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ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' SELF PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE

By

Kelly Gomez

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Leadership

Under the Supervision of Dr. Kay Keiser

Omaha, Nebraska

July, 2020

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

Kelly Gomez

University of Nebraska, 2020

Advisory: Dr. Kay Keiser

An effective teacher is the greatest influence on student achievement. Therefore, it is essential for school districts to ensure there is an effective teacher in every classroom. Yet the responsibilities of a teacher are countless and continually changing, leaving teachers at risk for becoming overworked and worn out. Teachers experiencing high levels of professional quality of life, comprised of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, are better able to provide positive learning experiences and more likely to be retained in the teaching profession. Therefore, it is sensible and necessary for school districts to understand how to support and retain teachers in order to ensure a thriving teacher for every student.

This study explored teacher self-perception of professional quality of life and whether teachers' self-perception of professional quality of life differed according to various teacher characteristics. Participants included certified teachers in four elementary schools. Each participant completed the thirty item Professional Quality of Life Scale. An analysis of teacher self-perception was completed for all participants, as well as to compare teachers in Title I and non-Title I buildings, teachers that have taught less than five years and teachers that have taught five years or more, and general education teachers and teachers in all other roles. This study may provide insight for schools,

districts, and school leaders on strategies to support teachers and prevent burnt out teachers in classrooms or teachers leaving the profession.

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I am blessed to have the opportunity to fulfil a dream I first spoke of in high school: earning a doctorate degree. An endless number of champions have provided strength and motivation without which I would not have succeeded.

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I could not have completed this journey without love and inspiration from friends. To a group of women brought together by a small elementary school and now my closest friends, thank you for the motivation, laughter, love, and support. I aspire to learn from the exceptional examples you have each set for me. I am a better woman and educator because of my friendships with each of you. To my dear friend also on the doctoral journey, I would be lost without the hours of conversation about dissertations and all things education. While we do not have all the answers yet, I love every minute of our time discussing the endless possibilities education has to offer. I also share my gratitude and appreciation with my cousin whose knowledge and skills are remarkable, and who never hesitated to share her knowledge, check in, and provide encouragement. I am proud to share a name with you and even prouder to serve as an educator with you.

I firmly believe that at the core of education is people. I am privileged to have worked with and learned from incredible educators throughout my time in education. Every student, parent, teacher, administrator, and leader I have worked with has shaped who I am and want to be as an educator and therefore played a vital role in my journey to completing this degree. Words cannot express how thankful I am to have worked with such remarkable people, and I will be forever grateful for all of the love, guidance, and opportunities I have been granted.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"Teaching is a helping profession" (Fowler, 2015, p. 30). Teaching is heart work and may leave teachers emotionally depleted (Demirdag, 2016). Teachers experience personal interactions with students consistently throughout the work day and may get lost in feeling empathy for students. For teachers to provide emotional and the behavioral supports students need takes empathy, time, and heart (Muller, Dodd, & Fiala, 2014).

A helping profession is defined as "occupations that provide health and education services to individuals and groups, including occupations in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, counseling, medicine, nursing, social work, physical and occupational therapy, teaching, and education" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020). Individuals in helping professions are constantly serving and assisting others, and due to often having a personal nature to want to work for the greater good, their own wellbeing may suffer. For teachers, the emotional involvement demanded to meet student needs can be consuming, and eventually that emotional involvement can lead to stress, fatigue, and teacher burnout.

Student achievement increases in positive learning environments with quality teachers, and therefore it is the responsibility of school leaders to set teachers up to thrive in the school environment. School leaders and district leaders must understand the needs of teachers and how to provide appropriate support. Avoiding teacher burnout is essential to ensure student success and for teacher retention in the profession.

Professional quality of life refers to how a person in a helping profession feels about their work. Professional quality of life is comprised of compassion satisfaction and

compassion fatigue, which is further divided into burnout and secondary traumatic stress. It is most ideal when the positive feelings a person gains from their work, compassion satisfaction, outweigh the negative feelings that lead to compassion fatigue. A teacher may feel burnout when job responsibilities and student needs become overwhelming, there is a negative culture among colleagues, or there is a lack of support for teachers. In some circumstances, teachers may be exposed to the trauma of students and suffer from secondary traumatic stress. When a teacher's professional quality of life is depleted, their own wellbeing and health are in jeopardy as well as the positive learning environment required for students to be successful.

Statement of the Problem

Retaining high quality teachers is an essential factor for high student achievement in schools. Schools are challenged with ensuring that all teachers have a positive influence on the classroom and therefore student achievement. If schools fail to support teachers, the professional responsibilities of being a teacher may lead to frustrated, stagnant teachers having a negative effect on students.

As education has evolved, the teaching profession has evolved with it. High stakes assessments, constantly developing standards and curriculum, and teaching students with a wide variety of social emotional and behavioral needs are all factors that affect teachers. High pressure on schools for all students to demonstrate proficiency on high stakes assessments filters down to pressure on teachers (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). In some schools, such as Title I schools, teachers are responsible for ensuring students' basic needs are met, in addition to academic and behavioral needs. Students living in poverty are at significant risk to fail academically and socially, and

therefore require additional services to ensure they are proficient in school (Stichter, Stormont, & Lewis, 2009).

The needs of students today places greater pressure on teachers, which may lead to teachers experiencing decreased professional quality of life and burnout. Compassion fatigue has two factors: burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Teachers may experience burnout due to job requirements and meeting the needs of all students. Secondary traumatic stress may also affect teachers that are exposed to students that have experienced trauma. Due to the high number of students living in poverty, teachers in Title I schools could be exposed to more student trauma. Teachers suffering from burnout or secondary traumatic stress may be less effective in the classroom or choose to leave the teaching profession, which could negatively affect student achievement.

School and district leaders need to understand what factors have the greatest effect on teachers experiencing burnout and how to support teachers as the teaching profession evolves. Teacher turnover has a negative effect on student achievement (Young, 2018). After the first few years teaching, teacher confidence and professional knowledge grows, and effectiveness grows (Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012). Teachers also build professional relationships with colleagues and administrators, which leads to positive school climate. Students benefit from the growth teachers experience throughout years of experience. Teachers experiencing burnout can be detrimental to themselves, students, schools, and districts, and therefore understanding what factors are leading to a decreased professional quality of life and burnout is essential.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this exploratory research was to study teacher self-perception of professional quality of life. Research explored whether differences occur in professional quality depending on various teacher characteristics. The teacher characteristics explored were teachers in Title I buildings and non-Title I buildings, years of experience, and job role. Professional quality of life consists of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Survey results were used to determine if differences exist for each factor of professional quality of life among various groups of certified teachers according to teacher characteristics. Research supports educational leaders to provide educational environments that allow teachers to thrive.

Research Questions

1. What are elementary teachers' self-perceptions of professional quality of life?
2. How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between Title and non-Title settings?
3. How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between novice teachers and teachers that have taught for more than five years?
4. How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between teacher roles?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of schools has long been to educate students, which primarily focused on academic learning. Research has shown that the academic success of students is tied to students feeling respected and cared for in the classroom. Demonstrating a high capacity for emotional intelligence or social emotional competence allows a teacher to

provide a classroom that focuses not only on academics, but also respectful interactions, safe behaviors, and positive work habits (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Emotional intelligence includes personal and social competencies such as persistence, empathy, and the ability to form positive relationships (Cherniss, 1998).

In addition to academics, life skills (or social-emotional learning) have been a focus in educating students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). As the mission of many schools has evolved from building knowledge to preparing students to be citizens of society today, social-emotional learning has become a larger focus in schools. "Teachers are constantly required to manage their own emotional displays as well as the emotions of their students" (Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola, & Pepe, 2017, p. 128). Can teachers teach and model something they do not embody? Can teachers support student needs and provide a positive learning environment where students excel if those teachers are not emotionally competent themselves? The relationships teachers build with students, ability to build lessons that recognize student strengths and lead to greater success, and capacity to build a positive behavioral plan for a classroom are all dependent on a socially and emotionally competent teacher (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

In order to ensure all students are being taught by effective teachers, educational leaders must have the emotional intelligence to support teachers, identify teachers in need of support, and provide teachers the support required to be effective. "Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize emotions in one's self and in others, to understand the causes and effects of emotions, and to manage emotions effectively to suit a goal or situation (Patti, Holzer, Stern, Floman, & Brackett, 2018, p. 48)." A leader with strong emotional intelligence can recognize teacher behaviors and triggers that demonstrate

concern and work to provide supports for that teacher. Together, teachers and educational leaders must have the emotional intelligence to build and support classrooms that are emotionally, physically, and socially positive for students (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018).

"Increasingly, schools are providing students with opportunities for social and emotional learning. We must be equally concerned with the social and emotional learning of our school leaders (Cherniss, 1998, p. 28)." A traditional focus on increasing achievement by focusing strictly on academics is not enough (Rice, 2018). Understanding what factors, if any, may lead to higher levels of burnout may support school leaders in supporting and retaining teachers.

Limitations

The research in this study was completed in a mid-size district within four elementary schools. Due to the limited number of subjects and schools, further research is needed to identify how research applies to teachers in larger school districts and secondary school teachers. The study did not take into account factors from outside school that may affect a teacher's professional quality of life.

Assumptions

The survey for this study was completed by teachers. It was assumed that teachers were able to make accurate decisions on each survey question so that survey results accurately represent professional quality of life.

Definition of Terms

Professional Quality of Life- is how a worker in a helping profession feels in relation to their work and is made up of two aspects, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2010).

Compassion Satisfaction- is the pleasure a person in a helping profession derives from doing their job well (Stamm, 2010).

Compassion Fatigue- is an underestimated, occupational hazard for those in a helping profession that causes a reduced capacity or interest to serve others in need or be empathetic (Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014). Compassion fatigue is further broken into two aspects: burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Burnout- psychological syndrome brought on by the effects of overwork, physical exhaustion, and professional frustration and includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016); Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009).

Secondary Traumatic Stress- is work related secondary exposure to traumatic events, or when a worker is exposed to the trauma of others through their profession (Stamm, 2010).

Title I School- is a school with a high percentage of students from low income families. Federal funds are available to Title I schools based on statutory formulas and census poverty data (Title I, Part A Program, 2015).

Significance of Study

This study contributed to research related to teacher effectiveness and teacher burnout. The research collected in this study connected to research regarding contributing

factors of teacher burnout. This exploratory study provided initial findings for specific teacher characteristics that future research can build on or use to compare different size districts, secondary schools, and various teacher characteristics.

The findings of the study are of interest to teachers, school leaders, and district leaders. Professional quality of life refers to several factors of those in helping professions, and this study reported specifically on teachers with various characteristics. Understanding how various teacher characteristics affect professional quality of life allows schools and districts to appropriately support teachers, therefore ensuring effective teachers in every classroom. This study was focused on the factors of professional quality of life, compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, and whether teacher's self-perceptions differ between Title I and non-Title I buildings, years of experience, and teaching role.

Outline of the Study

Chapter Two of this study includes a review of professional literature related to the teacher career cycle, professional quality of life, and Title I schools. Chapter Three outlines the methodology for this quantitative study and a description of how data was gathered and analyzed. Chapter Four of this study reports data collected from the survey and Chapter Five presents discussions for using this research in practice and further research opportunities.

Chapter II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of a school is to educate students, and a quality teacher greatly affects student success and achievement (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Hattie reported, (2003) "excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement" (p. 4). Although curriculum, funding, parental involvement, and administration are factors in student achievement, nothing is as important as an effective teacher. Due to the importance of a high-quality teacher in every classroom, hiring, supporting, and retaining excellent teachers is a high priority for school districts. As teachers face challenges from high stakes assessment to continually changing curriculum and increasing student needs, the retention of effective teachers becomes an urgent need.

The role of a teacher has expanded to include greater and more varied responsibilities and become more demanding (Richards, Bristol, Templin, & Graber, 2016; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016). No longer are teachers simply required to attend school, deliver lessons, and grade student work. Technological influences have grown exponentially and require a new skill set for teachers (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016). This new skill set requires extensive training and practice for effective use in the classroom. Additionally, high stakes testing and school accountability have placed tremendous pressure on teachers.

Teachers are responsible for educating every student in the classroom, despite the variety of academic, emotional, and behavioral needs students demonstrate (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). Teachers now endure long days with heavy workloads and a lack of time to complete required tasks, let alone time to build the necessary relationships for students to be successful (Richards, Bristol, Templin, & Graber, 2016). The changing

and varied needs of students requires teachers to constantly seek out and learn new methods to ensure every student has the opportunity to learn and grow.

Teaching is a profession built around relationships. That is, it is necessary for teachers to build relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. In addition, in many cases students' needs are becoming more complex, leaving teachers to provide skills in self-care, emotional competence, and social skills. Due to the connection between teaching and relationships, teaching has become an emotionally laden career and a lack of professional development and training on this responsibility allows the emotional demands of the profession to have lasting consequences for teachers (Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola, & Pepe, 2017).

Teacher Career Cycle

All teachers require support, regardless of the years of experience, in order to maintain a positive professional quality of life. "Teacher change research establishes that teachers develop differently and have individual attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and self-efficacy levels at various points during their careers (Weasmer, Woods, & Coburn, 2008, p. 22)." Often new teachers receive support in the form in mentor programs or new teacher programs for the first year to three years of teaching. The quality of mentor programs may vary and the level of support wanes with time, possibly leaving new teachers feeling overwhelmed. In addition, supports like mentor programs are often not available to more experienced teachers that may still be in need of support.

Throughout a teaching career, a teacher goes through several stages. The stages are fluid, and teachers will ebb and flow throughout the stages during their career (Lynn, 2002). Stages can include pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and

growing, career frustration, stability, career wind-down, and career exit (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Lynn, 2002; Weasmer, Woods, & Coburn, 2008). While career frustration often occurs in the middle of a teacher's career, it can also occur early on. School leaders must be able to recognize the signs of a frustrated teacher in order to avoid negative effects on student achievement.

Within the teacher career cycle lies the longest portion of a career: the middle or midcareer. A teacher midcareer is beyond the novice and induction phases, gets through the first five when teachers are especially prone to leaving (Young, 2018). Within the midcareer, teachers can be key members or contributors of a school staff (Evans, 1996). Key members are enthusiastic about education and continue to learn and grow and perform at exceptional levels. While contributors, a larger group, are less eager to experiment with newer, cunning edge practices, contributors are competent, solid professionals. At the lower end of the midcareer continuum are stable and stagnant teachers and deadwood teachers. Stable and stagnant teachers are passable teachers simply going through the motions. Deadwood teachers are a small, yet influential group of teachers whose performance has deteriorated and have a history of poor performance. Deadwood teachers have a negative effect on student achievement. School leaders must identify these teachers and what is causing teachers to perform at these levels or risk a decline in student achievement.

Professional Quality of Life

Professional quality of life is the quality a person in a helping profession feels regarding their work. There are both positive and negative aspects of professional quality of life. The positive aspect is compassion satisfaction, or the pleasure a person in a

helping profession gets from their work. The negative aspect is compassion fatigue, which includes both burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Compassion Satisfaction

Compassion satisfaction is the positive feelings a person in a helping profession feels regarding their ability to help others (Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, & Segal, 2015), or feeling good about helping others through work. High levels of compassion satisfaction is directly tied to positive feelings regarding work life and lower levels of burnout. A person feeling compassion satisfaction understands the importance of the work they do and the difference it makes (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, 2017). A person may experience both compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, however if compassion fatigue increases it may inhibit a worker's ability to experience compassion satisfaction (Bride, Radey, Figley, 2007). High compassion satisfaction paired with low compassion fatigue and burnout is the optimal balance for professionals (Beaumont, Durkin, Hollins, & Carson, 2016).

Compassion Fatigue

Caring for others and high emotional involvement with students, both roles of a teacher, may lead to compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue affects people who enter helping professions (Katopol, 2015). Constantly demonstrating compassion and empathy towards students can take a toll on a teacher ("Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project", 2017). It is an underestimated, occupational hazard that causes a reduced capacity or interest to serve others in need or be empathetic (Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014). Compassion fatigue is a negative aspect of helping others and can cause exhaustion, frustration, anger, and depression. The first step in prevention or treatment of compassion

fatigue is to understand the symptoms and the variety of measurement instruments available to assess compassion fatigue (Bride, Radey, & Figley, 2007).

A teacher suffering from compassion fatigue may suffer helplessness, isolation, and confusion, and find it difficult to see beyond the danger in the world (Eastwood & Ecklund, 2008; Katopol, 2016). Lack of sleep, and other physical challenges such as headaches, may lead to mental and physical exhaustion and therefore higher rates of absenteeism (Bush, 2009; Fowler, 2015). Teachers experiencing compassion fatigue may find it difficult to connect with colleagues and administration at school and appear preoccupied. Compassion fatigue may lead to low morale and productivity in the workplace, as well as reduced concentration and communication (Beaumont, Durkin, Martin, & Carson, 2015; Showalter, 2010). Symptoms of compassion fatigue may come on gradually or emerge suddenly (Eastwood & Ecklund, 2008).

Compassion fatigue negatively affects schools, as teachers may leave the profession when experiencing compassion fatigue, and yet self-care is rarely part of teacher preparation programs. Self-care is a preventative factor to work related stress (Beaumont, Durkin, Martin, & Carson, 2016). Teachers need continuous professional development to take care of themselves in order to prevent or treat symptoms of compassion fatigue. Individual teachers should be encouraged to seek methods of self-care such as meditation, spiritual involvement, and spending time with family and friends. In addition, personal reading and having a hobby outside of school may help teachers to prevent or lessen symptoms of compassion fatigue (Huggard, 2003).

Teachers may also use professional strategies such as seeking out a mentor or supervisor to monitor and discuss work stress or gaining access to wellness programs for

support in order to care for themselves (Huggard, 2003). Organizations can also support teachers experiencing compassion fatigue. Administrators should build a culture of care and support amongst staff (Huggard, 2003; Mackenzie, 2012). When administrators communicate openly with staff members, and provide clear expectations, teachers feel supported and are less likely to experience compassion fatigue (Sprang, Clark, & Whitt-Woosley, 2007). All teachers should feel comfortable seeking help from colleagues and administrators if symptoms of compassion fatigue arise. Finally, the school organization is responsible for providing professional development on how to work with families and demonstrate empathy, along with how to focus on self-care.

Compassion fatigue is an occupational hazard that causes a reduced capacity or interest to serve others in need or be empathetic (Adams, Figley, & Boscarino, 2008). A person experiencing compassion fatigue may feel helpless in their ability to help others and confusion regarding what can be done. This may cause a person to pull away from colleagues and become isolated and lead to burnout (Figley, 2002; Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley & Segal, 2015). Burnout and secondary traumatic stress are two facets of compassion fatigue that affect human services professionals in different ways and to varying degrees of severity (Adams, Figley, & Boscarino, 2008; "ProQOL Measure," 2017).

Burnout

A career in teaching provides teachers the opportunity to not only teach academics, but also care for and support students. Teachers can reap a great deal of fulfillment from teaching, yet teachers can also experience negative effects.

Changes occurring in education are leading to higher levels of burnout among teachers, which in turn affects student achievement. "Employees experiencing burnout lose the capacity to provide the intense contributions that make an impact" (Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009, p. 205). Burnout was recognized in the 1970s (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Williams & Dikes, 2015) and has been defined as a psychological syndrome brought on by the effects of overwork, physical exhaustion, and professional frustration and includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009). Additionally, burnout is a physical, attitudinal, and emotional state observed in staff that work with demanding clients and whose work requirements exceed their own capacity (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016). Burnout is common among individuals in human services jobs that require continuous interaction with people (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). Because teaching is a necessary and respected profession, it is beneficial for schools, districts, and society to seek a remedy for burnout, which has three dimensions (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016).

The three dimensions of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. All three dimensions have the potential to greatly affect teachers' job performance and life.

Emotional exhaustion is the central quality of burnout, and represents feeling emotionally overextended and exhausted (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Garn, Kulik, & Fahlman 2015). When experiencing emotional exhaustion the stressors of the external environment exceed the individual's capacity to deal with the stress. Emotional exhaustion can present through frustration, depression, and dissatisfaction (Shaheen &

Mahmood, 2016). Other characteristics of emotional exhaustion can be physical deterioration, emotional overburden, and lack of enthusiasm for work or life. Emotional exhaustion is often the first reaction to feelings of burnout (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Depersonalization often manifests as negative feelings and detachment from students (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). A teacher experiencing burnout may feel negative attitudes toward work and therefore distance themselves from coworkers and students. Depersonalization can be demonstrated by a teacher detaching and distancing themselves from others not only at work, but also members of their personal lives (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Experiencing depersonalization affects professional ability due to cynical and resentful feelings, as well as seeing the worst in people in all situations (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016).

When a teacher experiences prolonged emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, a loss of self-efficacy and self-motivation may follow (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016). Teachers may feel less qualified, ineffective, and hopeless. Self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief that they can effectively complete job requirements. Reduced personal accomplishment leaves a teacher feeling less effective, therefore having less self-efficacy, and negative about their job performance (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Reduced personal accomplishment is the self evaluation dimension of burnout. Because a teacher's efforts are not reaching desired outcomes, the teacher may feel incompetent, dissatisfied, and worthless (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016).

The symptoms of burnout exhibited by teachers, as well as the degree to which symptoms affect teachers, varies by person (Paterson, 2016). Some teachers may experience moderate worries, while other teachers experience severe depression. On a

personal level, burnout undermines a person's motivation, zeal, and enthusiasm (Shen et al., 2015). Exhaustion, or overwhelming fatigue due to depleted emotional energy, is often one of the first and most regular symptoms of burnout (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Williams & Dikes, 2015). Teachers may also suffer from insomnia or chronic fatigue, feeling emotionally and physically drained.

Some symptoms of burnout affect not only the teacher, but have the potential to affect students and learning. Teachers experiencing burnout may demonstrate high levels of absenteeism due to a decreased feelings of commitment and desire to work (Garcia-Ros, Fuentes, & Fernandez, 2015). One suffering from burnout may try to distance themselves from the work environment and colleagues. Teachers may become cynical, pessimistic, and difficult to work with (Williams & Dikes, 2015). When teachers are not present in the classroom, become less internally involved in their work, or are suffering from chronic fatigue, it becomes more unlikely that quality instruction is taking place in the classroom (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016). Burnout can lead to less thorough classroom planning and efficient teaching, and therefore lower student achievement (Shen et al., 2015).

Teachers experiencing burnout may demonstrate more severe symptoms. Teachers may feel a sense of dread or experience anxiety not only at work, also in their personal lives. Burnout can cause physical ailments such as headaches and stomach issues, or even more serious ailments such a dizziness and chest pain. Experiencing burnout, as well as dealing with symptoms of burnout may lead a teacher to feeling anger and depression. Teachers may feel guilty or sad about not meeting job expectations,

detached from work and personal relationships, or even worthless. The more severe the symptoms are or become, the more important it becomes to seek medical help.

Finding ways for teachers to cope with feelings of burnout is essential to avoid teachers leaving the profession altogether. Treating burnout after it occurs has received a great deal of focus, however prevention may better serve professionals. Teachers are professionals; to be successful teachers must address their own personal, familial, emotional, and spiritual needs (Wagaman et al., 2015). While in some situations teachers may require professional treatment to cope with the symptoms of burnout, other factors exist that may affect the prevalence of burnout among teachers.

Additional stress is inflicted upon teachers when a destructive relationship between a teacher and administrator is present, potentially leading to higher teacher burnout. Some factors of conflict between a teacher and administrator could be excessive workload, lack of support with students and parents, lack of autonomy, and conflict (Akman, 2016). A lack of open communication between teachers and administration, as well as teachers feeling they do not have a voice in the school, leaves teachers with diminished trust for administration. Teachers also lose trust when they do not feel supported by the administration, or feel their job performance is under constant judgment. When teachers do not feel respected or appreciated by administration more stress is inflicted upon teachers and can contribute to burnout. Administrators are responsible for creating a positive work environment, where teachers are encouraged to communicate openly, grow as professionals, and feel supported by administration (Akman, 2016).

A negative school culture has the potential to negatively affect the burnout levels of teachers (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda, 2009; Demirdag, 2016). When

teachers feel supported by colleagues they are more motivated to meet the high demands of teaching. Camaraderie among staff leaves teachers with a sense of being in it together and willing to strive to achieve more. Simply being able to talk to a colleague about concerns and troubles is an asset for teachers. On the other hand, when the school culture among staff members is negative, stress is added and can lead to higher levels of burnout (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). A negative culture among teachers may include competition for attention and resentment centered around which staff members are doing the most work. A lack of positive relationships between staff members limits trust, functional communication, and the expectations set of students and therefore can be detrimental to teacher and student success (Demirdag, 2016).

The changes in education require teachers to change and grow as well. When teachers do not receive adequate opportunities for professional development, confidence levels decrease and students suffer (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Williams & Dikes, 2015). Often professional development opportunities are foregone due to lack of time. However, growth is an expectation for teacher evaluation and therefore teachers want to be able to demonstrate development and growth. Professional development contributes to higher teacher self-efficacy, or a teacher's belief in their ability to successfully execute a particular task, and higher teacher efficacy may improve teacher burnout (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda, 2009; Garcia-Ros, Fuentes, & Fernandez, 2015). As important as opportunities for professional development is time and support to implement new concepts and ideas. While finding time for professional growth and implementation can be difficult for administrators, it is essential for teachers to feel successful.

A multitude of additional duties and the expansion of student needs may cause a teacher to experience the effects of burnout. However, when teachers are exposed to the trauma their students endure, teachers may experience secondary traumatic stress.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

As schools and the responsibility of teacher change, teachers are exposed to more traumatic experiences of students and may also be at risk to experience secondary traumatic stress. “Secondary traumatic stress is the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other- the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (Figley, 2002, p.1435). Due to the nature of a teacher’s job in current times, teachers may hear stories of student trauma or stressful events in students’ lives. These stories may lead a teacher to experience secondary traumatic stress. In these cases, teachers experience symptoms of secondary traumatic stress due to exposure to the stress or trauma of students ("ProQOL Measure," 2017). Secondary traumatic stress can lead to changes in how a person sees themselves, others, and the world and the change in views a person experiences can be pervasive and permanent (Baird & Kracen, 2006).

Symptoms of secondary traumatic stress are likely to have a quick onset after being exposed to another’s trauma. A person suffering from secondary traumatic stress may experience a wide variety of psychological effects, such as feelings of sadness, helplessness, fatigue, guilt, and anger (Shannonhouse, Barden, Jones, Gonzalez, & Murphy, 2016). In addition a teacher may become easily annoyed by others, become emotionally numb, or have significant difficulty concentrating (Craun & Bourke, 2014). In some cases symptoms may develop into anxiety, panic, or depressed feelings that

require medical attention (Kostouros, 2016). Psychological symptoms of secondary traumatic stress may cause a person to find it difficult to do one's job (Newmeyer, Keyes, Palmer, Kent, Spong, Stephen, & Troy, 2016).

Secondary traumatic stress may cause a teacher to only see negative in the world and experience more fear of normal, everyday things than previously. Nightmares or replaying intrusive imagery of traumatic events in the head may interfere with a sufferer's ability to complete everyday activities or work (Bonach & Heckert, 2012). A teacher may have feelings of injustice or distrust in the world and struggle to understand how or why a student was exposed to trauma (Craun & Bourke, 2015; Shannonhouse, Barden, Jones, Gonzalez, & Murphy, 2016). A teacher will likely feel an obligation to help students in trauma and end up with a feeling of helplessness if they feel unsuccessful or helpless.

Teachers suffering from secondary traumatic stress may experience a desire to isolate themselves. This isolation can have effects on all of a person's relationships, such as personal relationships, family relationships, and relationships with students and colleagues. It is likely that a person suffering from secondary traumatic stress will not understand what exactly is happening to them, and therefore will not want to share the feelings with others. This may cause a person to pull away from others. Family relationships can suffer as teachers may not want to share students' trauma with their family. A teacher may even become extremely overprotective of their own family in response to knowing what has happened to another child (Craun & Bourke, 2015). Hypervigilance trying to keep loved ones safe may lead to distrust in one's capacity to do so (Bonach & Heckert, 2012).

While some cases of secondary traumatic stress require medical attention, there are coping techniques that may support teachers or others suffering from symptoms. Group cohesion, co-worker support, supervisor support, and social support all prove beneficial to secondary traumatic stress sufferers (Craun & Bourke, 2014). While a teacher may not want to share their stress with others, it essential to do so. Positive interactions with professional peers reduces stress, as does encouragement from a supervisor (Bonach & Heckert, 2012). The use of humor with co-workers can provide relief from symptoms of secondary traumatic stress (Craun & Bourke, 2015). However, even more important is the support from external social relationships like family and friends. A person may feel they have more control over social relationships and may find it easier to share feelings without the fear of coworkers or supervisors judging their job performance. Just sharing and feeling supported by friends and family may have extraordinary positive effects on secondary traumatic stress (Bonach & Heckert, 2012; Conn & Butterfield, 2013).

Education is key in coping with secondary traumatic stress. Teachers and caregivers need to understand their symptoms and the options that are available. While self-care is often an aspect of training for counselors and social workers, this training should occur for all human services positions. Self-care includes physical and emotional health, and it is important for teachers to consider both. Self-care activities may include exercise, prayer, meditation, sleep, or taking time to be alone (Conn & Butterfield, 2013). Education also includes being educated about trauma and how traumatic experiences affect individuals. Being educated about trauma is the only way for teachers to understand what a student experiencing trauma needs, and therefore be capable of

supporting students without experiencing secondary traumatic stress (Carello & Butler, 2015).

Teachers also need to be aware of what resources are available for support, how to gain those services and feel assured taking advantage of services will not have a negative effect on their job. A reluctance to seek medical treatment necessitates safe avenues for teachers to seek help without stigma (Conn & Butterfield, 2013). If a teacher seeks out medical or clinical services it is essential for the family to be educated regarding symptoms and supports in order to limit damage done to those relationships (Craigen, Cole, Paiva & Levingston, 2014).

The effects of secondary traumatic stress may negatively affect teachers that are exposed to the trauma students face. Due to a higher percentage of students from low-income families, teachers in Title I schools may be more likely to work with students that have faced traumatic situations.

Title I Schools

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 directed federal aid to children living in concentrated poverty due to the recognition that children living in poverty faced disadvantages (Liu, 2008). Title I is a federal designation that provides financial assistance to schools with a high number or percentage of children from low-income families (Title I, Part A Program, 2015). Additional federal funding is provided to help ensure that all children achieve proficiency on state academic standards. Funds are allocated using formulas that focus on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state (Title I, Part A Program, 2015). At least forty percent of students in a school must come from a low income family in order for a school to be designated as a Title I

school (Isernhagen, 2012). During the 2015-2016 school year, twenty-six million children were served by Title I programs (Title I, Part A Program, 2015).

There are specific guidelines for how Title I money can be spent by a school. If at least forty percent of a school population of a school is students from low-income families, a school can run a school-wide Title I program, however if the school has less than forty percent of students from low income families, funds must be spent on targeted assistance (Isernhagen, 2012). Targeted assistance requires providing specific assistance to students that may struggle to demonstrate proficiency on state standards due to low socioeconomic status. All programs and assistance provided to students use instructional strategies that are based on scientifically based research. Parental involvement activities must also be included (Title I, Part A Program, 2015).

Title One schools receive additional funding due to increased needs students from low-income families may have. “Poverty impacts the whole child, as research indicates there are negative effects on cognitive development, health, and behavior (Evans & Radina, 2014, p. 108).” Students from low-income families are less likely to have attended preschool before kindergarten or have parents that have attended higher education (Evans &Radina, 2014; Vernaza, 2012). Students are more likely to speak a different language at home and may begin school not having a solid foundation of the English language. These characteristics put students at risk to struggle in school. Funding may provide additional staff for school to provide interventions for students requiring extra academic support. Funding may also be used to purchase materials necessary to increase the likelihood of proficiency for students or provide programming to increase student achievement. Programming may include after school programs, summer school

programs, or tutoring for individual students, as long as all strategies are research based. All funding is provided to meet a wide range of student needs in order to ensure proficiency for students in Title I schools.

In addition to academic difficulties, a student from a low income family may face more challenging behavior patterns and difficulty with social emotional skills. Behavioral struggles may inhibit the ability of a student to be successful in the classroom and lead to further academic concerns (Stichter, Stormont, & Lewis, 2009). It may be difficult for parents in low-income families to consistently meet students' basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing, which can become distracting to students and make it difficult for students to focus on school and learn. While many of the characteristics of students from a low income family put a student at risk to face difficulties in school, they do not automatically mean a particular student is at risk (MacMahon, 2011). However, due to the potential for poverty to affect nearly every measure of academic results, funding to support schools is essential (Liu, 2008).

Students in Title I schools may have greater needs academically and behaviorally (Vernaza, 2012). Teachers in Title I schools are therefore relied on to meet every students' needs in order to ensure students' academic success (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). This may also include meeting students' basic needs, such as clothing, food, and emotional support. While providing additional supports for students is one aspect of encouraging academic success in a Title I school, it may cause teachers to experience additional stress. Teachers who are already working hard to provide exceptional lessons, participate in professional development, and prepare students for high stakes assessments may experience burnout or secondary traumatic stress while

attempting to meet students' various needs. For some teachers, however, the additional responsibility of providing additional support for students may increase compassion satisfaction. School and district leaders must understand the additional support some students in Title I schools may require to be successful in order to support teachers and ensure effective teachers in every classroom.

Conclusion

The realities of teaching in today's world leave teachers vulnerable to experiencing decreased professional quality of life. Students, schools, and school districts benefit from understanding and supporting teachers suffering from compassion fatigue. High accountability standards require schools to continuously demonstrate student proficiency and growth. In order for students and schools to meet accountability requirements, students must receive high quality instruction every day, from every teacher. Teachers suffering from compassion fatigue are less likely to have the capacity to provide high quality instruction and may also suffer in their personal lives. As every student deserves a high quality education to increase the likelihood of playing a positive role in the future of society, educational leaders are responsible for ensuring that teachers are capable of providing high quality instruction daily.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the methodology for this quantitative research study. The chapter is focused on the purpose, participants, design, instrumentation, and procedure, and analysis of data.

Effective teachers are essential for student success in school. Teacher effectiveness may be negatively affected by decreased professional quality of life among teachers. Due to the nature of teaching, which includes supporting students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally, teachers may become overwhelmed, suffer from burnout or secondary traumatic stress, or even leave the teaching profession. As teacher effectiveness increases with experience, it is important to work to understand teacher struggles and needs in order to ensure student success.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher self-perception of professional quality of life, including compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, and whether teacher self-perception differed according to various teacher characteristics. The teacher characteristics explored were teachers in Title I buildings and non-Title I settings, years of experience, and teacher role. The study also explored the relationship of the factors of professional quality of life.

Research Questions

1. What are elementary teachers' self-perceptions of professional quality of life?
2. How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between Title and non-Title settings?

3. How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between novice teachers and teachers that have taught for more than five years?
4. How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between teacher roles?

Participants

All participants in this study were certified teachers in a mid-sized urban school district. The district serves approximately 10,000 students from Preschool to 12th grade. Comprising of fifteen elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools, the district also serves students from an air force base located in the city. The district employs approximately 850 certified staff.

The subjects of this study were certified teachers in four elementary schools, two Title I elementary schools and two non-Title I elementary schools. Certified teachers included general education teachers, special education teachers, specialist teachers, and teachers that work with small groups of students such as English Language teachers, and Reading teachers. Subjects' years of experience, sex, and level of education varied. The identity of participants was anonymous. One hundred and twenty-three teachers were invited to participate in this study. Sixty-five of the invited teachers participated in the study.

Research Design

This quantitative study was designed to explore teacher perception of professional quality of life in regards to various teacher characteristics. A cross-sectional survey design was utilized to gather teachers' beliefs at one point in time. After data was collected, comparisons were made between groups of certified teachers. The survey

generated sub scores for professional quality of life in the areas of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Comparisons were made between teachers in Title I schools and non-Title I schools, teachers teaching less than five years or five or more years, and general education teachers and teachers in other roles. The study also explored the relationship of the factors of professional quality of life.

Instrumentation

The instrument for the survey was the Professional Quality of Life Scale- version 5 (ProQOL) (See Appendix A). This instrument is approved for use in research. The ProQOL consists of thirty items and produces three subscale scores. The subscale scores are for compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Compassion satisfaction refers to the pleasure or satisfaction a person in a helping profession gains from their work. Compassion fatigue is the negative aspect of working in a helping profession and is broken into two parts: burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout is the feeling of hopelessness, frustration, and exhaustion due to the work a person does. secondary traumatic stress is brought on when a person experiences secondary exposure to a trauma in their work ("ProQOL Measure," 2017).

Participants responded to the Professional Quality of Life scale using a 5 point Likert scale to identify how frequently they have experienced each item in the last thirty days (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often). The thirty statements were broken into three the subscales of professional quality of life (compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress). The compassion satisfaction subscale was derived from ten items, such as "I get satisfaction from being able to teach people," and "I feel invigorated after working with those I teach." The burnout subscale was derived from ten items such

as, “I feel connected to others,” and “I feel worn out because of my work as a teacher.” The secondary traumatic stress subscale was derived from ten items such as, “I am preoccupied with more than one person I teach,” and “As a result of my teaching, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.”

The Professional Quality of Life Scale has been found to have high reliability and validity. A bibliography of studies that have utilized the ProQOL features 667 studies. The subscale for compassion fatigue is distinct and the shares a 2% shared variance with secondary traumatic stress and 5% shared variance with burnout. The shared variance between burnout and secondary traumatic stress is 34%. The two scales measure different ideas, however the shared variance likely reflects the distress common to both. The average score for compassion satisfaction is fifty with a standard deviation of ten and alpha scale reliability of 0.88. The average score on the burnout subscale is fifty, with a standard deviation of ten and an alpha scale reliability of 0.75. The average score on the secondary traumatic subscale is fifty, with a standard deviation of ten and an alpha scale reliability of 0.81. About twenty-five percent of people score higher than fifty-seven, and another twenty-five percent of people score lower than forty-three, on each of the subscales (“ProQOL Measure,” 2017).

Procedures

The Professional Quality of Life Scale can be given individually or in a group setting (Stamm, 2010). For this study the survey was given individually. After receiving permission from the school district to conduct the study, the researcher worked with the principals from the four buildings to determine an acceptable time frame for conducting the survey. The survey was sent to participants in an email, and data was collected

electronically. Survey remained anonymous to the researcher and subjects were only sorted by school, length of teaching career, and teaching role. Three weeks were provided to collect data. When the survey was initially sent out, the physical closing of the district where data collection occurred due to Coronavirus was unforeseen. Thirty-five teachers completed the survey prior to school buildings closing and thirty teachers completed the survey after school buildings closed. Results of the survey were unaffected by the school building closure.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study was collected electronically and scored according to The Concise ProQOL Manual (Stamm, 2010). First, several items on the questionnaire were reversed for scoring. Next, a subscale scores were calculated for compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. After item reversals, the sum of items three, six, twelve, sixteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-two, twenty-four, twenty-seven, and thirty provided the subscale for compassion satisfaction. Items one, four, eight, ten, fifteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty-one, twenty-six, and twenty-nine were summed to identify the burnout subscale. The sum of items two, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, twenty-three, twenty-five, and twenty-eight provided the secondary traumatic stress sub score.

After t-scores were calculated, multiple t-tests were conducted to determine if differences were present according to building characteristics and teacher characteristics. Tables are used to present data to determine if differences are present between Title I schools and non-Title I schools, between teachers teaching five years or less and more than five years, and between general education teachers and teachers in other roles.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher self-perception of professional quality of life. The study examined if differences occur in professional quality of life based on various teacher characteristics. The teacher characteristics examined were teachers in Title I and non-Title I schools, years of experience teaching, and job roles. Professional quality of life includes compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Results for this study were drawn from a thirty question survey, the Professional Quality of Life Scale, which provided a sub-score for compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress for each participant. A statistical analysis provided the opportunity to examine differences between teacher groups as well as correlation between subscales on the survey. Surveys were completed by 65 certified teachers in four elementary schools. Two of the schools were Title I schools, and two were not Title I schools.

Data for this study was collected electronically over a three week period. After one week of data collection, the district where data was collected closed school buildings due to Coronavirus. Thirty-five teachers completed the survey prior to school buildings closing and thirty teachers completed the survey after school buildings closed. Results of the survey were unaffected by the school building closure.

Research Question 1

What are elementary teachers' self-perceptions of professional quality of life?

Results. The group as a whole demonstrated average scores on all three subscales of professional quality of life. The instrumentation identifies three ranges of scores for each of the three subscale scores, compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic

stress. A subscale score of 22 or less is considered low, between 23 and 41 is considered average, and 42 or more is considered high. For compassion satisfaction subscale a higher score is favorable, while on the burnout and secondary traumatic stress subscales a lower score is favorable. The average score of participants on the compassion satisfaction subscale (M = 39.49, SD = 5.32), burnout (M = 25.43, SD = 5.25), and secondary traumatic stress (M = 24.09, SD = 5.48) all rest strongly within the average range of 23-41. Average subscale scores for all teachers are presented in Table 1, and scores for individual survey questions for each subscale are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1

Professional Quality of Life Scale Average Subscale Scores for All Participants

Item	All Participants (n=65)	
	M	*SD*
Compassion Satisfaction	39.49	5.32
Burnout	25.43	5.25
Secondary Traumatic Stress	24.09	5.48

Table 2

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Compassion Satisfaction for All Participants

Item	All Participants (n=65)	
	M	*SD*
I get satisfaction from being able to teach people.	4.37	0.675
I feel invigorated after working with those I teach.	3.52	0.731
I like my work as a teacher.	4.14	0.704
I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with teaching techniques and protocols.	3.55	0.791
My work makes me feel satisfied.	3.72	0.696
I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I teach and how I could help them.	3.94	0.682
I believe I can make a difference through my work.	4.20	0.712
I am proud of what I can do to teach.	4.26	0.713
I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a teacher.	3.63	0.802
I am happy that I chose to do this work.	4.15	0.795

Table 3

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Burnout for All Participants

Item	All Participants (n=65)	
	M	*SD*
I am happy.	1.92	0.620
I feel connected to others.	2.03	0.770
I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I teach.	2.28	0.820
I feel trapped by my job as a teacher.	2.34	1.094
I have beliefs that sustain me.	1.75	0.791
I am the person I always wanted to be.	2.42	0.882
I feel worn out because of my work as a teacher.	3.83	0.911
I feel overwhelmed because my case load seems endless.	3.78	0.992
I feel “bogged down” by the system.	3.52	1.047
I am a very caring person.	1.55	0.587

Table 4

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Secondary Traumatic Stress for All Participants

Item	All Participants (n=65)	
	M	*SD*
I am preoccupied with more than one person I teach.	3.91	1.042
I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.	2.68	0.773
I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a teacher.	3.00	0.952
I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I teach.	2.52	1.032
Because of my teaching, I have felt “on edge” about various things.	2.89	0.921
I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I teach.	2.18	0.768
I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have taught.	1.92	0.853
I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I teach.	1.51	0.664
As a result of my teaching, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.	1.57	0.809
I can’t recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.	1.91	0.785

Research Question 2

How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between Title and non-Title settings?

Results. No significant difference ($p < .05$) was present for compassion satisfaction, burnout, or secondary traumatic stress between teachers in Title I schools and non-Title I schools. The Professional Quality of Life Scale identifies three ranges for the three subscales. The ranges are low (scores of 22 and below), average (scores of 23-41), and high (scores of 42 and above). The average subscale scores for both groups fell strongly within the average range for compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress as defined by the instrumentation.

This research showed on the compassion satisfaction subscale the 33 participants that teach in a Title I school ($M = 39.06$, $SD = 4.65$) demonstrated no significant difference compared to the 32 teachers that teach in a non-Title I school ($M = 39.94$, $SD = 5.73$) using a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = 0.662$, $p = .51$. For burnout, the subscale showed teachers in a Title I school ($M = 25.64$, $SD = 4.94$) demonstrated no significant difference compared to teachers that teach in a non-Title I school ($M = 25.22$, $SD = 5.87$) on a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -0.319$, $p = .75$. The final sub-score is secondary traumatic stress. The secondary traumatic stress sub-score for teachers in a Title I school ($M = 24.49$, $SD = 5.03$) demonstrated no significant difference compared to teachers that teach in a non-Title I school ($M = 23.69$, $SD = 5.96$) on a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -0.584$, $p = .56$. Results related to question 2 are included on Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Table 5

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Responses for Compassion Satisfaction of Title I and Non-Title I Teachers

Item	Title I (n=33)		Non-Title (n=32)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I get satisfaction from being able to teach people.	4.27	0.674	4.47	0.671
I feel invigorated after working with those I teach.	3.48	0.566	3.56	0.878
I like my work as a teacher.	4.12	0.650	4.16	0.767
I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with teaching techniques and protocols.	3.58	0.830	3.53	0.761
My work makes me feel satisfied.	3.79	0.740	3.66	0.653
I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I teach and how I could help them.	3.82	0.683	4.06	0.669
I believe I can make a difference through my work.	4.15	0.619	4.25	0.803
I am proud of what I can do to teach.	4.15	0.755	4.38	0.660
I have thoughts that I am a “success” as a teacher.	3.61	0.747	3.66	0.865
I am happy that I chose to do this work.	4.09	0.765	4.22	0.832

Table 6

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Responses for Burnout of Title I and Non-Title I Teachers

Item	Title I (n=33)		Non-Title I (n=32)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I am happy.	2.03	0.529	1.81	0.693
I feel connected to others.	1.97	0.728	2.09	0.818
I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I teach.	2.33	0.854	2.22	0.792
I feel trapped by my job as a teacher.	2.33	0.990	2.34	1.208
I have beliefs that sustain me.	1.64	0.603	1.88	0.942
I am the person I always wanted to be.	2.30	0.810	2.53	0.950
I feel worn out because of my work as a teacher.	3.94	0.899	3.72	0.924
I feel overwhelmed because my case load seems endless.	3.97	0.883	3.59	1.073
I feel “bogged down” by the system.	3.58	0.936	3.47	1.164
I am a very caring person.	1.55	0.617	1.59	0.564

Table 7

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Responses for Secondary Traumatic Stress of Title I and Non-Title I Teachers

Item	Title I (n=33)		Non-Title I (n=32)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I am preoccupied with more than one person I teach.	3.82	1.158	4.00	0.916
I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.	2.58	0.614	2.78	0.906
I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a teacher.	3.06	0.864	2.94	1.045
I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I teach.	2.73	0.944	2.31	1.091
Because of my teaching, I have felt "on edge" about various things.	2.82	0.808	2.97	1.031
I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I teach.	2.30	0.810	2.06	0.716
I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have taught.	2.06	0.864	1.78	0.832
I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I teach.	1.48	0.566	1.53	0.761

As a result of my teaching, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.	1.58	0.614	1.56	0.982
I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.	2.06	0.747	1.75	0.803

Table 8

Two Tailed t-test Results for Title I and non-Title I teachers for Compassion Satisfaction

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Title I	33	39.06	4.94	63	0.662	.51
Non-Title I	32	39.94	5.73			

Note. * = p < .05

Table 9

Two Tailed t-test Results for Title I and non-Title I teachers for Burnout

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Title I	33	25.64	4.65	63	-0.319	.75
Non-Title I	32	25.22	5.87			

Note. * = p < .05

Table 10

Two Tailed t-test Results for Title I and non-Title I teachers for Secondary Traumatic Stress

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Title I	33	24.49	5.03	63	-0.584	.56
Non-Title I	32	23.69	5.96			

Note. * = p < .05

Research Question 3

How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between novice teachers and teacher that have taught for more than five years?

Results. This research demonstrated a significant difference ($p , < .05$) between novice teachers and experienced teachers for the burnout subscale score, however no significant difference was noted for compassion satisfaction or secondary traumatic stress. The compassion satisfaction subscale showed the 6 novice teachers ($M = 41.67$, $SD = 2.34$) demonstrated no significant difference compared to the 59 teachers that have taught more than five years ($M = 39.27$, $SD = 5.50$) using a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = 1.052$, $p = .30$. According to the three ranges defined by the instrumentation, novice teachers demonstrated slightly above average compassion satisfaction scores, while experienced teachers fell in the higher end of average (average subscale range 23-41).

On the burnout subscale novice teachers ($M = 20.33$, $SD = 3.62$) demonstrated a significant difference compared to experienced teachers ($M = 25.95$, $SD = 5.13$) on a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -2.609$, $p = .01$. The instrument defines the range of low as 22 and below. Therefore, the average of novice teachers fell in the below average range, while the average of the experienced teachers fell in the average range.

The final sub-score is secondary traumatic stress. The secondary traumatic stress subscale score for novice teachers ($M = 23.17$, $SD = 5.00$) demonstrated no significant difference compared experienced teachers ($M = 24.19$, $SD = 5.55$) on a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -0.432$, $p = .67$. The average sub-score for secondary traumatic stress of both groups rests in the low end of the average range of scores, which is 23-41. Results related to Question 3 are presented on Tables 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

Table 11

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Compassion Satisfaction of Novice Teachers and Experienced Teachers

Item	Novice Teachers (n=6)		Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience (n=59)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I get satisfaction from being able to teach people.	4.67	0.816	4.34	0.659
I feel invigorated after working with those I teach.	3.67	0.516	3.51	0.751
I like my work as a teacher.	4.50	0.548	4.10	0.712
I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with teaching techniques and protocols.	4.00	0.632	3.51	0.796
My work makes me feel satisfied.	3.83	0.983	3.71	0.671
I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I teach and how I could help them.	3.50	0.837	3.98	0.656
I believe I can make a difference through my work.	4.33	0.516	4.19	0.730
I am proud of what I can do to teach.	4.50	0.548	4.24	0.727
I have thoughts that I am a “success” as a teacher.	3.83	0.753	3.61	0.810
I am happy that I chose to do this work.	4.83	0.408	4.08	0.794

Table 12

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Burnout of Novice Teachers and Experienced Teachers

Item	Novice Teachers (n=6)		Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience (n=59)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I am happy.	1.50	0.548	1.97	0.615
I feel connected to others.	1.50	0.837	2.08	0.749
I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I teach.	2.50	1.049	2.25	0.801
I feel trapped by my job as a teacher.	1.50	0.837	2.42	1.086
I have beliefs that sustain me.	1.83	0.753	1.75	0.801
I am the person I always wanted to be.	2.00	0.632	2.46	0.897
I feel worn out because of my work as a teacher.	2.67	0.516	3.95	0.860
I feel overwhelmed because my case load seems endless.	3.17	1.169	3.85	0.962
I feel “bogged down” by the system.	2.50	0.548	3.63	1.032
I am a very caring person.	1.17	0.408	1.59	0.591

Table 13

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Secondary Traumatic Stress of Novice Teachers and Experienced Teachers

Item	Novice Teachers (n=6)		Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience (n=59)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I am preoccupied with more than one person I teach.	4.17	0.983	3.88	1.052
I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.	2.83	0.753	2.66	0.779
I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a teacher.	3.00	0.894	3.00	0.965
I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I teach.	2.33	1.211	2.54	1.023
Because of my teaching, I have felt "on edge" about various things.	2.50	1.049	2.93	0.907
I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I teach.	1.83	0.753	2.22	0.767
I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have taught.	2.17	0.983	1.90	0.845
I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I teach.	1.17	0.408	1.54	0.678

As a result of my teaching, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.	1.33	0.516	1.59	0.833
I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.	1.83	0.408	1.92	0.816

Table 14

Two Tailed t-test Results for Novice Teachers and Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience for Compassion Satisfaction

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Novice Teachers	6	41.67	2.34	63	1.052	.30
Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience	59	39.27	5.50			

Note. * = $p < .05$

Table 15

Two Tailed t-test Results for Novice Teachers and Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience for Burnout

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Novice Teachers	6	20.33	3.62	63	-2.609	.01*
Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience	59	25.95	5.13			

Note. * = $p < .05$

Table 16

Two Tailed t-test Results for Novice Teachers and Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience for Secondary Traumatic Stress

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Novice Teachers	6	23.17	5.00	63	-0.432	.67
Teachers with 5 or More Years of Experience	59	24.19	5.55			

Note. * = $p < .05$

Research Question 4

How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between teacher roles?

Results. In regards to general education teachers and teachers in all other roles, a significant difference ($p < .05$) was noted for one subscale score, secondary traumatic stress, while no significance was noted for compassion satisfaction and burnout. On the compassion satisfaction subscale the 33 participants that teach in general education teachers ($M = 38.88$, $SD = 4.84$) demonstrated no significant difference compared to the 32 teachers that teach in any other role ($M = 40.13$, $SD = 5.78$) using a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -0.944$, $p = .35$. Both group subscale averages fell at the high end of the average range (23 to 41 as defined by the instrument).

Research demonstrated no significant difference on the burnout subscale for general education teachers ($M = 25.09$, $SD = 5.81$) when compared to teachers that teach in any other role ($M = 25.78$, $SD = 4.67$) on a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -0.527$, $p = .60$. The average subscale score for burnout of both groups rests strongly in the low end of average range of scores, which is between 23 and 41.

The final subscale is secondary traumatic stress. The secondary traumatic stress subscale score for general education teachers ($M = 22.70$, $SD = 5.89$) demonstrated a significant difference compared to teachers that teach any other role ($M = 25.53$, $SD = 6.68$) on a two tailed independent t-test, $t(63) = -2.144$, $p = .04$. The average of general education teachers fell in the low range (defined as 22 and below) for secondary traumatic stress, while teachers in all other roles fell in the average range (defined as 23-41). Results related to Question 4 are included on Tables 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

Table 17

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Compassion Satisfaction of General Education Teachers and Teachers in All other Roles

Item	General Education Teachers (n=33)		All Other Roles (n=32)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I get satisfaction from being able to teach people.	4.30	0.684	4.44	0.669
I feel invigorated after working with those I teach.	3.33	0.595	3.72	0.813
I like my work as a teacher.	4.12	0.696	4.16	0.723
I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with teaching techniques and protocols.	3.48	0.870	3.63	0.707
My work makes me feel satisfied.	3.70	0.637	3.75	0.762
I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I teach and how I could help them.	3.91	0.522	3.97	0.822
I believe I can make a difference through my work.	4.09	0.723	4.31	0.693
I am proud of what I can do to teach.	4.24	0.663	4.28	0.772
I have thoughts that I am a “success” as a teacher.	3.64	0.822	3.63	0.793
I am happy that I chose to do this work.	4.06	0.788	4.25	0.803

Table 18

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Burnout of General Education Teachers and Teachers in All other Roles

Item	General Education Teachers (n=33)		All Other Roles (n=32)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I am happy.	1.91	0.579	1.94	0.669
I feel connected to others.	1.97	0.684	2.09	0.856
I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I teach.	2.09	0.843	2.47	0.761
I feel trapped by my job as a teacher.	2.33	1.216	2.34	0.971
I have beliefs that sustain me.	1.73	0.626	1.78	0.941
I am the person I always wanted to be.	2.58	0.936	2.25	0.803
I feel worn out because of my work as a teacher.	3.82	0.983	3.84	0.847
I feel overwhelmed because my case load seems endless.	3.61	1.059	3.97	0.897
I feel “bogged down” by the system.	3.42	1.146	3.63	0.942
I am a very caring person.	1.64	0.603	1.47	0.567

Table 19

Professional Quality of Life Scale Individual Question Responses for Secondary Traumatic Stress of General Education Teachers and Teachers in All other Roles

Item	General Education Teachers (n=33)		All Other Roles (n=32)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I am preoccupied with more than one person I teach.	3.91	1.071	3.91	1.027
I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.	2.52	0.712	2.84	0.808
I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a teacher.	2.85	1.093	3.16	0.767
I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I teach.	2.33	1.051	2.72	0.991
Because of my teaching, I have felt "on edge" about various things.	2.76	1.001	3.03	0.822
I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I teach.	2.06	0.788	2.31	0.738
I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have taught.	1.79	0.927	2.06	0.759
I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I teach.	1.36	0.699	1.66	0.602

As a result of my teaching, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.	1.42	0.751	1.72	0.851
I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.	1.70	0.637	2.13	0.871

Table 20

Two Tailed t-test Results for General Education Teachers and Teachers in All Other Roles for Compassion Satisfaction

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
General Education Teachers	33	38.88	4.84	63	-0.944	.35
All Other Roles	32	40.13	5.78			

Note. * = $p < .05$

Table 21

Two Tailed t-test Results for General Education Teachers and Teachers in All Other Roles for Burnout

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
General Education Teachers	33	25.09	5.81	63	-0.527	.60
All Other Roles	32	25.78	4.67			

Note. * = p < .05

Table 22

Two Tailed t-test Results for General Education Teachers and Teachers in All Other Roles for Secondary Traumatic Stress

	n	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
General Education Teachers	33	22.70	5.89	63	-2.144	.04*
All Other Roles	32	25.53	6.68			

Note. * = p < .05

Conclusion

This study explored teacher perception of professional quality of life and whether teacher self-perception of professional quality of life differed according to teacher characteristics. Teacher characteristics investigated in this study were teachers in Title I and non-Title I buildings, teachers with less than five years of teaching experience and teachers that have taught five or more years, and general education teachers and teachers in all other roles. Chapter Five presents an overview of the study, conclusions, and discussions.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers have the greatest impact of any other factors on the achievement of students (Hattie, 2003). Teachers are responsible for planning and teaching, assessing, and participating in professional responsibilities such as professional learning. Teachers are responsible for educating every student they work with and meeting individual student needs. Teachers are responsible for academics, supporting emotional needs, and meeting the behavioral needs of students. Teachers are responsible for professional growth to stay abreast on current research based teaching methods and technology. And at times, teachers are responsible for supporting families and meeting students' basic needs (Rankin, 2017; The Current State of Teacher Burnout in America, 2019). The job of a teacher is all encompassing, and may lead teachers to experience burnout. Because teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement, retaining and supporting successful teachers is essential for school districts.

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher self-perceptions of professional quality of life, and if teacher self-perception of professional quality of life differs according to teacher characteristics. Consisting of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, professional quality of life measures how a person in a helping profession feels about their work. This study explored whether differences in professional quality of life occurred between teachers in Title I schools and non-Title I schools, teachers that have taught for five years or more and novice teachers, and between general education teachers and teachers in all other roles.

Professional quality of life refers to how a person in a helping profession feels about their job. Teaching is a helping profession, which is defined as "occupations that

provide health and education services to individuals and groups, including occupations in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, counseling, medicine, nursing, social work, physical and occupational therapy, teaching, and education" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020). Professional quality of life is composed of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, which has two factors. The factors of compassion fatigue are burnout and secondary traumatic stress. For a person in a helping profession, experiencing high compassion satisfaction with low burnout and secondary traumatic stress is optimal (Beaumont, Durkin, Hollins, & Carson, 2016).

Compassion satisfaction describes the positive feelings a person in a helping profession feels about their ability to help others (Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, & Segal, 2015). Compassion fatigue is composed of burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout is a psychological condition brought on by overwork, physical exhaustion, and professional frustration. Burnout is affected by job responsibilities, such as professional learning and assessment, as well as school culture, relationships with colleagues, and support of school leadership. A teacher experiencing burnout may experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). Symptoms of burnout may include exhaustion and insomnia, lack of motivation, feeling emotionally and physically drained, and a desire to remain distant from other people, especially colleagues. Secondary traumatic stress is a natural response to knowing about the trauma of a traumatized person and wanting or trying to help the person (Figley, 2002). Secondary traumatic stress may cause a teacher to only see negative in the world, feel emotionally numb,

experience anxiety or depressed feelings, and have difficulty doing one's job (Craun & Bourke, 2015).

Title I schools are schools that receive additional funding to support student achievement due to a high population of students living in low income households. Additional funding is provided to support the academic achievement of students because children living in poverty may face educational disadvantages (Liu, 2008; Title I, Part A Program, 2015). Title I schools are required to spend funding provided on researched based practices that seek to increase the academic achievement of students. Students attending Title I schools are more likely to speak a language other than English at home, possibly leading to a limited vocabulary and difficulty communicating with families. It is less likely that a student from a low income family will attend preschool before kindergarten or have parents that have attended higher education (Evans & Radina, 2014; Vernaza, 2012). Students and families may need support to attain basic needs such as food and clothing. Students may also experience behavioral struggles that further inhibit academic achievement (Stichter, Stormont, & Lewis, 2009). Title I schools receive funding to address student needs and ensure academic success. Four schools participated in this study, two Title I and two non-Title I.

Throughout a teacher's career a teacher moves through several stages and develops differently. Teachers move fluidly in and out of career stages and experience varying attitudes, levels of knowledge, behaviors, and self-efficacy in each stage (Weasmer, Woods, & Coburn, 2008). While new teachers often benefit from mentor programs, those programs end after the first few years of teaching leaving teachers to continue learning and growing without mentor support. Regardless of stage, every

teacher needs support from colleagues and leaders to thrive as an educator, maintain a positive professional quality of life, and ensure high student achievement. This study explored whether differences were present between teachers' self-perception of professional quality of life depending on teacher characteristics, such as teachers in Title I and non-Title I buildings, novice teachers and experienced teachers, and general education teachers and teachers in other roles.

This study was a quantitative study exploring teacher self-perception of professional quality of life. Data was collected using the Professional Quality of Life Scale (See Appendix A). Data was gathered from 65 certified teachers in four elementary schools. The 65 teachers completed the Professional Quality of Life Scale, which consisted of thirty questions and produced a subscale for compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress for each teacher. The Professional Quality of Life Scale is used to determine professional quality of life for people working in helping professions. Helping professions are defined as professions that provide health and education to individuals or groups, including teachers. A statistical analysis of the data was completed using t-tests and Pearson correlations. The findings collected in the surveys have been presented in Chapter IV.

This study was completed in the Spring of 2020. That Spring all aspects of life, including school, were affected by Coronavirus. Nationwide Coronavirus brought businesses and schools to a halt in an attempt to limit the spread of the virus. The survey for this study was sent to participants a week prior to the school district closing down due to Coronavirus. The survey was open for three weeks and about half of participants completed the survey prior to the district closing and half completed the survey after it

was announced that the district would be closed. The closure did not affect teacher responses on the survey.

Conclusions

What are elementary teachers' self-perceptions of professional quality of life? Survey data for all participants in the survey demonstrated positive results. The average score of all participants in each of the subscale areas, compassion satisfaction (M = 39.49, SD = 5.32), burnout (M = 25.43, SD = 5.25), and secondary traumatic stress (M = 24.09, SD = 5.48), was within the average range as defined by the instrumentation (scores of 23-41). Results of this study signal that although the work of being a teacher is all encompassing and may be difficult, the teachers surveyed are coping. Teachers are provided with the support necessary to do the job of a teacher without reporting high levels of burnout. There is the possibility that the teachers experiencing higher levels of burnout did not complete the survey, as it was another task to complete; however the research highlights that teachers may be experiencing adequate support from colleagues and leaders.

In the area of compassion satisfaction, participating teachers answered ten questions. The survey items with the highest average responses were questions relating to the essence of being a teacher and wanting to do the job. Survey questions were answered on a 5 point Likert scale to identify how frequently they have experienced each item in the last thirty days (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often). The survey items for compassion satisfaction with the highest average responses were:

- I get satisfaction from being a teacher (M = 4.37, SD = 0.675).
- I believe I can make a difference through my work (M = 4.20, SD = 0.712).

- I am proud of what I can do to teach (M = 4.26, SD = 0.713).
- I am happy I chose to do this work (M = 4.15, SD = 0.795).

Teachers also reported higher average scores on several of the burnout sub-section items. Participants answered survey items using a 5 point Likert scale to identify how frequently they have experienced each item in the last thirty days (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often). All three items that averaged higher were related to the amount of work and exhaustion of teaching. The burnout survey items with the highest averages were:

- I feel worn out because of my work as a teacher (M = 3.83, SD = 0.911).
- I feel overwhelmed because my caseload seems endless (M = 3.78, SD = 0.992).
- I feel "bogged down" by the system (M = 3.52, SD = 1.047).

Those survey results demonstrate a high level of belief in teaching as a profession and desire to do the work. Teachers often go into the teaching profession with a desire to help or serve others and make a difference (Rankin, 2016). Though teachers may feel overworked, overwhelmed, and worn out, the satisfaction of knowing that the opportunity is there to positively impact the lives of students, and possibly an intrinsic inclination to make a difference, counteracts the effects of the work.

How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between Title and non-Title settings? Survey data for this study demonstrated no significant differences in professional quality of life between teachers in Title I schools and teachers in non-Title I schools. However, no significance does not equal no difference. Title I and non-Title I schools are different by definition. Title I schools have more students that come from low income families. However, Title I schools also have additional support

available due to Title I funding. For instance, a Title I school may have additional teachers to meet the needs of struggling students, counseling resources, access to resources such as food banks to meet the basic needs of families, and additional classroom support staff. While a non-Title I school has fewer students from low income families, there may still be a significant number of students in need of additional support, but the school lacks the additional resources and personnel to serve students, leaving the responsibilities to the classroom teacher. While difficulties are faced by teachers in both schools, the challenges are different.

The results of this study did not demonstrate a significant difference in the compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress of teachers. No significant difference ($t(63) = 0.662$, $p = .51$) was noted in the area of compassion satisfaction for teachers in Title I schools ($M = 39.06$, $SD = 4.65$) and non-Title I schools ($M = 39.94$, $SD = 5.73$). In addition, no significant difference ($t(63) = -0.319$, $p = .75$) was demonstrated on the burnout sub-scale for Title I ($M = 25.64$, $SD = 4.94$) teachers and non-Title I ($M = 25.22$, $SD = 5.87$) teachers. Finally, no significant difference ($t(63) = -0.584$, $p = .56$) was indicated between Title I teachers ($M = 24.49$, $SD = 5.03$) and non-Title I teachers ($M = 23.69$, $SD = 5.96$) in the area of secondary traumatic stress. These results differ from other studies that have demonstrated a higher level of burnout and leaving the profession among teachers in Title I settings. One report suggested turnover rates are 50% higher in Title I schools (Pircon, 2019). As districts have some autonomy to determine how and on what Title I funds are spent, this discrepancy may indicate success in the choices made by the participating district from this study. Teachers in both settings appear to have the support necessary to meet the needs of

students and complete job responsibilities without reporting burnout. While the support needed in each building for each teacher may differ, the district has seemingly met those needs for teachers. Further research regarding the utilization of Title I funds and the effectiveness of various methods of spending would be beneficial to school leaders in order to determine both what methods are resulting in higher student achievement as well as retaining teachers in the profession.

How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between novice teachers and teachers that have taught for more than five years? For this study, 65 teachers completed the Professional Quality of Life Scale. Of the teachers that completed the survey, 6 teachers had taught 4 years or less, while 59 had been teaching 5 or more years. While a small percentage of the participants in this study were novice teachers, the voice of every novice teacher is vital due to the high number of teachers leaving the profession in the first 5 years of teaching. Any information suggesting why novice teachers are leaving the profession, and what can be done to alleviate the problem is useful information for schools and further research.

Research has shown that an alarming percentage of teachers leave the teaching profession in the first five year of teaching. New research indicates around 17% of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Pircon, 2019). This may be due to a lack of understanding of the scope of the job, the behavior of students, or a demanding schedule (Rankin, 2017). Whatever the cause, novice teachers nationally are leaving the profession early, and that costs schools billions of dollars (Pircon, 2019; Rankin, 2017). However, this study demonstrated some differing results. Novice teachers ($M = 41.67$, $SD = 2.34$) in this study reported higher averages than experienced teachers ($M = 39.27$,

SD = 5.50) on the compassion subscale score, and on individual compassion satisfaction subscale items. Still, both groups fell strongly within the average range (23-41) for compassion satisfaction.

A significant difference ($t(63) = -2.609$, $p = .01$) was observed between the novice ($M = 20.33$, $SD = 3.62$) and experienced teachers ($M = 25.95$, $SD = 5.13$) in the area of burnout. Experienced teachers demonstrated a higher average burnout subscale score, and higher average scores on the survey items specifically related to being overworked. While there was not a significant difference (t-test, $t(63) = -0.432$, $p = .67$) between novice teachers ($M = 23.17$, $SD = 5.00$) and experienced teachers ($M = 24.19$, $SD = 5.55$) on the secondary traumatic stress subsection, experienced teachers did demonstrate higher averages on survey items related to being able to separate from the job and being preoccupied.

The results of this study for burnout and secondary traumatic stress seem to indicate that while the novice and experienced participants experience compassion satisfaction, the experienced teachers identified an increased feeling of exhaustion, overwork, and inability to disconnect. A strong mentor program may support new teachers and provide so many resources that new teachers feel appropriately supported. It is also possible that some teachers that have taught more than five years are asked to be a mentor, therefore adding additional work to an already full plate. New teachers may not have the experience to fully understand the depth of responsibility of a teacher and therefore live in the day-to-day of teaching without time to worry about new curriculum, participate on committees, or feel the pressures of the system of education. Regardless of the rationale, this study identifies a need to consider if appropriate resources are being

provided to support all teachers to thrive in the profession, while continuing to recognize the importance of supporting new teachers. Since burnout can be experienced early on in a career or built up throughout a career, further research into when teachers begin experiencing burnout symptoms, factors that influence burnout, and supports that prevent burnout is vital. Further research may decrease the financial loss school systems experience and the negative effects teacher turnover has on student achievement.

How does teacher self-perception of professional quality of life compare between teacher roles? For the purpose of this study, participants identified themselves as general education teachers or a teacher in all other teaching roles. General education teachers were described as classroom teachers in grades Pre-Kindergarten through six, while all other teaching roles represented any teacher that was not a classroom teacher for preschool through sixth grade. In an elementary setting, a general education teacher teaches the same group of students the majority of the day. Teachers in other roles may teach different small groups of students throughout the day, work with individual students, or teach one subject to classes and work with several classes each day. While there was no significant difference is the data for compassion satisfaction ($t(63) = -0.944$, $p = .35$) and burnout ($t(63) = -0.527$, $p = .60$), a significant difference was present in the area of secondary traumatic stress ($t(63) = -2.144$, $p = .04$). The absence of significant differences between the two groups in compassion satisfaction and burnout again points to the conclusion that while teachers in different roles may face different challenges, all teachers are in jeopardy of experiencing burnout and benefit from high levels of compassion satisfaction.

This study showed teachers in roles outside of general education (M = 25.53, SD = 6.68) experienced higher levels of secondary traumatic stress than general education teachers (M = 22.70, SD = 5.89). A significant difference was observed between general education teachers and teachers in all other roles in the area of secondary traumatic stress. Secondary traumatic stress refers specifically to when someone in a helping profession suffers due to exposure to the trauma of someone the person works with. Due to the nature of their job responsibilities, general education teachers may have more opportunities for training in the area of student trauma than teachers in other roles. Therefore, general education teachers may feel more prepared to cope with exposure to the trauma of students, as well as more prepared to seek out resources to support students and families. Teachers in other roles will often spend less time with students, working in small groups or rotating classes throughout the day. Students may be less likely to share traumatic events with teachers they spend less time with. However, when a student does share a traumatic event, a teacher without adequate training may struggle with the proper procedures to support the student. When traumatic events do arise, building leaders may automatically seek to provide support to the general education teacher, while inadvertently neglecting to support all teachers that may be affected. This research demonstrated that teachers in all roles have similar perceptions of professional quality of life. Further research is necessary to explore if similar results are identified in larger school districts and secondary schools.

Discussion

This study explored teacher self-perception of professional quality of life and whether differences occurred between various teacher characteristics. Though the overall

results of this study were positive, a higher percentage of participants did identify areas such as feeling overwhelmed and worn out as concerns. In addition, the data demonstrated areas of significant differences according to teacher characteristics. Due to the findings of this study, it is evident that all teachers require support from colleagues and leaders, professional learning, and a feeling of connectedness in order to thrive as a teacher. Differences may occur in the type of support and learning teachers require due to both internal and external factors. In order to retain effective teachers that are capable of ensuring high student achievement, school leaders have a responsibility to explore factors that may affect teacher success.

Teacher Locus of Control. Locus of control is a construct that refers to a person's perception about the causes of life events (Joelson, 2017) Human behavior is guided by rewards and punishments, and people have personal beliefs about actions and their causes. A person either has an internal locus of control, behavior driven by personal decisions or actions, or external locus of control, behavior driven by fate or luck (Joelson, 2017). A person with an internal locus of control believes the success and failures of life are due to effort and ability, while a person with an external locus of control believes fate and luck are responsible for the successes and failures of life (Cook, 2012; Joelson, 2017). Both have intricacies and neither should be considered more positive than the other.

In regards to this study, there may be a correlation between teachers experiencing compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. It is possible teachers who reported higher levels of burnout may be more likely to have external locus of control because they believe challenges are being inflicted on them with little or no

personal control (Conley & You, 2014). People with external locus of control are more likely to experience anxiety because they have no control over life. As teachers, people with external locus of control may not believe their actions and efforts have any effect on student achievement or behavior. This may lead to a teacher feeling a disconnect from the profession, and may lead to higher levels of burnout (Cook, 2012). On the other hand, teachers with an internal locus of control believe personal effort and responsibility will lead to success. Teachers with an internal locus of control may have more confidence and sense of belief in their ability, as well as believe that their teaching practices and effort will be evident in student learning (Cook, 2012). Teachers with an internal locus of control may have more positive feelings about their work. As a component of a person's personality, locus of control could help explain why people react to and respond to stress (Conley & You, 2014).

"Teachers enter the teaching profession with selfless intentions" (Rankin, 2016). Teachers want to make a difference in students' lives. However, locus of control is a personality component shaped throughout childhood and part of who a teacher is, and therefore regardless of positive intent, it may have an effect on teacher effectiveness. In this study, higher averages in areas of compassion satisfaction focused on being proud of work and happy with the opportunity to teach demonstrates the overall nature of teachers. Yet, for some teachers that desire to help and serve may be overcome by the vast responsibilities of the job. Those teachers may be more likely to have an external locus of control and believe the negative aspects of teaching happen to them or are placed on them by the system of education.

To have highly effective teachers in every classroom, school leaders must understand locus of control as one of the many personality characteristics that affect a teacher's ability to thrive as a teacher. Because locus of control is shaped throughout childhood, school leaders need to understand the construct and how to help teachers early in the career cycle to navigate locus of control. Mentoring programs, coaching, and evaluations provide opportunities for leaders to support new teachers in understanding the importance of effective planning, meaningful instruction, and reflection.

A leader can work through evaluation processes and coaching to guide all teachers in self-reflection. Self-reflection centered on classroom practices will benefit students and teachers by paving the way to adjustment and growth. Through self-reflection a teacher may be able to use research and data to identify successes and needs in the classroom and adjust teaching accordingly. Self-reflection may prove easier for those with an internal locus of control, but is a vital process for all educators in order to make the connection between teaching actions and student achievement. As teachers and leaders work through self-reflection together, teachers may recognize natural autonomy in the job. Research shows that burnout is positively countered by feeling connected and in control of one's work (Conley & You, 2014). "Continual self-evaluation might encourage adjustments to be made to one's overall sense of control in life, with well-being and favorable affective reactions to work experienced as a result (Conley & You, 2014)."

Navigating Complicated and Complex School Systems. School systems are a complicated and complex external factor in teacher success. Educating students is a massive undertaking that necessitates merging legislation, finance, curriculum,

assessment, facilities, transportation, and the list could go on. Part of being a teacher is navigating the system of education, while focusing on the everyday work of teaching children. For some teachers, navigating the system is one of the more difficult aspects of being a teacher. Three items from the survey in this study repeatedly demonstrated higher averages than other items. These items were focused on being worn out, overwhelmed, and bogged down by the system. The system is the complicated web of necessary elements that affect what teachers do every day and that teachers may not always understand or be a part of.

Teachers make a multitude of decisions in the classroom every minute, and each decision affects student learning. However, decisions are constantly made at the district level that define the decisions teachers are able to make. For instance, curriculum may be chosen by the district for teachers to use to teach math. Once purchased, a teacher can make decisions on how to teach what is in the curriculum but is not given a choice in using the chosen curriculum. Teachers are educated professionals. They must have college or university degrees and meet many requirements to become certified (Rankin, 2016). Therefore, teachers are also an asset to school districts. When appropriate, inviting teachers to participate in the decision making process gives teachers a voice, creates teacher buy-in, and builds teacher leadership.

Teacher leaders are an invaluable resource for school districts. Building teacher leaders provides school districts with individuals that are willing to serve on committees, share teacher insights, and bridge the gap between the district system and school personnel. Bridging that gap may support teachers in feeling less bogged down by the

school system due to a greater understanding of how decisions were made and feeling represented in the decision making process.

The benefits of building teacher leadership within a school system are vast. If teacher leaders are given the opportunity to grow as leaders and educators, they will more likely feel proud and connected to their work, thus having a higher level of compassion satisfaction and job satisfaction. More teachers experiencing high levels of satisfaction in their work means less teachers experiencing burnout or leaving the profession of teaching. The communication and connection that can be built by districts working with teacher leaders is beneficial to all teachers. All teachers could experience higher job satisfaction if they feel more capable to keep up with new initiatives, experience greater voice in decision making, and have a sense of support for their work.

Involving teacher leaders in the school district system is beneficial to school districts as well. Districts have the opportunity to improve operations and positively influence student achievement by learning from teachers and using their expertise. Communication between leadership and teachers is a factor in burnout, and teacher leaders can help support improved district communication. In addition, teachers leaving the profession prior to retirement is costly for districts. Retaining high quality, effective teachers, and continuing to support the growth of those teachers, is financially vital for school districts.

Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence is how a person understands and manages emotions, and in turn is able to understand and empathize with the emotions of others (Patti, Holzer, Stern, Floman, & Brackett, 2018). This study began with an emotional intelligence framework that suggested the social emotional learning of students

is a vital component of education today, and the emotional intelligence of teachers and leaders is key to retaining thriving teachers and ensuring effective social emotional education for students. Teachers are often responsible for incorporating social emotional learning into the classroom. In order to effectively guide students through social emotional learning and demonstrate appropriate actions for students, teachers must understand emotional intelligence and their own strengths and needs. In turn, in order to support teachers and retain effective teachers, school leaders must have a high level of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence includes stress management, emotional awareness, communication, and relationship management. The relationship between emotional intelligence and professional quality of life is evident. Healthy communication and relationships with colleagues has a positive effect on compassion satisfaction and burnout. As this study demonstrated, teachers often feel overworked and worn out, even without reporting high burnout. Stress management may be key in overwhelmed teachers having the ability to experience and recover from symptoms of burnout without considering leaving the profession or experiencing a decrease in effectiveness in the classroom.

Schools districts and school leaders should consider professional learning in the area of emotional intelligence an investment. Learning could include relationship building, being aware of signs or symptoms of burnout, effective communication strategies, and self-care. Time for professional learning is scarce, and it may seem counterproductive to take time away from curriculum, data, or technology; however time spent on emotional intelligence has the opportunity to improve teaching capacity in all of

those areas over time. A teacher that understands how to deal with the stress of teaching is more likely to positively deal with stress and therefore have more time to spend on curriculum and technology, and remain an effective teacher.

In order to effectively provide professional learning and lead teachers, school and district leaders would benefit from training as well. Leaders should participate in emotional intelligence training and look for indicators signaling that staff need additional support or intervention. Responsibility lies with leaders to notice teachers that are struggling, in the short or long term, and have the capacity to provide support or direct a teacher to appropriate resources. A school leader's job is to ensure positive learning experiences for students and high student achievement. If leaders are aware teachers suffering from burnout are less likely to be having a positive effect in the classroom, then leaders must have the tools to address teacher needs.

In the end, teachers leaving early in their career or leaving the profession prior to retirement is costly to the school district. There are financial costs from recruiting and training teachers, but there are costs to schools and students as well. Teachers build relationships over time with colleagues, and those relationships have a positive effect on teaching. Teachers also grow their professional expertise over time, when teachers leave, so does their knowledge. Time spent training teachers and leaders in emotional intelligence may lead to more effective, productive teachers in classrooms.

Summary

"Teaching is one of the most difficult yet most rewarding career paths a professional can take" (The Current State of Teacher Burnout in America, 2019). Few things in life are more important than the education of a child. Education opens the doors

to infinite possibilities for students. Knowing the importance of education, and considering an effective teacher is the most influential factor in student achievement, schools, districts, and school leaders must make retaining effective teachers a priority. In order to achieve that, leaders must understand the needs of teachers and have the capacity to support teachers. The quality of life of teachers must be a primary consideration of school districts. If not, students, achievement, and education will suffer.

Appendix A

Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue
(ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)

When you *[help]* people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you *[help]* can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some-questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a *[helper]*. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the *last 30 days*.

1=Never	2=Rarely	3=Sometimes	4=Often	5=Very Often

_____ 1. I am happy.
_____ 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I *[help]*.
_____ 3. I get satisfaction from being able to *[help]* people.
_____ 4. I feel connected to others.
_____ 5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
_____ 6. I feel invigorated after working with those I *[help]*.
_____ 7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a *[helper]*.
_____ 8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I *[help]*.
_____ 9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I *[help]*.
_____ 10. I feel trapped by my job as a *[helper]*.
_____ 11. Because of my *[helping]*, I have felt "on edge" about various things.
_____ 12. I like my work as a *[helper]*.
_____ 13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I *[help]*.
_____ 14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have *[helped]*.
_____ 15. I have beliefs that sustain me.
_____ 16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with *[helping]* techniques and protocols.
_____ 17. I am the person I always wanted to be.
_____ 18. My work makes me feel satisfied.
_____ 19. I feel worn out because of my work as a *[helper]*.
_____ 20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I *[help]* and how I could help them.
_____ 21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless.
_____ 22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
_____ 23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I *[help]*.
_____ 24. I am proud of what I can do to *[help]*.
_____ 25. As a result of my *[helping]*, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
_____ 26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.
_____ 27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a *[helper]*.
_____ 28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
_____ 29. I am a very caring person.
_____ 30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.

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