

SCHOOL COUNSELORS PROMOTING SELF-CARE: AN ACTION BASED RESEARCH
PROJECT

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Lorraine Gladys Albrecht

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major Program:
Counselor Education & Supervision

June 2021

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

SCHOOL COUNSELORS PROMOTING SELF-CARE: AN ACTION BASED
STUDY

By

Lorraine Gladys Albrecht

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota
State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Jill Nelson

Chair

Dr. Jodi Tangen

Dr. Carol Buchholz Holland

Dr. Christine Weber Knopp

Approved:

July 15, 2021

Date

Dr. Jill Nelson

Department Chair

ABSTRACT

Now, more than ever, teachers are experiencing many daily demands, sometimes with limited resources or support. Teachers and school staff are expected to play a significant role in modeling positive social and emotional behaviors through supportive student relationships, yet those adults may be experiencing distress due to stress or anxiety and are most likely the ones most in need of support (Gordon & Turner, 2011).

The People Project is a project that focuses on promoting health through happiness in Cass County of North Dakota and Clay County of Minnesota. The foundation of the People Project is based on the work of Martin Seligman, an American Psychologist known for his work with positive psychology and wellbeing. In his book, *Flourish* (2011) Seligman wrote about “Wellbeing Theory”. In *Flourish*, Seligman (2011) breaks down happiness into workable terms such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). Using PERMA as a framework, leaders of the People Project developed practices designed to address the elements of PERMA.

The goal of the research was to identify how the simple wellbeing practices of People Project have an impact on work-setting, happiness, and wellbeing for secondary educators. An action-based research project informed by phenomenology was used to explore the research question, how did teachers at the secondary level experience the People Project? Four themes emerged along with several subthemes. The four main themes that emerged were (1) insight into the behaviors of self and others, (2) vulnerability and risk-taking (3) intentionality and (4) culture, along with several subthemes

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my friends, family, and dissertation committee for all of the love and support that you have given me throughout this process. Thank you to my partner, Eric, for supporting me through the last challenges of my program and dissertation. It was a wild ride with a global pandemic and A LOT of life “stuff” that happened in the midst of all of it. I know there were many times that my stress level affected all of us and I am thankful to have had you there as a sounding board with your continued encouragement. I appreciate you more than you know.

Thank you to my kids’ dad, Brett, for your support and flexibility throughout the entire 7 years it took me to complete this degree! You never hesitated to pick up the slack during those semesters when I had more credits and classes. I can never thank you enough for continuing to support me even after we were no longer together. I am beyond lucky to have you as my co-parent and as the father of our children.

Thank you to my children, Adelei and Beckett, for ALWAYS believing in your mom! You were pretty young when I started the program and really didn’t comprehend mom going back to school. As you got older I know it was confusing why I was even back in school and as you have gotten even older I feel the love and support from both of you! It’s been a crazy year with so many changes in our lives and you know I have been stressed and working hard so your words of encouragement are VERY appreciated! I love you both to the moon and back!

Thank you to my bonus children, Tyson, and Macie, for always knowing when I needed time and space to get my work done and respecting that! Unfortunately, you didn’t come into my life until the last few years when it was even more stressful and yet you still loved and supported

me through it all! I am so thankful that I get to be a part of your lives now and watch you grow into amazing adults! Love you both so much!

I would like to thank my parents, Charles, and Loretta. Although neither of you ever had the slightest idea about half of what I was talking about with school stuff, yet you were always supportive and encouraging. Dad, as much as it hurts me to know that you never got to see me FINALLY finish and walk across the stage, I know you are watching from above. I have thought of you a lot in this last year and I can hear you pushing me forward, I miss you SO MUCH every day. Mom, you have always been one of my biggest cheerleaders and I am so thankful for that!

Thank you to Dr. Nelson, my advisor for all the drafts and expertise you were able to share with me. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Carol Buchholz Holland, Dr. Jodi Tangen, and Dr. Christine Weber Knopp. You all made the whole process so much more enjoyable than I ever imagined it could be! A special thank you to Dr. James Korcuska who helped me through so many life events throughout this entire program. You may not know this, but you made a HUGE impact on my life, and I am forever in debt to you and the guidance you gave me through some really difficult times.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ABSTRACT..... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iv |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..... | 8 |
| CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS..... | 22 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS..... | 34 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION..... | 50 |
| REFERENCES | 59 |
| APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS | 62 |
| APPENDIX B. FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE | 63 |
| APPENDIX C. RECRUITMENT EMAIL..... | 64 |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teachers' mental health has implications for students' academic achievement, as well as social emotional development and mental health. Research shows that the daily stress and anxiety that teachers experience puts them at a higher risk of common mental health disorders compared to workers in other professions (Eaton et al., 1990; Johnson et al., 2005; Stansfeld et al., 2011; Wieclaw et al. 2005).

It is for these reasons that it is important to attend to the mental health of teachers to avoid long-lasting detrimental mental health effects for both teachers and students. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between poor mental health and absenteeism of teachers (Ever et al., 2014; Husse et al., 2012; Jain et al., 2013). In the world of education these outcomes in turn have large consequences for the students they teach. According to Sisask et al. (2014), poor wellbeing reduces teachers' belief that they can help students with emotional or behavioral problems. Poor teacher-student relationships have been found to be associated with childhood psychiatric disorder as well as exclusion from school three years later (Lang et al., 2013). Conversely, positive teacher-student relationships predict lower student depression and can mitigate the effects of poverty.

According to Michie and Williams (2003), poor wellbeing, that is work-related, tends to be due to long hours worked, work overload and pressure, lack of control over work, lack of participation in decision-making, poor social support, and unclear management. Teaching and social care occupations tend to share higher rates of poor wellbeing due to an elevated level of "emotional labor" that is needed in their roles. Emotional labor is defined as "the process by which workers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined rules and guidelines" (Wharton, 2009, p. 77). Regarding teachers, most of their work

involves face to face interaction with both students and families, which in turn requires the teacher to manage and control any expressive emotions during these interactions.

Although there appears to be significant research on the effects of the elevated levels of stress and sometimes poor wellbeing that teachers experience, there is little research on the wellbeing of educators. Due to burnout being so high among educators, we needed to find a way to help teachers cope. We found the People Project as a means of doing that. The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers experienced the People Project.

How we found the People Project

ReThink Mental Health is an organization that was formed in the Fargo Moorhead area in 2013 after a Community Health Needs Assessment found mental health as a priority health concern. Community leaders began working together to ‘rethink’ the way in which our systems ran and wanted to put a focus on prevention and community flourishing, rather than continuing to only be reactive to crisis. ReThink Mental Health has done substantial work in the FM area since it began. One of those endeavors was collaborating with other agencies to form Building Compassionate Schools.

Building compassionate schools

Building Compassionate Schools (BCS) is a training that is hosted at Dakota Medical Foundation (DMF) building by Southeast Education Cooperative. BCS holds workshops four times throughout the year with several topics presented to aid school teams in continuing to learn, teach and support their colleagues in trauma. Topics include things such as: Implementation of Trauma Sensitive Schools, Restorative Practices in Schools, Social and Emotional Learning 2.0 and Taking Care of Yourself and Staff just to name a few.

BCS has been active for three years, building upon the topics and discussion from the previous year as well as continuing to bring in new school teams each year. I had the opportunity to be a part of the school team that attended BCS for its pilot year as well as the following two years. The presentations typically happened in the mornings, giving us all afternoon to collaborate and brainstorm about ways to use the information we had learned within our own unique buildings.

The last session of the first year of BCS was titled, Taking Care of Yourself and Staff. The presenter was an individual named Dr. Corey Martin from Buffalo, MN. Dr. Martin shared a community wide project in Buffalo called Bounce Back. He shared how and why he and his community started the Bounce Back project along with its effectiveness to date.

The Bounce Back Project

Dr. Martin shared that in 2014 the hospital that he worked at in Buffalo, MN tragically lost two highly respected physicians, one in a motorcycle accident and another took his own life. It was devastating for both the hospital and the community due to Buffalo being a smaller town. Reeling from the losses he and his colleagues began to ask themselves what they needed to do to not only pause and re-evaluate how fragile life can be but to really evaluate the simple choices they made each day and how those choices affected their wellbeing.

A group of physicians attended a resilience conference that got them thinking how important that information could be for not only them but also for their community and patients. Around the same time, Dr. Martin also attended a workshop with Dr. Jill Nelson, a Professor at North Dakota State University, on the work of Brene Brown. Brene Brown is a professor, lecturer, author, and podcast host that is known for her research on shame, vulnerability, and

courage. Dr. Martin was so affected by the workshop and the research of Brene that he had invited Dr. Nelson to Buffalo to train others and the Bounce Back project began to unfold.

People Project

Shortly after Dr. Martin discussed the Bounce Back Project at Building Compassionate Schools a committee was formed to bring a similar concept to the FM area. The leaders of this project used the Bounce Back Project as a model to create something local. They used wellbeing as a focal point along with the works of Martin Seligman. In his book, *Flourish* (2011) Seligman wrote about “Wellbeing Theory”. In *Flourish*, Seligman (2011) breaks down happiness into workable terms such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). Using PERMA as a framework, leaders of the People Project developed practices designed to address the elements of PERMA. The leaders of the People Project defined positive emotions as, “emotions that contribute to a pleasant life”, engagement was defined as, “loss of self-consciousness during an activity, relationships were defined as other people that matter in our lives or “the connected life”, meaning was defined as “belonging to and serving something that is bigger than yourself”, and lastly accomplishment was defined as, “achievement pursued for its own sake”. The practices that were correlated to each element of PERMA included: kindness, gratitude, finding flow, connection, and values.

The leaders of the People Project were very intentional in the activities that they chose to address each of the elements of PERMA. The activity chosen to address kindness was random acts of kindness. Kiderra, (2010) found that acts of kindness can result in a helpers’ high that leads to more health benefits than from exercise or quitting smoking. People who receive acts of kindness often pay it forward which causes a ripple effect of kind acts. The most powerful way to increase your short-term feelings of happiness is to perform random acts of kindness for

others. Studies show that performing five acts of kindness a week will increase your happiness for up to three months (Kiderra, 2010).

Practicing gratitude was another activity designed to address the elements of PERMA. Gratitude is defined as the quality of being thankful; a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Physical benefits of gratitude include decreased depressive symptoms and increased feelings of wellbeing (Seligman, Peterson & Steen, 2005). Three good things were the activity chosen by the People Project to address gratitude. Participants were instructed to either write down three things that went well for them each day and why they went well or to download an app in which they could record three good things for each day. They were instructed to do this for at least a week. According to Seligman et al (2005), people who took part in three good things over the course of one week had increased scores on happiness scales and decreased depressive symptoms.

A third concept of PERMA is “finding your flow”, according to Seligman (2005), flow is the state of mind when you are fully immersed in a task and forget about the outside world for a while. He claims being in a flowing state leads to more happiness in life. Preconditions for a state of flow include being involved in an activity with a clear set of goals and progress, the task must have clear and immediate feedback, and there must be a good balance between the challenges of the task and one’s skills. The leaders of the People Project encouraged participants to identify an activity that they would lose themselves in to create flow. Some examples of flow that were supplied included coloring, yoga, gardening, home improvement projects, music, painting, etc.

The practice chosen to address connection consisted of participants learning how simple acts of connection and minor changes in their relationships could improve their wellbeing and

even help them live longer. In a world where we often substitute on-line communication for genuine connections, it is important to be reminded of why connections are vital. Basic connection practices given by creators of the People Project included keeping current friendships, rekindling old friendships, strengthening important relationships, and using social media with care.

The last practice introduced participants to discover their personal values and put those values into place. Participants found thoughts and behaviors to know that they were on the right track. Some examples of activities the People Project suggested to incorporate values into ordinary situations included bringing up values in conversation, comparing list of core values to actions at the end of the day, and writing your own commandments exercise to declare what is important in life and what one's life would stand for with the ability to choose.

Once a month for five months a new concept from PERMA and a corresponding activity or practice were introduced to staff. At the start of each monthly meeting, we discussed the previous month's PERMA element and activity. These discussions centralized around what they enjoyed about the practices and differences they observed in mood and behavior.

Statement of the problem

To avoid long-term detrimental mental health outcomes among teachers it is important to address and attend to their mental health needs (Melchior et al., 2007). Due to the daily demands placed on educational staff it is important for these educators to learn and practice self-care to remain in the field of education. New initiatives are constantly introduced in education, however, many of them are focused on student academics or student social emotional wellbeing. This research study was unique in that it focused on the wellbeing of the very educators that are tasked with caring for the academic and social wellbeing of

students. Educators were given the opportunity to take part in the People Project. This study looked at their experiences.

Purpose of study and research question

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of the educators who took part in the People Project. The present study features one research question. How did teachers at the secondary level experience the People Project?

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For this chapter I conducted a review of current and relevant literature on the topics addressed in this research, such as teacher burnout and stress, secondary traumatic stress, factors associated with educator burnout, and methods to support educators. The goals of this review of literature are to give the current research on the demands of teachers and the damage it causes to both mental and physical wellbeing as well as provide a rationale for the current research study. I will define stress, burnout, individual and school level factors affecting burnout, how burnout can affect physical and mental health, and secondary traumatic stress. I will also share literature about potential areas of support and prevention, including coping and wellness. Lastly, I will give an overview of different wellness models and how they affect levels of happiness and wellbeing.

According to Jalong & Heider (2006), as many as 46% of teachers leave within the first five years of teaching in the US. A large part of this attrition rate is due to work-related wellbeing and engagement at work. Wellbeing and engagement have traditionally been understood in terms of satisfaction at work, enjoyment of work, and happiness within the culture of one's organization (Foster, 2000). A teacher who is engaged and immersed in the culture of the school will have more positive intentions to remain in the field of education and lower levels of attrition.

Unfortunately, the current level of teacher disengagement affects the quality of students' learning experiences, especially in critical areas like relationship building. Underlining the new crisis of educator disengagement and stress, a recent Gallup poll found nearly half of US teachers are actively looking for a different job or looking for

opportunities to change professions (Gallup, 2014). For many would-be and existing educators, stressful circumstances suppress the joy and creativity of the profession.

Teacher stress and burnout

Teacher stress and burnout are leading factors to educators leaving the profession within five years. Events perceived as potential threats trigger a stress response within the human body. A stress response, commonly known as fight or flight response, is a series of psychological and physiological changes that occur within the body when a person perceives the demands placed on them are greater than their ability to cope. Using this definition, teacher stress could be due to the belief there is an imbalance between demands at school and the resources teachers have (Esteve, 2000; Troman & Woods, 2001). Symptoms of stress in teachers can include irritability, anxiety, frustration, impaired work performance and impaired relationships both at work and home (Kyriacou, 2001). Research has shown that teachers that experience stress over an extended period may also begin to experience burnout.

Maslach and Jackson (1981) refined the meaning of burnout to include three different sub-domains including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and having depleted one's emotional resources. Depersonalization refers to a negative, insensitive, and detached attitude towards the people one works with, i.e., patients, clients, or students. Reduced personal accomplishment refers to someone's negative self-evaluation in relation to their job performance (Schaufeli et al., 1993). Teachers may be at greater risk of depersonalization since most of their daily work tends to be individualized and in isolation from colleagues.

LeCompte and Dworkin (1991), developed a more extensive description of burnout as an extreme type of role-specific alienation with a focus on feelings of meaninglessness, especially as this applies to one's ability to successfully reach students, a finding also supported by Farber (1998). Additionally, a sense of both physical and mental exhaustion worsened by the belief that expectations for teachers are constantly in flux, or in conflict with previously held beliefs, has been cited by many researchers as influencing teacher burnout (Bullough & Baughmann, 1997; Brown & Ralph, 1998; Esteve, 2000; Hinton & Rotheiler, 1998; Troman & Woods, 2001).

Burnout results from the chronic belief that one is unable to cope with life's daily demands. Teachers must not only face a classroom full of students every day, but they also must interact with parents, administrators, counselors, and other teachers that could potentially be stressful. They also must deal with shrinking school budgets and strict standards of accountability.

Due to the above-named issues, it is no wonder that many teachers experience burnout and leave the profession within five years. Interventions such as allowing teachers more autonomy and teaching them proper self-care strategies are essential to keep them within the field of education. By teaching educators, the simple wellbeing practices of People Project, the hope is that it gives more educators the skills and tools necessary to take care of themselves in such an emotionally demanding career.

Physical effects of burnout (quality of life)

Stress, a widespread problem among teachers, may have grave consequences for not only their mental and emotional wellbeing but their physical health as well. According to Yang et al. (2009), it has been well-documented that teachers tend to have a higher prevalence of anxiety, hypertension, headaches, psychological disorders, and cardiovascular disease as

compared to other workers. A lower quality of life (QOL) and a shorter life expectancy have also been reported due to the extreme occupational stress teachers' experience.

According to Yang et al. (2009), gender and age were found to be key factors of QOL (quality of life) in teachers. Gender was found to have the most effect on physical health. Female teachers reported poorer physical health and higher occupational stress than their male counterparts. Age was also a factor that affected QOL. This could be that younger teachers have less experience, feel a lower level of accomplishment compared to more experienced teachers and evaluate themselves as having weaker skills or abilities.

It is my belief that the activities and practices of the People Project, specifically the activity chosen to address accomplishment, could greatly help teachers feel more confident and accomplished. The concept of accomplishment is addressed with the activities correlated with finding flow and values. These practices could aid teachers in finding meaning and engagement in their careers.

Evidence provided by Yang et al. (2009) reported that teachers tend to have lower QOL compared to other occupations supports those teachers should be given more help to improve their wellbeing. Self-care, which appeared to be significant to physical health, played a significant role in the prevention of poor physical health. Teachers with good self-care tended to enjoy better physical QOL. ("Relationship between quality of life and occupational ...") The self-care strategies from the People Project could help educators in keeping better overall health, including physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Individual and school level factors associated with burnout

There are a few factors related to poor mental health, both in the workplace and in general, specifically related to the occupation of teaching. According to Kidger, et al. (2015),

how teachers feel about their working conditions, how stressed or dissatisfied they are, may be related to their mental health. Many teachers report wanting to talk to a colleague about feeling stressed or down but feel unable to do so, in turn creating high depressive symptoms. Earlier qualitative studies have shown that there is a culture among teachers of coping alone and having an unwillingness to approach anyone above them due to a concern about feeling weak or incompetent. The practices of connection in the People Project could potentially help educators become more connected within the workplace so they are not feeling so isolated which in turn can lead to depressive symptoms and burnout.

Several things have been found that contribute to the stress of teachers. These factors include interpersonal demands, diversity of tasks, lack of professional recognition, discipline problems in the classroom, administrative red tape, lack of support, workload, the amount of paperwork needed, and lastly the lack of resources provided (Carlson & Thompson, 1995). Kidger et al. (2015) also found clear differences between men and women in terms of work satisfaction. Men had stronger depressive symptoms while association between sickness absence and depressive symptoms was stronger in women.

Although many environmental factors contribute to teacher burnout there are also individual personality characteristics that show poor coping and negative mood regulation among some teachers. Reliance on avoidant coping strategies was associated with higher levels of burnout and stress (Mearns & Cain, 2002). The practice of three good things introduced in the People Project could address negative mood regulation as writing down three good things each day for at least a week has been shown to increase happiness levels.

Secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue

Teachers are often on the front lines of childhood trauma, responding to emotional and behavior crisis due to trauma as well as hearing about individual student trauma (Hydon, Wong, Langley, Stein & Kataoka, 2015). These things tend to contribute to the high stress and turnover rate found within the teaching profession. Despite the challenge of working with children with a traumatic history, little attention has been paid to the needs of the teachers until recently (Barza, Essary & Thurston, 2020).

Approximately 60% of children living in the United States will experience at least one traumatic life event before their 18th birthday (Adams, 2010; Finkelhor et al., (2015). Oftentimes, it is the responsibility of educators to provide responsive and compassionate care to these children, however, while doing so teachers themselves become at risk for secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Barza, Essary & Thurston, 2020). Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is defined by stress reactions or symptoms that can mirror Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and may be experienced by teachers or others in the helping professions who continually hear the stories of children affected by trauma (Hydon et al., 2015).

STS has been defined as a form of burnout from some while others have defined it as a component of “compassion fatigue”. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary (2021), compassion fatigue is defined as physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period. STS among teachers has been studied less than burnout but also may affect a high teacher turnover rate. In one qualitative study examining factors contributing to STS among teachers working with children affected by trauma, 75% of them had a plan to change careers, retire, or change schools soon (Caringi et al., 2015). Although teachers may not be explicitly tasked with

processing students' trauma in the same way that a therapist might, the highly interpersonal nature of teachers' work paired with their efforts to form meaningful relationships with individual students and families means that teachers have many opportunities to learn about student traumatic experiences through their daily interactions. Overall research states that STS among teachers is very prevalent.

Teacher stress and STS directly correlate with the quality of relationship between teacher and student, the use of negative classroom management techniques, and teachers' motivation to leave the teaching professions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Yet, concerns for the psychological welfare of teachers rarely end up in journals that reach practicing educators (Barza, Essary & Thurston, 2020). According to Barza, Essary & Thurston (2020), exposure to the traumatic experiences of others is an occupational hazard for educators, individuals in child welfare, health care and law enforcement. STS may contribute to the burnout, particularly in early childhood and special education teachers. When a teacher has compassion fatigue, the stress symptoms can be detected at the same level as the student directly affected by a stressful experience. That is, a teacher may be traumatized by empathizing or sympathizing with a student (Makadia, Sabin-Farrell, & Turpin, 2017).

Increased exposure to individuals with PTSD and a history of trauma or depression may increase vulnerability to STS symptomology (Miller & Sprang, 2017). Therefore, larger student groups increase the probability of exposure and may pose a concern for teachers' well-being. This exposure may be further confounded in communities that lack resources (e.g., high-poverty areas) and cannot as readily support children and teachers. If STS becomes an issue for a teacher, it might be necessary for the teacher to both process the trauma as well as practice psychological detachment. Detachment involves "switching off" work-related thoughts

and emotions after the workday ends (Ludick & Figley, 2017). Yet, complete detachment is not helpful for educators in their attempt to foster meaningful pedagogical relationships with students. Therefore, a balance between psychological detachment and trauma reflection is ideal.

Although practicing self-care may help with detachment, teachers also need opportunities to process the trauma with school-based support. Teacher leaders and administrators may create school-based awareness programs, establish STS recovery leave-of-absence policies, implement case-based discussion groups, provide STS skill training practice, and suggest opportunities to instruct children about trauma (Berger, Abu-Raiya, & Benatov, 2016). In addition, administrators can encourage school counselors to expand research in this area and create a culture of shared values toward STS awareness and support. It is for this reason that I chose teacher self-care as a focus for this research.

Potential areas of support and prevention

In this section I will share potential areas of support in preventing teacher burnout, as well as other areas of prevention. Potential areas of support discussed will include coping, buoyancy, resiliency, and preparedness.

Typically, practices that can be useful to prevent teacher burnout at the organizational level include those that allow teachers more control and autonomy within their daily routines.

Earlier studies have found that social conditions, including supportive relationships with colleagues, a school culture of trust, respect, and openness are key factors in determining work satisfaction (Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Pas, 2010). Beyond increasing community resources and keeping smaller class sizes, it would also be important that teachers learn about and discuss STS during their educational preparation, and engage in self-care to manage STS (Barza, Essary, & Thurston, 2020).

Coping and buoyancy

Parker and Martin (2008) did a research study to examine teacher wellbeing and engagement, specifically coping and buoyancy in the workplace. Buoyancy is defined as everyday resilience such as an individuals' self-perception of their ability to successfully deal with setbacks and challenges that are typical in life (Parker & Martin, 2008). According to Merriam Webster Dictionary (2021), resilience is defined as an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

According to Parker and Martin (2008), coping strategies have been the subject of extensive research in relation to teacher wellbeing and engagement. This is largely because effective coping strategies help guard teachers from the negative effects of the many demands they face daily and the many ways in which effective coping strategies can help build higher levels of wellbeing and engagement (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2011). The People Project's activities correlated with finding flow and connection specifically address the topic of teacher engagement.

Parker and Martin (2008) found that the cognitive coping strategies of failure avoidance and mastery orientation were stronger predictors of teacher engagement and wellbeing than behavioral strategies of planning and self-handicapping. They define failure avoidance as the effort to avoid the negative consequences of failure and mastery orientation as individuals that are motivated by the task itself rather than the reward, they might receive from doing the task, i.e., intrinsic motivation. They are practices within the teachers' locus of control rather than environmental factors not within their control. This relates to the present research project because all the practices of the People Project are self-driven and motivated.

Preparedness

Research shows that teachers that feel better prepared to meet the daily demands of their job report feeling more capable of educating their students. They also report more job satisfaction, less burnout, and a closer connection to their students (Schonfeld, 2001; Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). Teachers that ended their first year of teaching feeling more effective reported having higher quality preparation than did those teachers that reported feeling less effective after their first year, which in turn makes them less vulnerable to the effects of stress and burnout (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2010). A large piece of higher quality preparation consisted of having a mentoring system in place for new teachers to consult with a veteran teacher. It is therefore likely that teachers that receive more advanced training and support prior to entering the field of teaching will feel better equipped to handle the challenges and demands needed from them. Compassion fatigue prevention information and discussions about STS and burnout in coursework and field experience supervision would increase awareness and better ensure that educators are prepared to face challenges (Hydon et al., 2015; Stamm, 1999). Timely support and feedback from teacher mentors and supervisors may positively influence their interpretation of burnout matters and allow for theory development to enhance compassion satisfaction.

Incorporating self-care strategies within education programs is something that could be highly beneficial. Oftentimes, educators are told to ‘take care of themselves’ but they are unsure as to what that means or how to go about it. Self-care is defined as activities one performs to maintain well-being. It is valuable for anyone in the helping professions (Ludick & Figley, 2017). According to Barza, Essary and Thurston (2020), plans for self-care may include a balance of activities to detach from stressors, such as social, physical, intellectual, financial, and

emotional activities. For example, educators may create a book club, a workout accountability group, or a gardening team. By introducing the simple wellbeing practices of People Project, I believe that educators will be given more tools to help take care of themselves and prevent burnout.

Wellbeing

Providing a concrete definition of wellbeing has been a daunting task with several definitions arising. For years, psychologists have been conceptualizing theories to understand what contributes to a fulfilling life and conducting empirical tests of their merits. These efforts have led to a proliferation of new definitions, models, and measures of well-being.

Originally there appeared two specific schools of thought where wellbeing was seen either as hedonic or eudemonic (Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan, & Kauffman, 2018).

Some philosophers view wellbeing from a hedonic view, view, focusing on happiness is the total of all pleasurable moments. Other philosophers held a somewhat different view, believing that people experience happiness when they engage in something they find valuable and worthwhile (Carter, 2016). Building upon the eudemonic view of wellbeing is Maslow's (1970) concept of self-actualization and Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory. People's beliefs, their feelings, their thoughts, and their actions, then, have a direct impact on their own and others' living conditions (Michalos, 2007).

To compound the issue of definition inconsistency, wellbeing is often used interchangeably with other terms such as 'happiness', 'flourishing', 'enjoying a good life' and 'life satisfaction', all which have vastly different interpretations and underlying meanings. Next, I will discuss three models of wellbeing and their components.

Models of wellbeing

Although positive psychology and the study of wellbeing are not new, it is becoming increasingly more popular as we know that wellbeing contributes to overall happiness. In this section I will provide an overview of three different models of wellbeing.

Tripartite model of subjective wellbeing

Diener and Ryan's (2009) Tripartite Model of Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) presents wellbeing as a general evaluation of an individual's quality of life in terms of three key components which consist of: Life satisfaction, which is composed of the balance between the positive and negative affect on a person's life. An overall assessment of how one's life is measuring up to their goals and aspirations. Positive affect being pleasurable or pleasant feelings and negative affect being painful feelings.

Next, I will provide an overview of McCallum and Price's Model of Holistic Wellbeing for comparison.

McCallum and Price's model of holistic wellbeing

McCallum and Price (2016) outlined a model of holistic wellbeing where the student is central. They suggest that the model captures the interplay between learner wellbeing, educator wellbeing, and community wellbeing. Six key principles are found together with six key strategies as a means of enactment in nurturing wellbeing in education (McCallum & Price, 2016). The six key principles that constitute the holistic wellbeing model are: positive relationships, positive strengths, positive communication, positive behavior, positive emotions, and positive leadership.

Positive relationships are the building and sustaining of healthy relationships throughout one's life. Developing and nurturing individual and group strengths is what makes

up the key principle of positive strengths. The ability to communicate strategies effectively and safely is positive communication. The fourth key principle, positive behavior is defined as behaving in a way that welcomes a sense of belonging and connections to others as well as positive and caring actions toward others. Nurturing emotional health is a key strategy found in the fifth principle of positive emotions and lastly positive leadership is the ability to scaffold wellbeing by growing leaders with a democratic leadership style.

The last model of wellbeing that I will provide an overview of is Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of wellbeing and the model that was chosen by the developers of the People Project.

PERMA

Seligman's (2011) PERMA model proposes that wellbeing has several measurable elements, each contributing to wellbeing. The PERMA model names five essential elements to wellbeing: Positive emotions include a wide range of feelings, not just happiness and joy [P]. Engagement refers to involvement in activities that draw and build upon one's interests [E]. Positive Relationships are all important in promoting positive emotions, whether they are work-related, school related, familial, romantic, or friendly [R]. Meaning also known as purpose and prompts the question of "why" [M]. Achievement / accomplishment are the pursuit of success and mastery [A]. Just like the study by Parker and Martin (2008), Seligman suggests there is a stronger predictor of engagement and wellbeing using cognitive coping strategies that are intrinsic in nature.

Although each of these three models of wellbeing has key points and factors to take into consideration when studying wellbeing, the leaders of the People Project chose to use the concepts from Seligman's wellbeing model, PERMA. This model of wellbeing provides not

only measurable elements, but it also has a researcher questionnaire designed to measure each of the five elements of PERMA, called the PERMA Profiler. The PERMA-Profiler measures these five pillars, along with negative emotion and health (Butler & Kern, 2015).

Summary

The goals of this review of literature are to provide the current research on the demands of teachers and the damage it causes to both mental and physical wellbeing as well as provide a rationale for the current research study. I reviewed literature about teacher burnout, the effects and causes of teacher burnout, support and prevention and lastly various models of wellbeing. According to literature teacher burnout and stress continue to be an issue and have educators leaving the field within five years. Due to so many teachers leaving the field after five years due to stress and burnout, it is necessary to continue to dive deeper into prevention and self-care.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter 3 will describe the methodology for the present study, including an overview of qualitative research as well as the data collection and data analysis procedures. This action-based research project is important because it examines how high school staff experienced the People Project. Due to the daily demands placed on educational staff it is important for these educators to learn and practice self-care to remain in the field of education. This study and its findings could help the researcher recognize additional ways to help support educators.

The methodology that was used for this research study was action research informed by phenomenology. Action research is an approach commonly used for improving conditions and practices in a range healthcare environment (Lingard et al., 2008; Whitehead et al., 2003). The purpose of undertaking action research is to bring about change in specific contexts. Using action research allowed me to look at ways to improve self-care among educators while using a phenomenological approach allowed me to further explore how staff experienced the wellbeing practices of the People Project by interviewing participants and understanding their lived experience of the People Project.

The purpose of phenomenology is to discover and describe the meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences. It is the understanding of individual and collective human experiences and how we think about those experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavey, 2006; Patton, 2002; Wertz, 2005). In phenomenology, researchers approach a phenomenon with a fresh perspective, as if seeing it for the first time through the eyes of the participants. This process begins with trying to gain an understanding or view of the participants and then finding commonalities among participants to see how their lived experiences relate to the phenomenon

of interest (Hays & Singh, 2012). Phenomenology was used to describe the experiences of participants when they took part in the People Project.

There are different approaches to phenomenological methodology. These approaches include transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic. Phenomenological research that is transcendental is focused on the meanings of the participants' experiences. An existential phenomenological approach is focused on the nature of reality that holds the phenomenon. Lastly, a hermeneutic approach is focused on both how the participants experienced the phenomenon but also how they interpreted these experiences (Moustakas, 1994). For this research project I used a hermeneutic approach as I was focused on the meanings of the participants' experiences with People Project and how they interpreted them.

For a researcher to get at the essence of the experience of participants, that researcher must also remove themselves from the description of the phenomenon. Epoche is the process by which the researcher seeks to set aside their own notions and judgments (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is a term often used synonymously with epoche (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing is the task of sorting out qualities that belong to the researchers' experience of the phenomenon (Drew, 2004). I went through the process of bracketing which will be found in greater detail in the section on researcher reflective statement.

Procedures

Procedures for data collection

Purposeful sampling was used for this research study. The purpose of sampling is to develop specific criteria for the sample the researcher wants to study prior to entering the field (Patton, 2002). Hays and Singh (2012) define purposeful sampling as the selection of participants based on the details they can provide about a phenomenon. The participants of this

study were high school educators who took part in the People Project and used wellbeing practices taught in the People Project. Selecting staff to take part was purposeful because they were individuals that took part in the People Project and were individuals that could provide the best information in terms of their lived experience with the People Project. Participants were interviewed, and the descriptive data gathered. The level of data saturation was determined by the main researcher. Saturation was based on the researcher hearing the same statements over and over. For example, “if it were built into the day”.

Through examination of the research question, an understanding was gained of participants' experiences with the People Project. This framework helped me gain insight into the effectiveness of wellbeing practices as well as how to continue promoting self-care practices within a school setting.

Recruitment

Recruitment of participants began after North Dakota State University's (NDSU) IRB and the West Fargo Public School district approved the study. Approximately 250 teachers took part in the People Project, and all were asked. Recruitment was done via email and through a closed group on a social media site. One mass email was sent to all participants seeking interest. A second mass email was sent to recruit additional participants. After the second email a total of eight participants responded and agreed to be interviewed. Informed consents were sent via email prior to the interview (appendix C) and participants verbally agreed prior to the start of the interview.

Participants

Participant 1, Adam, is a 52-year-old classroom teacher. Adam has been a teacher for 29 years and has spent his entire career with West Fargo Public Schools. Adam has held many

different leadership positions in the district throughout his 29 years as an educator and has been under the leadership of several different administrators. Adam is naturally a positive person and often seeks out and enjoys practices of self-care.

Participant 2, Bella, is a 30-year-old classroom teacher. Bella has been a teacher for 7 years and has spent her entire career at West Fargo High School. In her brief time as a teacher Bella has already experienced many different initiatives in education. Bella often takes part in additional committees throughout school to improve the culture of the school.

Participant 3, Matthew, is a 36-year-old classroom teacher that is only in his 3rd year of teaching. Matthew was in the field of technology (IT) prior to going back to school for education. Matthew chose to go back to school for teaching to make a difference and find fulfillment and satisfaction.

Participant 4, Madison, is a 37-year-old classroom teacher turned school counselor. Madison has spent most of her career with West Fargo Public Schools. Madison has been a classroom teacher in the district and is currently a school counselor. Although Madison has been in the same district, she has spent her time at a few different buildings but always working with secondary students.

Participant 5, Susan, is a 41-year-old classroom teacher turned administrator. Susan has been with West Fargo Public Schools only 5 years and was previously in a different school district in Minnesota.

Participant 6, Addison, is a 45-year-old special education teacher. Addison has been with West Fargo Public Schools for 7 years and was in a different district previously. Addison has been in education for the last 12 years and was in a different field prior. She was recruited

by an earlier administrator to go back to school for special education and work with individuals with emotional disturbance.

Participant 7, Sally, is a 46-year-old classroom teacher. Sally has been in education for the last 23 years and has spent her entire career with West Fargo Public Schools. Sally has worked under several different administrators and has been a part of several different initiatives in education.

Lastly, participant 8, Derek, is a 38-year-old classroom teacher that has been in education for 5 years. Derek went back to school to become a teacher at the age of 31 after being in the landscape and construction field. Derek took a pay cut to go into education and oftentimes finds himself frustrated with how things work in education versus the business world.

The time lapse between the first teaching of the People Project and the time of the interviews was about a year. This was to allow the participants to reflect on any changes in their world view and whether they transferred what they learned to their self-care practices. The interviews were scheduled at times convenient for the participants. I conducted all the interviews by Zoom. To ensure confidentiality, interviews were conducted in a secure and quiet location. During the interviews, the door was locked and a “do not disturb” sign was put on the outside of the door. All interviews were conducted on my personal computer and recorded using the technology available via ZOOM.

Data collection

The primary form of data collection that was used in this study was interviews. Individual interviews are the most widely used data collection method in qualitative research (Nunkeosing, 2005; Sandelowski, 2002). There are three distinct types of interviews used in

qualitative research. These include structured, semi structured, and unstructured interviews. This research project used semi structured interviews in which an interview protocol is used as a guide, however, once the process is started the interviewee will have more say in the structure and process. Individual interviews typically consist of 5-10 questions which can include additional probing questions. Each interview consisted of a set of questions developed by me, the researcher. The questions asked were designed to focus on the participants' experiences with the People Project. I asked any additional or clarifying questions needed to get further information. Interviews were conducted with participants via Zoom. Interview data was transcribed using Zoom recording and later analyzed. The interviews were on my personal computer and deleted once transcribed to ensure confidentiality.

According to Hays and Singh (2012), interviewing has guided much of early theory in education and mental health settings and continues to be a preferred method for uncharted social phenomena.

The semi structured interview questions were as follows:

1. Tell me what you have learned about the People Project.
2. What motivated you to want to learn more about self-care practices?
3. What challenges have you experienced with the implementation of self-care practices taught during the People Project, if any?
4. What successes have you experienced with the implementation of self-care practices taught during the People Project, if any?
5. Have you practiced any of the self-care strategies prior to the implementation of the People Project?
6. What are other self-care practices you use other than those taught during

People Project?

7. Have you observed any differences in how you engage or interact with others?
8. Have any of the practices helped you feel less burned out if you were starting to show symptoms of burnout?
9. Have any of the practices of People Project changed your classroom practices?
10. Have they helped with STS?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Data analysis

For this research project I used Moustakas (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological data analysis, which include the following steps:

1. obtaining a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon. 2.

After transcription the following steps should be followed: consider each statement with respect to the significance of the description, record relevant statements, list nonrepetitive and non-overlapping statement, relate and cluster meanings into themes, synthesize the invariant meaning units and meanings into a description of the textures of the experience, including precise experiences, construct a description of the structures of your experience, and lastly construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of your experience. Complete all those steps for each transcript of the experience. 3. Lastly, from the individual textural-structural descriptions of all researchers' experiences, construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience integrating all individual textual-

structural description into a universal description of the experience representing the group, Moustakas (1994 p. 122).

Participants were encouraged to talk freely and to tell stories of their experiences using their own words. Each interview lasted from 25-50 minutes and all of them were conducted by me, the researcher. Components of phenomenological data analysis consist of bracketing, horizontalization, textural description and structural description. At the onset of my data analysis, I immersed myself in the data and bracketed any bias or assumptions that I had about the focus of the study. According to Hays and Singh (2012), bracketing is also sometimes referred to as “mind mapping” and is critical in analysis to account for any researcher bias and can also be accomplished through researcher reflection, which I provide later in this chapter.

I then employed horizontalization which is a part of the phenomenological reduction process in which the researcher gives equal value to all the participant statements and removes all repetitive statements (Hays & Singh, 2012). Textural description refines the data into new categories striving to understand the meaning and depth of the participants’ experiences and was a process I used as well. I created a list as a visual representation of the participant experiences that refines the horizontalization of the data into a textural description of teacher experiences with the practices of the People Project.

Lastly, I found multiple potential meanings within the textural descriptions as well as variations within the meanings. This component of qualitative research is called structural description. Hays and Singh (2012) encourage researchers to think of this process as a “filter” in which the researcher can filter all the participant descriptions and essentially what is left is the actual lived experiences of the participants.

This process of data analysis is when I was able to develop codes to organize the data collected. It was during this process that I was able to identify themes as well as subthemes within the transcriptions. To break it down further I used large sheets of sticky notes and labeled them with the themes I had found, then I used a distinct color sticky note for each participant and wrote different phrases or statements from their transcriptions that directly correlated with a specific theme. This helped me visually recognize the subthemes that had emerged within each of the four themes.

Strategies for trustworthiness

Within qualitative research there is a focus on data trustworthiness. There are many strategies that a researcher can employ to maximize trustworthiness. Creswell (2007) recommends using a minimum of two strategies to gain trustworthiness. It is important to use strategies that address the research process, data interpretation and research writing. For this study, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the design, data collection and data analysis process. In the journal I reflected on any thoughts, biases, observations, and reactions related to the research process. I also wrote contact summaries after each interview as made field notes. The purpose of a reflexive journal is to describe and analyze any findings as they appear throughout the research process.

Another strategy that I used was having a research team to discuss research design, data collection and data analysis. The research team consisted of the researcher, Lorraine Albrecht, and my advisor, Dr. Jill Nelson. The use of a research team is a strategy for trustworthiness known as triangulation of investigators (Hays & Singh, 2011). This helps strengthen the study by introducing multiple different perspectives into the analysis of data.

In summary, this research used an action-based approach informed by phenomenology to study the experiences of educators who took part in the People Project. Purposeful sampling was used, and the participants of this study were high school educators who took part in the People Project and used wellbeing practices taught in the People Project, therefore they were able to provide the best description of their experiences. To analyze the data, I used Moustakas (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological data analysis. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of secondary educators who took part in this qualitative research project. An action-based research approach informed by phenomenology was used to explore the research question, how did teachers at the secondary level experience the People Project?

Researcher reflective statement

I was the primary researcher on this research project. I am a 40-year-old white female working toward my doctorate in counselor education and supervision. I am in my fifteenth year as a Professional School Counselor and have worked at both the elementary and secondary levels. I have been heavily involved in the People Project since the very beginning and the first steps of bringing it to schools. While my primary role was initially just learning about People Project, I became one of the people in the district that became very invested in it. I believe that this program is something that can be beneficial to all teaching staff and possibly allow some educators to remain within the field of education rather than becoming burned out.

The reasons that I continue to believe in this project are for the following reasons. On two separate occasions, I have presented to staff about working with children and families living in poverty and have shared my story of growing up in poverty and becoming a first-

generation college student. Many staff approached me afterward asking what made me different. Why was I different and what had pushed me to do something different?

Like most professions, school counselors must do professional development throughout the year to keep up to date with the latest initiatives in education as well as continued self-exploration. It is through some of the professional development opportunities that I realized pieces of what have helped push me toward a different lifestyle. Having a positive outlook on life, continued practice of gratitude, valuing connectedness with others, and staying grounded in my own personal values, as hard as that was sometimes, were things that helped guide me.

The strengths that I bring to this project are a commitment to teaching others about health through happiness. I have had a lot of personal and professional experience with this and believe in these practices wholeheartedly. I have experienced how these practices have helped shift my mindset, giving me the ability to navigate life through some large setbacks. These practices have given me strength to push forward and persist when I could have chosen to become stagnant and continue along the path of poverty. I believe that if these practices can help me in such a substantial way, then they could help ALL people acquire health through happiness.

The limitations for this project might include having such a strong personal belief in these practices and becoming discouraged or frustrated if others do not experience the same benefits in practicing them. Other limitations might include a bias toward staff members that do not find benefits to these practices and have had more advantages in life than I have. I am mindful of my biases and will take steps to objectively look at that data through bracketing, consultation with my advisor and stepping away from the data.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the methodology of this study including data collection and analysis as well as information on qualitative research. The methodology that was used for this research study was action research informed by phenomenology. Using action research allowed me to look at ways to improve self-care among educators specifically and apply what I had learned while using a phenomenological approach allowed me to further explore how staff experienced the wellbeing practices of the People Project by interviewing participants and understanding their lived experience of the People Project. To analyze the data, I used Moustakas (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological data analysis.

The purpose of this action-based research was to investigate the implementation of well-being practices and their impact on high school staff wellbeing. The goal of the research was to identify how simple well-being practices have an impact on both personal wellbeing as well as workplace satisfaction. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this action-based research was to investigate the experience of high school staff who engaged in wellbeing practices via the People Project. The goal of the research was to identify if simple well-being practices had an impact on both personal happiness as well as work setting happiness and satisfaction.

This study was guided by the research question: what were the experiences of teachers who took part in the People Project? Data was collected through individual interviews with participants via Zoom. Interview data was transcribed using Zoom recording and later analyzed. Analysis used Moustakas' (1994) guidelines for analysis of phenomenological studies. The researcher showed meaning units, or significant statements, and integrated these into core themes. Four major themes emerged from the interviews along with several subthemes. The four main themes were, (1) insight into the behavior of self and others, (2) vulnerability and risk-taking, (3) intentionality, and (4) the importance of school culture. Within the four themes there were several subthemes that also emerged. These included: burnout and boundaries, stepping outside of one's own department, focus, consistency, challenges of practice, relationship building, support from administration, and time built into the day. The four main themes and eight subthemes are discussed in detail below.

Major Themes and Subthemes

1. Insight into the behavior of self and others
 - a. *Burnout and Boundaries*
 - b. *Stepping outside of one's own department*
2. Vulnerability and risk-taking

3. Intentionality
 - a. *Focus*
 - b. *Consistency*
 - c. *Challenges of practice*
4. Importance of school culture
 - a. *Relationship building*
 - b. *Support from Administration*
 - c. *Time built into the day*

Insight into self and others' behavior

In the first theme, “Insight into self and others’ behavior”, participants discussed the need to both be aware of themselves as well as those around them in terms of poor self-care, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Participants discussed the many demands placed on educators and how easy it can be to lose oneself with all the demands from administration, students, and parents.

Derek stated:

“I don’t typically even realize when my demeanor changes as we get more things thrown on our plates as the year continues. I start off aware of what I want to do as a teacher, but I lose my focus when we get busy and need a reset.”

Even the participants, like Derek, that have been in education five years or less reported that they have observed themselves becoming more negative and pessimistic throughout different points in their career.

Nearly every participant described this newfound sense of awareness in both themselves and their colleagues. Although it wasn’t as though the People Project explicitly

taught participants about the signs and symptoms of burnout, it became clear that through the teaching and practicing of self-care strategies that participants noticed more negative and burnout like behaviors within themselves as well as others.

Sally stated:

“The self-awareness piece of the People Project helped me take a look into myself and I noticed some negative tendencies. I began to think, how long until I burn out? And that scares me as a teacher because I went into this for the same reasons we all did, I love kids.”

Burnout and boundaries

The first subtheme to emerge from, insight into self and others’ behavior was burnout and boundaries. Overwhelmingly, participants described a new focus on self-awareness, which made them really begin paying attention to the types of boundaries they were setting for themselves each day in addition to signs and symptoms of burnout. Educators get so busy in our day-to-day lives, both personally and professionally that we become blind and immune to our own poor behavior and self-care strategies.

Bella stated:

“We are focused on classroom management strategies and content in our education to become teachers that I feel like the universities are missing a key component to the lives and occupation of teachers. We are taught to take care of students, parents, and collaborate with peers but what about self-care for ourselves?”

Oftentimes, throughout a counselor educator program a student will continuously hear things about self-care and practices, however, in teacher educator programs this is a piece that is often missing as Bella pointed out. Unless a teacher is particularly good at setting boundaries

and practicing self-care, they may not ever hear those things discussed within their education programs or within their school buildings, therefore they do not always begin to recognize the signs of burnout until it is too late. Addison said, “I realized that setting boundaries is not something I am good at when I spend hours upon hours on schoolwork outside of school. I realized that I was never unplugging from my job!”

Derek discussed beginning to feel the effects of burnout and negative attitude and stated, “I didn’t like it and I thought there has to be a better way to feel better and be better.”

Other participants noticed an overall increase in awareness and empathy toward colleagues as well as students. For example, Bella shared, “my department has been working on getting in this space to become aware of and share our feelings with each other.”

Interviewees found that it became easier for them to recognize when they began to think negatively after they had been reminded of self-care practices such as gratitude and kindness. They also suggested that although many colleagues originally viewed the People Project as “one more thing” that their viewpoints began to change once they noticed and observed a change in those that were faithfully trying to practice the self-care strategies from People Project.

Stepping outside of your own department

A second subtheme found within the theme of insight into self and others’ behavior included, “stepping outside of your own department.” Oftentimes, in a secondary setting that is a larger school, educators tend to only see or converse with those people within their department.

Susan shared:

“I find myself sometimes never leaving my wing or my. We are a large school and I feel like I can go months without conversating with people from another department. My colleagues and I talk about being siloed in our wings; however, the People Project provided a means for us to visit with others outside of our content area. Not only were we able to visit with teachers outside of our department but I think this could also help improve the culture by providing a means to collaborate with others on self-care ideas.”

Within the two high school settings used for this study, teachers and educators can literally go weeks without seeing or talking to someone from a different department. Even in faculty meetings you will often see like departments sitting with one another rather than sitting from people from another department. Many interviewees described an awareness and a need to communicate with teachers from other departments after participating in the People Project. There didn't appear to be any specific reason as to why this began happening, but it was something that emerged as a subtheme as several participants mentioned this newfound urge to “step outside of their own department” and take notice of colleagues they have worked with for years.

Vulnerability and risk taking

The second major theme that emerged in the research was the theme of, “vulnerability and risk-taking.” In her book *Daring Greatly* (2012), Brené Brown, professor, lecturer, author, and podcast host known for her research on shame, vulnerability, and courage describes vulnerability as "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure." It's that unstable feeling we get when we step out of our comfort zone or do something that forces us to loosen control. Through her shame research Dr. Brown has discovered that many of us believe vulnerability equals weakness, which she has found to be a myth.

Dr. Brown (2012) states, "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy courage, empathy, and creativity." In the book, *Daring Greatly* (2012), Dr. Brown described the ways in which we, as humans, try to avoid vulnerability. She calls this "armor up" and states that what we do to "armor up" is oftentimes based around three different themes, although it might look different from person to person. Dr. Brown believes that it usually revolves around one of three themes: striving for perfection, numbing out, or disrupting joyful moments by "dress rehearsing tragedy" and imagining all the way that things could go wrong.

Within education there is an unspoken fear of vulnerability. According to Kidger, et al. (2015), earlier qualitative studies have shown that there is a culture among teachers of coping alone and having an unwillingness to approach anyone above them due to a concern about feeling weak or incompetent. This fear typically stems from the fact that teachers do not want to be viewed as incapable or incompetent, therefore, they do not ask for nor accept help from colleagues or peers. This tends to leave teachers feeling isolated and as though they are on an island by themselves rather than working within a team or department of professionals. Depending upon the school and climate that has been developed this can be better or worse. Sadly, most education programs do not spend much time on classroom management and behaviors, or self-care strategies so new teachers do not always come equipped with all the skills they need to be great teachers; however, they are too afraid to ask for help due to the fear of looking incompetent.

After participating in the People Project many participants observed a change in both themselves as well as their colleagues when it came to being willing to be vulnerable as well as trusting one another. Bella recalled a tough week she had a few months ago in which she got in a car accident on the way to work and her car was totaled.

She stated:

“So, I guess I needed to accept kindness, which is ok to do. And sometimes it’s hard to ask for help. Like I needed a ride for over a week. I just felt like people were going out of their way to do it and I felt bad. I was like, ‘I’ll buy you some wine or some coffee or something.’ And then [name] was like this is just like. ‘You don’t need to get me something. This is what people should do for each other, just to help each other out.’ And I think that’s a good reminder to. Like, where we feel like we owe each other. When really, it’s ok to just do something and not expect something in return.”

Addison described something very similar by stating, “while we were doing the People Project most of my colleagues were experiencing a particularly difficult year. Taking the extra time to gather and talk about healthy practices while letting our guard down and attending to our own needs was helpful.”

Participants described taking extra time to gather with other colleagues as well as friends outside of the work setting and to pay attention to both their own needs as well as being more aware of the needs of those around them. They also described an ability and willingness to let their guards down. Susan stated, “Once we got more comfortable, like you can be a person at work and it’s okay to show your personality or share your feelings.”

Sally noticed that not only were people more willing to be more vulnerable by sharing parts of themselves and not “armoring up” but that it seemed as though many of her colleagues were more willing to accept ideas or strategies from others. She stated, “people became more willing to try creative plans for a situation and trust among our staff just seems to have greatly improved.”

Overall, participants reported the teaching of People Project self-care strategies in addition to the discussion around each strategy to be humanizing. It allowed them to view one another as human beings with lives and stressors outside of school, which in turn, seemed to create more ability to be vulnerable and gracious with one another.

Intentionality

In the third major theme, participants continued to discuss the meaningfulness of being intentional in their practices. All participants discussed doing random acts of kindness and practicing gratitude sporadically but after the people project, they found themselves being more intentional in those practices. Adam stated, “The people project was more of a daily practice, like everyday life, not just one certain event.” Bella stated something similar by saying, “I have always done a little bit but it’s more about being intentional and actually practicing it.”

Madison reported:

“The hard part about being intentional is that we get so used to checking off boxes of things we are supposed to do. We feel like we are jumping through hoops with no thought or purpose behind it other than because we are supposed to jump through that hoop. Being intentional about something like practicing kindness and gratitude amongst our peers and our students will only make the impact we want to if we are purposeful about making it a large part of our lives. Sometimes I feel like being intentional about making any changes at work will also require a lifestyle change for me personally as well.”

All participants felt that being intentional in practicing kindness and gratitude was the most beneficial to their overall well-being and happiness. Subthemes that emerged from the

theme of intentionality were having more of a focus on the practices, making them more of a daily practice rather than a one-time event and being consistent in setting aside time.

Focus

Every participant interviewed believed that having a focus on one well-being practice at a time was beneficial. It was believed that by focusing on one practice at a time they were able to concentrate on that practice and be much more intentional. They reported finding these meetings beneficial as it gave them more of a specific concentration. Addison commented, “I have always tried to be very intentional about gratitude and healthy connections, but it was still good to have focused and constructive conversation around these things as well as the other well-being practices discussed throughout People Project.”

Bella believed that by focusing on one strategy at a time she was able to recognize the benefits of each practice. She stated, “In general I just learned that very small intentional things can have a long-term positive effect.”

Using the strategy of three good things participants were also able to shift their focus when themselves or their colleagues began to vent and complain. Many participants described stating things such as, “okay, let’s shift our focus to something that is going well rather than focusing on the negative.”

All participants appreciated the rollout of the People Project in terms of one strategy being introduced at a time and then allowing for a month to actually practice the strategy. They felt as though this gave them time truly attempt to use the strategy.

Consistency

A second subtheme found within the theme of intentionality was consistency. This word came up repeatedly. All participants stated that they have always struggled with

consistently practicing self-care. Although many of them found it easier to be consistent while taking part in the People Project they still found this to be the biggest challenge overall.

Derek stated, “the biggest challenge I faced was the consistent practicing of the self-care strategies.” According to Bella, “I think the consistency piece was definitely the hardest.” Sally stated, “We had small things we did like gratitude posters, trying to get people to collaborate together, but it would only last a month or two and then people got busy, and it would diminish out.” Susan commented, “accountability partners were great however the scheduled meetings were too far apart and even sometimes my partner, and I needed a more often refresh.” Susan’s definition of an accountability partner was someone that helps each other stick to a common commitment.

Many participants believed that if they had all used accountability partners or daily visual reminders that it would be easier to stay consistent. Others did things such as keeping the gratitude cards in a place they would frequently see them, so they had that visual reminder.

The last subtheme that appeared within the theme of intentionality was practice which will be described in further detail in the following paragraph.

Challenges of practice

Similar to consistency and focus, all participants described a struggle to actually practice the strategies that they had learned. They reported that if they had more reminders surrounding the self-care strategies that they would have the ability to be more consistent. Several interviewees came up with methods to make this easier such as when Matthew stated, “So, I’ve only just kind of been mindful about, you know, being grateful. But I haven’t been super intentional about it. The first week. Those cards. I kept those cards paper clipped to my planner, which I look at 20 times a day.”

Madison commented that within her department they also had random acts of kindness cards out and readily available so that they were always on her mind. She also stated that her department would give out the random acts of kindness cards as well as the information on gratitude both during staff meetings and during informal meetings with staff. She believed that this not only helped other staff members but helped her be mindful of practicing kindness and gratitude as well.

Overall, participants felt that if they had accountability partners or more reminders surrounding the self-care strategies that they would have the ability to be more consistent.

Importance of school culture

The last major theme that appeared from the data analysis was the importance of a positive school culture and climate. Each participant expressed a belief that the implementation of the people project and its practices were important for school culture. They reported feeling that a focus on self-care and allowing for grace would just create an overall more positive school environment.

Adam stated, “It’s a good change of culture, especially in a school setting where culture kind of shifts. I hope it’s a push in the right direction for our school.”

Susan commented:

“I feel our school culture can benefit from consistent staff self-care. Sometimes as the school year goes on, I feel like we get engulfed by things such as curriculum, new initiatives from the district, taking care of our students and what not that we tend to forget about ourselves.”

Matthew shared similar thoughts by stating:

“Just promotion of self-care has an effect on culture. It makes us feel more valued and part of a team. I have felt the downward spiral of school culture when we do not feel like we are part of a team and People Project is a good way to rebuild that.”

All participants believed that by practicing the self-care strategies of the People Project they were able to see a shift in mindset either within their own departments or in the school. All participants also held the belief that self-care in education is important to prevent burnout and that it is something that is not done enough nor valued enough. This will be described in further detail throughout the following subthemes.

Relationship building

The first subtheme that emerged within the importance of school culture was, “relationship building.” Multiple statements were made by all interviewees about relationship building. Some statements that supported the subtheme of relationship building included, the ability to share feelings among department members, accepting help from one another, and helping others. Matthew commented, “If I’ve built a relationship with that person or if I’ve helped them in some way, that’s huge.” Bella shared a story about a personal struggle and how she had been practicing random acts of kindness that week but found it difficult to be the one on the receiving end throughout her struggle but felt that by allowing herself to ask for and receive help that she was able to build a stronger bond with individuals within her department.

Sally summed up her experience by stating:

“The people project taught me about how kindness, gratitude, and self-care can help us as colleagues to come together and find positives during our busy and oftentimes stressful days. The activities we did with staff did show changes within our building and

created more of a team environment. We were able to understand each other better and saw more kindness, complimenting and grace among our staff.”

Susan echoed similar thoughts by sharing, “we have found ways to make our ‘work family’ get along better and have lots of fun! All staff seem to be more supportive of one another.”

Overall, participants reported feeling a slight shift in the culture of the school, whether just in their individual departments or a slight shift in the culture of the school itself. It became evident throughout the interviews that teachers felt that a focus on self-care strategies and awareness of STS signs could benefit all educators which in turn would benefit the culture of the school as a whole.

Support from administration

The second subtheme that emerged from the major theme of importance of school culture was, “support from administration.” Overwhelmingly, all interviewees felt that there was a need to build the use of self-care practices into the culture of the school and not something that is done once or twice a year. It was often stated that educators have more stress and pressure in their roles now compared to years passed. There was a collective belief that if there were more support from administration and an effort to incorporate self-care into every faculty meeting those teachers would feel a little less overwhelmed.

Madison commented, “I think if there was more of a push from administration to make self-care a priority then it would be ‘sold’ a little better.” She believed that there are too many other things that take precedence over self-care such as curriculum, intervention strategies, scheduling, etc.

Addison mimicked Madison's beliefs by saying, "I just wish there was more of an awareness from our administration on how important self-care is in such a demanding career."

Sally expressed frustration with district leadership stating that:

"They always email about taking care of ourselves' and what not but when something such as the People Project becomes available it gets pushed to the side for technology training or new curriculum. I get that those things are important and are what education is about, however, we won't have any teachers left if we don't teach them how to take care of themselves."

Adam shared similar thoughts by saying:

"So many of our initiatives die after being introduced because there is not follow through from our leadership. They bring them to our attention and that we as school are going to start something new. But with a couple months, we will never hear about it again as leadership is not consistent throughout the school year on new initiatives like the People Project."

It was clear that all the participants valued and believed in the positive effects of practicing self-care to achieve a better personal and work life balance and felt that if they had additional support for administration, they would feel better about implementing self-care practices both at school and at home.

Time built into the day

The third and final subtheme to emerge from the theme of importance of school culture was, "time built into the day." Overall, participants felt strongly that if they had time specifically built into their work- day to learn about and incorporate People Project practices it would be more beneficial and long-lasting.

Adam stated:

“I think the challenges are the same with most things. It's just a matter of time, making sure that you make time in your day to do those practices both in school and outside of school. So, I think it's just a matter of setting aside the time to do it and being intentional of doing it and making sure that you're focusing on the things that we focused on when we had our people project meetings. It's about being intentional and focused on the practices.”

Matthew parroted similar thoughts by saying:

“For a true change in culture then we need to dedicate time to this on a regular basis. I feel like the people project could really take off if we were consistently meet. Faculty meetings are typically too spaced out and people lose focus on the initiative if we do not meet weekly. We have set time every week for student meeting on Wednesdays and I feel like we could do something similar for the staff and People Project.”

Many participants felt that topics that were typically covered during faculty meetings could be sent out via email and that more time could be spent in person on discussion of self-care and related topics. Participants felt that oftentimes faculty meetings were used to address “housekeeping” type items and that administration could use that time to introduce the self-care strategies of People Project in addition to allowing time to practice the strategies introduced.

Conclusion

In conclusion, data analysis revealed four themes which included, (1) insight into behavior of self and others, (2) vulnerability and risk taking, (3) intentionality, and (4) importance of school culture. Within the four themes there were several subthemes that also emerged that were explained in detail throughout the chapter.

This chapter described the process of descriptive phenomenology which was used in this study to explore the lived experiences of high school staff who engaged in wellbeing practices. It included understanding the data and identifying significant statements which in turn were converted into formulated meanings. Groups of theme clusters were then developed to establish the final thematic construct. Trustworthiness of the study findings was undertaken using different approaches and strategies to achieve each approach affectively.

The participants described a process of learning about the self-care strategies, trying to implement them in their daily lives, “falling off the wagon” and needing reminders to stay aware of their own self-care struggles and to keep practicing the strategies as well as wanting time built into the workday to practice the strategies they learned and a feeling of support from administration.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

The goal of the research was to identify if simple well-being practices had an impact on both personal happiness as well as work setting happiness and satisfaction. An action-based research project informed by phenomenology was used to explore the research question, how did teachers at the secondary level experience the People Project? The participants' experiences with the People Project emerged as four themes: (1) insight into the behavior of self and others (2) vulnerability and risk-taking, (3) intentionality and (4) importance of school culture.

Within the first theme, insight into the behavior of self and others, the participants' descriptions of their awareness emerged into two subthemes. These subthemes consisted of burnout and boundaries including a self-awareness when it came to attitude and symptoms of burnout as well as “stepping outside of one’s own department”, meaning that participants began to take notice of colleagues in other departments and what they might be feeling. From these descriptions it appeared that participants were reminded to be empathetic toward their colleagues and peers. By teaching the strategies of the People Project we can help teachers become more aware of their own feelings and emotions on the job as well as giving them the skills they need to take care of themselves once they notice signs of burnout and fatigue.

In the second theme, vulnerability and risk-taking, participants used phrases such as, “needed to check myself” or “noticed when I became negative” as a way to help describe the self-awareness that they saw after participation in the People Project. Most participants also gave a description of a newfound willingness to accept help from colleagues or co-workers. Many participants noticed that this was something that has always been difficult for them in

addition to asking for help from a colleague. I believe there is a culture of teachers and educators “going at it alone” which contributes to poor self-care and wellbeing. If we created a culture and expectation where teachers felt comfortable asking one another for help and support we might see healthier, happier teachers. According to Kidger, et al. (2015), many teachers report wanting to talk to a colleague about feeling stressed or down but feel unable to do so, in turn creating high depressive symptoms. In reference to Dr. Brown’s (2012) work on vulnerability I believe that we see a little bit of all three themes she describes when “armoring up”, however, the two that appear to be the most prevalent are striving for perfection along with “dress rehearsing tragedy”. Many times, in meetings with educators you will hear them ask things such as, “well what if that doesn’t work?” or “what if nobody shows up?” Again, there is this fear of vulnerability within education and some of it stems from always being in the public eye.

The third theme, intentionality was divided into three different subthemes consisting of focus, consistency, and practice. Research investigating the sources of happiness has focused on determining the strongest predictors of happiness and life satisfaction. Lyubomirsky and Tkach (2006) state that genes determine approximately 50% of happiness, and 10% of *happiness* is determined by circumstances. Leaving 40% that we can influence through intentional activity and practice. The experiences of the participants that were interviewed would echo the findings of Lyubomirsky and Tkach (2006) as the theme of being intentional in the practices of wellbeing was found to be most beneficial. The theme of intentionality and subthemes of focus, consistency and practice occurred throughout all the interviews. Participants used phrases such as, “tried to be intentional”, “consistency was the hardest”, “consistency was a challenge” and “making it part of my daily routine.” Most participants found that they enjoyed focusing on one

self-care practice at a time rather than learning multiple strategies at once. They found this allowed them to really concentrate on the practice itself. They also said that it was most difficult to be consistent with the strategies and used terms like “falling off the wagon” when they would not be as good about using the strategies. Several participants did feel that the more they put the strategies into practice the easier it was for them to become routine and consistently practicing self-care became much easier.

I think by continuing to focus on only one strategy at a time it allows participants the opportunity to truly absorb the meaning of the self-care strategy and also allows multiple opportunities for practice, rather than a short time for introduction and practice.

The last theme that appeared, importance of school culture, was broken down into three different subthemes. The first being relationship building with peers and colleagues. All participants experienced at least one form of positive relationship building with their colleagues either within individual departments or within the school. This is what appeared to make them the most happy and excited as they were able to directly see how the People Project practices affected not only themselves personally but also their interactions with colleagues.

The second subtheme that appeared was an overall wish for more support from administration. Several participants believed the self-care strategies of People Project to be valuable and worthy of time but felt that there were too many other things that took precedence, such as curriculum, student interventions, meetings, scheduling, etc. Many believe that if there was more support and backing from administration that self-care practices could be incorporated into daily or weekly practices at the secondary level.

The last subtheme to appear was a belief that self-care strategies like the ones taught during the People Project should take precedence and there should be time specifically carved

out for such practices. Phrases such as, “if only there were more time”, “we didn’t always have the time”, and “we didn’t get to meet as often due to not enough time” were used to give a description of what the participants believed to be an issue.

I believe that much of this could be solved by incorporating self-care practices into daily or weekly announcements, sending out email reminders to take care of oneself along with strategies on how to do so, posting reminders throughout the staff lounge and introducing and practicing self-care throughout the year during faculty meetings as well as designating times and opportunities for staff to practice self-care during the school day. Many times, educators are often seeking, “permission” from administration to allow themselves to take a step away from curriculum and take care of themselves.

Overall, participants found the self-care strategies of the People Project to be valuable and believed self-care should be better built into an educator’s day and professional development. All participants appeared to have become more observant of themselves and gained an appreciation for slowing down and putting themselves as a priority sometimes.

Contributions of research

This research contributes significantly to the field of school counseling and education. It introduces self-care strategies that can be used throughout the school year and that are easy to introduce, implement and practice. It can be used as a guide to help Professional School Counselors support the educators that they work with. Additionally, it presents the importance of vulnerability within the educational setting and giving educators permission to ask for help or state when they are struggling with burnout symptoms.

Teaching self-care practices

This research focuses on self-care practices that can help create an environment that cultivates greater job satisfaction, and support within the workplace as is evident throughout the interviews conducted. Such interventions may not only address the relatively prominent levels of poor wellbeing and depressive symptoms among teachers but may also help the students that they teach through improved teacher performance and more supportive teacher–student relationships.

There is a scarcity of literature on how to teach educators about self-care practices. This research provides an example of how teaching self-care practices can be used as a method to prevent burnout and secondary traumatic stress symptoms. Furthermore, this technique could be used in any school setting to increase educator reflection and awareness as well as build connection and trust among colleagues.

Creating an environment for risk taking

Earlier qualitative studies have revealed a culture among teachers of coping alone and an unwillingness to be vulnerable and ask senior teachers for help for fear that they may appear weak or incompetent (Davies, 2007; Kidger, et al., 2009). Research literature has shown that social support both enacted and perceived is associated with better psychological wellbeing in general (Diener and Seligman, 2002) therefore this research project is important because it has shown to help teachers be okay with vulnerability and asking for help which in turn affects and improves their mental wellbeing.

Professional School Counselors can focus on building a sense of safety through the teaching of burnout symptoms, self-awareness, and self-care practices. This may help with highly stressful and vulnerable situations that educators are put in daily.

Recommendations for future research

A primary contribution the research makes is that it an impetus for conducting future research on a myriad of related topics in terms of wellbeing and self-care for educators. Future research can explore numerous aspects of the implementation of self-care among teachers. The components of the People Project could be infused throughout future educator professional development and faculty meetings. It could also be conducted at other grade levels to determine if the practices of self-care can easily be applied at all grade levels and have an impact on the outcomes of teacher wellbeing. Creative inclusions of self-care strategies in other educational settings could explored in the future. This will build on the literature of the benefits of including self-care strategies within education.

Implications for Professional School Counselors and Administrators

A primary contribution this research makes is that it is an impetus for conducting future research on a myriad of related topics. Future research can explore many aspects of self-care within education. The implementation of self-care strategies can begin to be incorporated throughout the school year and be made a priority in faculty meetings.

The following recommendations could aid future Professional School Counselors who may be interested in implementing more self-care strategies and practices like People Project:

1. Data: Data will play an integral role in creating, implementing, and sustaining projects such as the People Project and will show the need for self-care strategies in preventing burnout in education. For example, data that might be used could be quantitative data of concepts related to the goal such as: wellbeing, burnout, happiness, etc. The collection and review of data can be done by Professional School

- Counselors individually or ideally done with a team of individuals interested in promoting self-care throughout the school.
2. Lay a foundation: lay a foundation of expectations for faculty meetings as well as building time throughout professional development days to both learn about and practice self-care strategies. A Professional School Counselor might aid in this process; however, this may be something that lands more in the administration role. For example, administration might designate at least 20 minutes per faculty meeting to address wellbeing and self-care strategies along with giving educators permission to step away from curriculum and healthy self-care strategies.
 3. Involve and address teachers' needs research has shown that when teachers feel heard and supported that they are less likely to feel the effects of burnout. If administration takes the time to ask questions or survey teachers, then they should find a way to address the areas of need found within the surveys. Again, this might be done with a team or committee of individuals that are interested in addressing the overall sense of wellbeing among the educators within their building.
 4. Administrative buy-in administrators are the individuals that create the professional development day schedules as well as conduct faculty meetings. It is essential that these individuals see and understand the importance of self-care not only for their staff but for themselves. By providing training and education to administrators regarding burnout along with the importance of educator wellbeing one might be able to create buy-in within their administration.
 5. Create a system of continued communication and support: one of the greatest identified areas of growth in programs such as the People Project is the need for

continued communication and support, especially because buy-in is an ongoing process. This could be done by creating a committee that is specifically designed to address the needs of their colleagues as well as communicate between teachers and administration.

Limitations of the study

Limitations of the research include that the data collected was all from participants who were in the same school district. The trustworthiness and credibility of the research would be strengthened if the research were extended to include data collected from participants in other high school settings. Other limitations of this research might include having such a strong personal belief in these practices and becoming discouraged or frustrated if others do not experience the same benefits in practicing them.

Although the researcher used bracketing as outlined by Moustakas (1994), it is not possible to completely remove all biases that are held by the researcher. The researcher's bias may have influenced the themes. Qualitative research does conceptualize the researcher as an instrument of the study and therefore researcher bias is a common limitation of all qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2011).

Finally, the researcher was a doctoral student with limited experience conducting qualitative research. The researcher's inexperience may have influenced both the data collection and data analysis processes. Reflexive journals, field notes, and collaboration with a research team was used to reduce these limitations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project has brought to light the importance of the continued push for self-care among educators. It is this researcher's belief that educators continue to have

some of the most challenging positions in our society and self-care is of the utmost importance to maintain highly qualified educators.

REFERENCES

- Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead*. New York: Gotham Books.
- Butler, J. & Kern, M. L. (2015). The PERMA-Profiler: A brief multidimensional measure of flourishing.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eaton, W.W., Anthony, J.C., Mandel, W., Garrison, R., 1990. Occupations and the prevalence of major depressive disorder. *Journal of Occupational Medicine*. 32 (11), 1079-1087.
- Esteve, J. M. (2000). The transformation of the teachers' role at the end of the twentieth century: new challenges for the future. *Educational Review*, 52(2), pp. 197-207.
- Evers, K.E., Castle, P.H., Prochaska, J.O., Prochaska, J.M., (2014). Examining relationships between multiple health risk behaviors, well-being, and productivity. *Psychol. Rep.* 114 (3), 843-853.
- Farber, B. A. (1998). Tailoring treatment strategies for different types of burnout. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, 106th, San Francisco California, August 14-18. ED 424 517.
- Foster, J.J. (2000). Motivation in the workplace. *Introduction to work and organizational Psychology: A European perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gordon, J., Turner, K., (2001). School staff as exemplars-where is the potential? *Health Education*, 101 (6), 283-291.
- Hays, D.G. & Singh, A. A. (2011). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. New York, NY: The Guildford Press.
- Hydon, S., Wong, M., Langley, A., Stein, B., & Kataoka, S. (2015). Preventing secondary traumatic stress in educators. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 24(2), 319-333.
- Jalongo, M.R., & Heider, K. (2006). Editorial teacher attrition: an issue of national concern. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33, 379-380.
- Kidger, J., Brockman, R., Tilling, K., Campbell, R., Ford, T., Araya, R., King, M., Gunnell, D. (2015). Teachers' wellbeing and depressive symptoms, and associated risk factors: A large cross-sectional study in English secondary schools. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 192, 76-82.

- Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 53(1), pp. 28-35. EJ 622 519.
- Lang, I.A., Marlow, R., Goodman, R., Meltzer, H. Ford, T., (2013). Influence of problematic child-teacher relationships on future psychiatric disorder: population survey with 3-year follow up. *Br. J. Psychiatry*. 202, 336-341.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Dworkin, A. G. (1991). *Giving Up on School: Student Dropouts and Teacher Burnouts*. Newbury Park, California: Corwin Press. ED 340 809.
- Maslach, C. & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 2, 99-113.
- Mearns, J., & Cain, J. (2003) Relationships between Teachers' Occupational Stress and Their Burnout and Distress: Roles of Coping and Negative Mood Regulation Expectancies. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, 16:1, 71-82.
- Melichior, M., Caspi, A., Milne, B.J., Danese, A., Poulton, R., Moffit, T., (2007). Work stress precipitates depression and anxiety in young, working women and men. *Psychol.Med.* 37, 1119-1129.
- Michie, S., Williams, S., (2003). Reducing work related to psychological ill health and sickness absence: a systematic literature review. *Occupational Environ. Med.* 60, 3-9.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Parker, P.D. & Martin, A.J. (2008). Coping and buoyancy in the workplace: Understanding their effects on teachers' work-related well-being and engagement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25 (2009) 68-75.
- Pas, E., Bradshaw, C., Hershfeldt, P. (2010). Teacher and school level predictors of teacher efficacy and burnout: Identifying potential areas of support. *Journal of Psychology*, 50, 129-145.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Van Dierendonck, D. (1993). The construct validity of two burnout measures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14, 631-647.
- Schonfeld, I. S. (2001). Stress in first-year women teachers: The context of social support and coping. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 127, 133-168.
- Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish*. New York, NY: Free Press.

- Sisask, M., Varnik, P., Varnik, A., Apter, A., Balazs, J. Balint, M., Bobes, J., Brunner, R. Corcoran, P., Cosman, D. Feldman, D., Haring, C., Kahn, J., Postuvan, V., Tubiana, A. Sarchiapone, M., Wasserman, C., Carli, V., Hoven, C.W., Wasserman, D., (2014). Teacher satisfaction with school and psychological well-being affects their readiness to help children with mental health problems. *Health Education Journal*, 73 (4), 382-393.
- Skaalvik, E., & Skaalvik, S. (2015). Job satisfaction, stress, and coping strategies in the teaching profession-what do teachers say? *International Education Studies*, 8(3), 181-192.
- Troman, G. & Woods, P. (2001). *Primary Teachers' Stress*. New York: Routledge/Falmer.
- Wharton, A.S., (2009). The sociology of emotional labor. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 35, 147-165.
- Yang, X., Ge., C., Hu, B., Chi, T., & Wang, L. (2009). Relationship between quality of life and occupational stress among teachers. *Public Health*, 123, 750-755.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me what you have learned about the People Project.
2. What motivated you to want to learn more about self-care practices?
3. What challenges have you experienced with the implementation of self-care practices taught during the People Project, if any?
4. What successes have you experienced with the implementation of self-care practices taught during the People Project, if any?
5. Have you practiced any of the self-care strategies prior to the implementation of the People Project?
6. What are other self-care practices you use other than those taught during People Project?
7. Have you observed any differences in how you engage or interact with others?
8. Have any of the practices helped you feel less burned out if you were starting to show symptoms of burnout?
9. Have any of the practices of People Project changed your classroom practices?
10. Have they helped with STS?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

Date:

Time of Observation:

Location:

Observer:

Research Question: How did secondary educators experience People Project?

Facts & Details in the Field Site

Verifiable sensory information in chronological order (eg. Missing participants, interruptions)

Observer Comments

Reflections and subjective responses to the facts and details of the setting (eg. Group process comments)

Reflective Summary

The overall impressions of the observation as well as additional questions you have for the future data collections

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Lorraine Albrecht, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at NDSU. I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation study, supervised by Jill Nelson, Ph.D., about how you experienced the People Project self-care strategies. We'll use the information to further research in the education field in this area.

The interview should take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete. Participants will be asked a series of questions regarding their experiences with the People Project practices and how it's affected both personal and professional wellbeing.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me via email at lalbrecht@west-fargo.k12.nd.us or Dr. Jill Nelson at jill.r.nelson@ndsu.edu

Research at NDSU, involving human participants, is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact North Dakota State University.

Thank you for considering.

Sincerely,
Lorraine Albrecht
Ph.D. Candidate
Professional School Counselor