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Grief, Burnout, and Teacher Well-Being

by

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has had various effects on social, economic, and political aspects of our world. Specifically in the realm of education, teachers have been left to navigate the uncharted territory of teaching exclusively online in the first phase of the virus, beginning in March 2020, then intermittently teaching online during the 2020-2021 school year, then dealing with the impact of Covid-19 on absenteeism, student apathy, and disengagement during the 2021-2022 school year. The impact on teachers' overall mental health and well-being was vast, and subsequent feelings of grief and burnout were experienced by many. In this qualitative study, based on grounded theory methodology, a small purposeful sampling of teachers volunteered to share their experiences of teaching in the pandemic, and to what extent they experienced the stages of grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969) and indicators of burnout (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019). Six participants were interviewed, data collected, transcribed, analyzed, and coded to identify themes. Teaching experience varied among participants, but many similarities existed. The final part of the research and questioning centered around supports administration and leadership, both divisional and local, could offer to mitigate some of the symptoms of grief and burnout being experienced. Despite the variance in experience with grief and burnout, each participant identified with the frameworks presented, while continuing to hope for a better future for their teaching experience and in the greater world of education.

Keywords: grief and burnout in education, covid-19 and education, teacher well-being, teacher well-being and covid-19, teacher burnout and covid-19

Contents

Grief, Burnout, and Teacher Well-Being

The nature of teaching, centered on giving in the form of time (paid and unpaid), mental capacity, and empathy, while consistently creating new and inventive ways to meet the diversity of students' social-emotional and academic learning needs, makes this human-giver profession one that is prone to exhaustion and burnout (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019; Michael, 2021). "Teachers spend much of their teaching time managing the increased complexities of their 21st Century classrooms" and these "contexts can add yet another layer of stressful circumstances to teachers trying to negotiate the myriad special needs and attentions required by their students" (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018, p. 27). The emphasis on teacher well-being has never been more important, especially considering the past two years of teaching through a global pandemic, characterized by unpredictability, professional challenges, anxiety, and stress. Well-being as a teacher means moving beyond "surviving the challenges and hardships" to "finding ways to thrive, feeling a sense of vitality and zest for work, all the while growing and filling out individual and collective potentials throughout one's teaching career" (p. 33). School leaders and administrators have much to gain from supporting the well-being of the teachers within their schools. "Staff members who [are] doing well across multiple well-being domains, [are] also more committed to the school and more satisfied with their health, life, and chosen occupation" (Turner & Theilking, 2019, p. 938).

Competencies outlined in the Leadership Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2021), including *Fostering Effective Relationships, Leading a Learning Community, and Developing Leadership Capacity,* call on educational leaders and administrators to create and cultivate opportunities for growth and well-being amongst staff, with the goal of improving student learning and educational outcomes. The responsibility placed on educational leaders to find

opportunities to enhance the efficacy, agency, and competency of teachers is one of the greatest responsibilities assigned to administrators. The well-being of our teachers is paramount, and leadership in our schools and divisions have an incredible role to play in supporting this, as "teacher well-being has been greatly impacted by this pandemic due to its devastating effect at a personal level, social distancing, and remote learning" (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021, p. 106). These stressors have "adversely affect[ed] the well-being and satisfaction, leading to increased burnout of teachers across the world" (Kotowski et al., 2022, p. 408). Teachers feeling an overwhelming sense of isolation and reduced social supports have led to several negative impacts on their mental health (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021). As a result, teachers have experienced grief moving through this pandemic as they "were generally not being acknowledged or supported" (p. 108).

The urgency for leadership to cultivate a supportive workplace and assist in the mitigation of this grief and burnout is imperative as "high levels of stress can create physical, psychological and behavioral problems among teachers, such as absenteeism, early retirement, sickness, tardiness, depression, insomnia, and attrition" (Ibrahim et al., 2021, p. 3). Administrators and educational leaders can mitigate some of these symptoms of grief, burnout, and stress through increased social supports. This centers around cultivating positive relationships with staff, built on trust, collaboration, care, and empathy (Turner et al., 2022). Teachers are unable to do their job effectively if they are reeling from the mental health impact of teaching through this pandemic. Using frameworks to guide social supports like the PERMA model, proposed by Seligman (2012), made up of five elements: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment, can create a possible structure for schools and leaders to utilize for the enhancement of well-being among their teachers.

The research conducted for this project was focused on evaluating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on a sampling of teachers and determining possible supports that could be implemented by divisional and local leadership to assist teachers with the grief and burnout experienced as a result of teaching through the pandemic.

Significance of Research

This research is significant because the literature and studies relating grief and teacher burnout resulting from Covid-19 are scant. Discovering ways teachers have experienced this pandemic and how it has impacted their agency, efficacy, and overall satisfaction with the profession of education, allows for enhanced insight into the severity of the grief and burnout symptoms being experienced, and strategizing supports moving forward. As an educational leader, it is imperative identification of this be prioritized to create supports and as Sokal et al. (2020) suggest, "addressing the diverse needs of teachers at different burnout stages during the Covid-19 pandemic will require both micro and macro responses" (p. 8). By looking at this pandemic response in education through a grief model such as Kübler-Ross' Grief Theory (1969), not only validates feelings of loss and immense stress of educators, but also enables teachers and educational leaders to assess these feelings against the stages of grief and consider the "grieving process as a powerful tool to introspect, self-realize, and to enhance compassion for self and others" (Valliani & Mughal, 2021, p. 3). Though this research is small in scale, it allowed for the opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue with other educators and gain insight into the grief and burnout among teachers of all experience levels. It provided an opportunity to analyze the consistencies in experiences between teachers regarding grief experienced and subsequent burnout, while strategizing ways educational leadership can attempt to respond and provide support to enhance the well-being of teachers.

Research Problem

Throughout the global Covid-19 pandemic, social, political, and economic impacts have been vast and multifaceted. "This pandemic has caused considerable morbidity and mortality, devastating consequences on patients and healthcare staff, strained healthcare structures, and shutdown economies" (Valliani & Mughal, 2021, p. 1). Consequential stress related to the pandemic has been increasing in the world of education. "Covid-19 has brought new, additional pressures not only to teachers, but also to students, families, and administrators globally" (Sokal et al., 2020, p. 1). Gurman et al. (2021) posits the pandemic has created challenges regarding increased workloads, uncertainty around the nature of the pandemic and impact on education, as well as the fear of falling ill with the virus and balancing teaching responsibilities. What has exacerbated stress is the duration of the pandemic and the ever-evolving nature of the virus, the mutation and appearance of new variants, the subsequent strain on society and the rollercoaster of restrictions and policy changes as government and health officials respond to the unpredictability of the virus.

Burnout has been studied extensively in education with teachers and administrators, but the impact of the pandemic on teacher efficacy, adaptability, and overall agency during persistent stress, grief and burnout associated with Covid-19 has not been overly researched, as it is an emerging topic. The research problem investigated in this project was centered around how the pandemic has contributed to increased stress and burnout in teachers, and the subsequent feelings of grief associated with teaching during these unprecedented times of a global pandemic. By using Kübler-Ross' Grief Theory (1969) and Nagoski and Nagoskis' (2019) contemporary conceptualization of burnout, originally coined by Freudenberger (1974), as the theoretical

framework, this research investigated the impact of the ever-changing and evolving nature of the pandemic on teachers' professional agency and mental health.

The primary research question in this study was:

- How has the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to teachers' symptoms of grief and burnout?

The sub questions guiding this study were:

- With the shift in education as a result of the global pandemic, how have teachers grieved professionally and what impact has this had on their agency, efficacy, and overall satisfaction with their career?

- In what ways can leadership assist in mitigating the stressors associated with teaching in the pandemic and support teachers as they move through this cycle of grief?

The interview schedule is outlined in Appendix A and will be discussed further throughout this paper.

<h2 align="center">Research Beliefs and Assumptions</h2>

Prior to conducting interviews, collecting, and coding the data, I assumed as a researcher, teachers are dealing with an immense amount of stress resulting from teaching during the pandemic. They have been going through an unpredictable and repetitious cycle of grief regarding their identity as teachers since the initial impact in March 2020. Many teachers have attempted to make the best of every situation and have adapted, course-corrected, and adjusted to the ebb and flow of the pandemic, but constant stress has created a situation that makes moving forward and on from the initial grief nearly impossible. In addition, teachers have had increasing symptoms of burnout, resulting from added professional and personal stress. This has been negatively impacting teachers' overall well-being and their ability to effectively teach and lead their students. Metaphorically speaking, teachers cannot pour from an empty cup or when they

are not well, and the long-term impact of teaching through the pandemic has created a situation where teachers are dealing with increasing stress, grief, and burnout, having an "immense impact on the health and well-being of teachers" (Kotowski et al., 2022, p. 408).

Literature Review

Stress and burnout in teaching is not a new phenomenon. However, the impact of the global pandemic on these indicators is an emerging topic of research. Increased responsibilities associated with professional instruction, assessment, management, and provision of social-emotional learning, as well as trauma-informed care for students, all required enhancement following the outbreak of the global coronavirus pandemic. "Covid-19 is thought to be amplifying stressors of regular teaching work, teachers are also dealing with job stressors that are a direct result of the pandemic itself" and "facing challenges with lower student attendance, lower engagement in online lessons, and difficulties with student access to technology" (Herman et al., 2021, p. 484). Teacher well-being has been greatly impacted by the pandemic and it has "been a serious psychosocial issue for teachers" (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021, p. 106). Professional stress that may have already existed prior to the pandemic related to increasing workload, variance in administrative supports, negative relationships with students, and time pressures, have been exacerbated, magnifying teachers' emotional exhaustion and negatively impacting their overall well-being (Soncini et al., 2021).

"Chronic stress at work, combined with a lack of support and resources, can lead to professional burnout" (Baker et al., 2021, p. 492). "Over time, these demands lead to teacher stress and burnout, which has been linked to lower self-efficacy, lower performance, lower job satisfaction, poor physical and psychological health, and turnover" (Kotowski et al., 2021, p. 408). The urgency to understand the causes of burnout and support required is paramount

following the past two years of the global pandemic, as teachers are feeling increased levels of stress and anxiety.

Burnout syndrome is described by Martinez-Ramon et al. (2021) as being a "state of stress that affects people at a psychological level, producing changes in attitude, mood, demotivation in terms of work, and other" and is defined by "high emotional exhaustion, high depersonalization, and low personal fulfillment" (p. 1). In the profession of teaching, these symptoms of burnout could be catastrophic to the individual educator, but also have disastrous effects on teaching and learning. "Burnt out teachers are no longer effective in their teaching roles and lack commitment to their schools and students, which often results in chronic absenteeism, medical leaves of absence, and in some cases attrition" (Sokal et al., 2021, p. 1). To prevent some of these symptoms of burnout, "school systems must start to deal with mental and physical health of teachers before a large portion of them leave the profession" (Kotowski et al., 2022, p. 414). Teacher well-being needs to be prioritized and acknowledged as a preventative method of support that could reduce the risk of "losing good teachers to overwork and stress" (Lawrence et al., 2019, p. 197).

Much of the research and literature regarding educational burnout and Covid-19, discuss how to increase teacher self-efficacy and support in the period of online learning and teaching, during the beginning stages of the pandemic (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021; Soncini et al., 2021; Beard et al., 2021; Zadok-Gurman et al., 2021; Vargus-Rubilar & Oros, 2021). The gap in this literature is in how to support teachers after almost two years of intermittent online teaching, constant disruption both professionally and personally, prevent teacher burnout, and foster more supportive environments that emphasize the well-being of teachers, following teaching through the pandemic.

The constant upheaval in the education system resulting from the global pandemic, has not only led to symptoms of the burnout syndrome, but the "acceptance of the drastic changes has become hard for people to adapt making them suffer from grief" (Valliani & Mughal, 2021, p.1). "Grief is a usual reaction to the loss of life or radical changes in lifestyle during or later a distressing event in terms of anxiety, distress, anger, disbelief, denial, loss of appetite, or sleep" (p.1). The unpredictability of life has created fertile ground for grief to be experienced by educators. Grieving over the loss of personal pre-pandemic teaching efficacy, loss of normalcy in student behaviour and expectations, as well as consequential disillusionment with one's capacity to make real change, creates the perfect storm of grief and burnout symptoms for teachers (Baker et al., 2021; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2022; Pressley; Valliani & Mughal, 2021). By utilizing the theoretical framework of Kübler-Ross' Grief Theory (1969), which claims people go through stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance), and connecting it to the indicators of burnout posited by Nagoski and Nagoski (2019) the dynamism of these conceptualized stages of grief regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and teaching practices and subsequent burnout, was investigated in my research.

Administration has a responsibility to find ways to support teachers' well-being where they can flourish and continue to have a positive impact on their student's growth and development (Beard et al., 2021). "Attending to well-being has become an important pillar of improving learning environments for students and teachers" (Cherkowski et al., 2020, p. 411) and school leaders have an integral part to play in fostering this. Well-being can also be fostered among teachers collectively through the building of a school culture based on collaboration, altruism, and provision of social support for colleagues during increasingly stressful times (Turner et al., 2022), as experienced during the global pandemic.

As we navigate the future following the global pandemic, an emphasis placed on teacher well-being and healing from the grief and burnout experienced during this unprecedented time should be prioritized. "Teachers who receive high social support are less affected by negative emotional effects and can create a positive work environment" (Ibrahim et al., 2021, p. 5). Cherkowski and Walker (2018) discuss the important role of leadership in cultivating a school culture that fosters well-being through genuinely spending time getting to know "teachers' skills, talents, temperaments, passions, and giftedness" to "facilitate the co-creation of an environment of flourishing for teachers" (p. 138). The urgency to cultivate a staff culture collaboratively working towards well-being and healing will be paramount to retain teachers and support educators to better teach and lead their students following the pandemic (Luthar et al., 2021). "Proactive community and school-based prevention efforts must be treated as a public health priority as society continues to deal with diverse fallouts from the pandemic; the well-being of an entire generation of youth is [also] at stake" (P. 57). Understanding teachers' challenges, stresses, and anxiety following the global pandemic will be integral to leadership supporting educators moving through their symptoms of grief and burnout, and for the future development of our education system. The purpose of this research was to address some of the gaps in the existing literature surrounding grief and burnout experienced by teachers resulting from teaching during the global pandemic and identification of frameworks that administration and leadership could utilize to build understanding and proactively support teachers.

Methods

The methods used for this qualitative research project were aligned with grounded theory, as the objective of this analysis was to "identify patterns in the data" and address "questions about process; that is how something changes over time" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32).

Interview questions were intentionally created to be open-ended, allowing respondents to comprehensively share. Purposeful sampling was utilized as the selection method for participants, based on the idea the greatest understanding and insight be prioritized (p. 96). The design of the qualitative research interviews was such that respondents could connect using an online video meeting platform (Google Meet), at a convenient and collaboratively predetermined time, and in a space that was conducive with comfort and increased ease for thoughtful response. The distribution of materials and questions prior to the interview was deliberate to engage participants and encourage cognition and comprehensive responses, as well as ease any anxiety about the upcoming transcribed interview.

Respondent Group

As the principal of a high school, I discussed the intended research with my staff and asked for willing participants, explaining this was completely voluntary and to inform me of their interest to participate. I also sent out an email asking principals in our division if they could recommend anyone on their staff for this research. Additionally, I sent out a request to people who are teachers on my personal Facebook account and asked for volunteers to participate in research regarding professional grief and burnout resulting from the pandemic. Six participants confirmed they were interested, four who were part of my staff, and two from other schools. All the participants were female, and their years of teaching experience ranged from six to over thirty years. All respondents were interviewed with information collected, transcribed, and pseudonyms are used when referring to each participant.

Tina was a science teacher, with twelve years teaching experience at the same rural junior and senior high school that has an approximate student population of 250-300 students in grades 7-12. Tina was on maternity leave during the initial wave of Covid-19, from March to August of

2020, and then experienced the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year teaching full-time, intermittently online and in-person. Tina experienced cohorting of classes and teaching during the 2020-2021 school year, returning to her own classroom in the 2021-2022 school year. Tina had prior experience using technology for her lesson design and delivery of teaching materials, but limited experience offering synchronous online teaching to her students. Her school equipped her with a microphone, Google Chromebook, and digital recording subscription, to support her synchronous teaching. Tina was a married mother of two young children, with all her family and friends lived in her town or in neighboring communities.

Kimberly was a junior high mathematics teacher, who transitioned to a larger rural junior and senior high school, with an approximate student population of 250-300 students in grades 7-12, from a small, mixed-grade, rural school in the division, with an approximate student population of 75-100 students from kindergarten to grade 9, at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. Kimberly had six years of teaching experience. During the initial wave of Covid-19, when schools closed, as well as when students went online intermittently, Kimberly had a student population without access to technology, so online teaching was not required. However, she was required to stay connected to families and send home paper copies of work to be completed. Kimberly was able to teach in her own classroom for the duration of pandemic teaching. During the 2021-2022 school year, Kimberly was forced to deal with chronic absenteeism and outbreaks of Covid-19 amongst student and staff population, but her teaching remained entirely in-person for the year. At the time of data collection, Kimberly taught in the town she was raised in and had most of her family and friends live in her town or neighboring communities.

Charla was a junior and senior high humanities teacher, with six years of teaching experience. Her first four years were spent in a remote rural community, with an approximate student population of 75-100 from kindergarten to grade 12, teaching mixed grades. The initial wave of Covid-19, in March 2020, was like Kimberly, as the students did not use online platforms, so the work created and delivered to students was in the form of paper packages. During the 2020-2021 school year, Charla transitioned to a larger junior and senior high school in the division, with an approximate student population of 250-300 students in grades 7-12, experiencing intermittent online teaching and delivery in a larger, non-mixed grade setting. Charla was able to teach out of her own classroom for her senior high classes and teach cohorted junior high classes, in the 2020-2021 school year. Returning to her classroom for all her classes in the 2021-2022 school year, Charla had extensive experience with online synchronous teaching and inclusion of technology in the classroom, as she had experience as a virtual educator for the first four years of her teaching career. At the time of the research interview, her school had equipped her with a microphone, Google Chromebook, and digital recording subscription, to support her synchronous teaching. Charla lived with her partner and had limited family members in the area she currently lives.

Emma was a principal and teacher at an elementary school within the division, with an approximate student population of 200-250 from kindergarten to grade 6. Her experience spanned thirty plus years as an educator. She was newly hired as principal for the 2020-2021 school year, following the previous three years as vice-principal at the same school, and teacher for many years before that. Emma had three adult children and is eligible for retirement, but still has a passion to positively impact the world of education. The cohorting of classes was her responsibility to oversee. Her teaching during the last two years had been minimal, as her

administrative duties made up much of her daily work. Emma had no experience, prior to pandemic teaching, with delivery of lessons, content, or synchronous online instruction. Emma lived with her partner and had additional family living within two hours of town.

Tanya was a junior and senior high science teacher, with six years of experience in teaching. The first three years of her career were spent in a small rural school in our division, with an approximate student population of 100-150 from kindergarten to grade 12, with multi-grade classes. She transitioned to the larger junior/senior high school, having an approximate student population of 250-300 students in grades 7-12, at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. Tanya experienced the cohorting of classes during the 2020-2021 school year, with the return to her own classroom in the 2021-2022 school year. Tanya had extensive experience with online synchronous teaching and inclusion of technology in the classroom, as she had experience as a virtual educator for the first three years of her teaching career. At the time of data collected, her school had equipped her with a microphone, Google Chromebook, and digital recording subscription, to support her synchronous teaching. Tanya taught in the town she was raised in and had most of her family and friends living in town or neighboring communities.

Betty was a junior high science and math teacher at a larger junior high school, with a student population of approximately 450-500 students from grades 7-9. She had nine years of experience, all in the same division, and had been at her current placement for the past five years. Betty experienced the cohorting of classes and migration around the school to teach students during the 2020-2021 school year. Returning to her own classroom in the 2021-2022 school year. She was also required to team-teach with another grade level teacher throughout the 2020-2021 school year, to adhere to cohorting expectations. Betty had minimal experience delivering synchronous lessons online but was adept with technology and the use of it in her lesson design

and delivery. At the time of the research interview, her school had equipped her with a microphone, Google Chromebook, and digital recording subscription, to support her synchronous teaching. Betty lived with her partner, close to all her family and friends.

Data Collection

The data collection was conducted as semi-structured interviews. General questions were explored and asked of the participants to allow for individual description and extrapolation. The nature of the questioning was structured in the sense it was predetermined questioning shared with participants prior to the interview, and unstructured in the depth each participant responded to the interview schedule and subsequent follow-up questions. The transcription of each interview was done using the Google Meet Extension, *Scribbl.* It captured the entire interview and categorized individual responses by name and was time-stamped.

The infographic (Appendix B) I created to summarize the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding the research, as well as the interview schedule (Appendix A), were distributed via email to participants prior to each interview, along with the letter of introduction and consent form (Appendix C & Appendix D). The purpose of this was to give participants time and space to ponder each of their individual responses to the questions, to gather comprehensive information. At the beginning of each interview, a review of consent and the theoretical framework was done using a script (Appendix E), to create consistency of information shared and subsequent data collected.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of each interview, transcripts were printed and reviewed. Each question was analyzed, and main ideas or concepts were highlighted and recorded on sticky notes, which were then placed on each corresponding question within individual transcripts. Once this was

completed, a summary of each of the respondents' interview answers were compiled to provide

respondent validation and engage in member-checking (see Appendix F). Within this analysis,

ideas were categorized with initial coding and further expounded on using corresponding quotes

taken directly from the interview transcript. Each of the respondent validation data results were

sent to the corresponding participant, for them to member-check and ensure reliability and

validity of data collected. Once this was completed, the data were further coded holistically,

looking for consistencies and variations in each response, and "recurring regularities in the data"

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 203). This final analysis of the information was then used to

summarize the findings for this research project, which will be discussed in future sections of

this paper.

Trustworthiness

To uphold the trustworthiness of this research, a variety of methods were used to

strengthen the research and collection of information from each participant. Receiving consent

was mandatory for all research participants, and the preview of the interview schedule and

information also added ethical transparency of the research for each participant. Electronic

transcription of each interview was effective in capturing words spoken verbatim, ensuring

information was not lost or left to human transcription errors. Trustworthiness of this research

was further enhanced through member checking the data gathered and summarized. Merriam and

Tisdell (2016) discuss member checks and respondent validation as an effective strategy for

promoting validity and reliability by "taking tentative interpretations/findings back to the people

from whom they were derived and asking if they are plausible" (p. 259). This was done with

each of the participants, to ensure correct information was gathered and not misinterpreted.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posit that reliability in the social sciences is problematic and instead of one reality being replicated, "researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it" (p. 250). A study such as this one, based on participant accounts is both "multifaceted and highly contextual" (p. 251), making achievement of reliability unrealistic. However, all attempts of setting my own beliefs aside within this research and during the interviews and subsequent interpretation of the data was prioritized. I made sure to ask consistent open-ended questions in each interview and was cognizant of any additional probing question not leading the participant in their discussion, but rather purposefully seeking enhanced understanding and depth of each response.

Limitations

As much as reliability, validity, and trustworthiness were a focus in this research, there were still issues and limitations. Some of the limitations revolved around recruitment of participants. Being a principal of the school where four out of six of the participants currently teach is a limitation. All these individuals are colleagues who I have worked alongside for years, but the inherent hierarchical relationship cannot be ignored, despite them willingly volunteering for this research of their own volition.

The lack of diversity of experience in various school divisions is also a limitation. Gaining a greater understanding of experiences of teachers regarding grief and burnout in a variety of school contexts is important to examine the similarities and potential themes identified. "Maximum variation in the sample, whether it be the sites selected for a study or the participants interviewed, allows for the possibility of a greater range of application" (p. 257). By addressing this limitation in future studies, greater variance in demographic representation would be prioritized, enhancing transferability.

Other limitations to this study, was the capturing of responses in a singular interview with each participant. It would be beneficial to run the study over a longer period and as the pandemic evolves and teaching resumes in the Covid-19 endemic phase, interviewing participants additionally to understand evolving perspectives and reflections concerning their stages of grief, experienced burnout, and overall well-being of teachers interviewed.

For future research and investigation, some of these limitations could be addressed having participants not directly known or that I work with, and ensuring interviews are conducted numerous times to enhance the breadth of responses in various contexts. These future considerations are important, however, these limitations discussed did not significantly impair the richness of data and responses collected. "Highly descriptive, detailed presentation" (p. 257) of each participant and data collected was prioritized, to increase potential transferability.

Research Findings

During each interview, the same questions were asked of each participant. Despite varying explanations and participant responses, the findings had many consistencies. In the following sections, the data collected will be discussed and described thematically, based on the questions asked in the interview schedule (Appendix A).

Teaching During the Pandemic

Despite varying years of experience among the surveyed teachers, being an educator during a global pandemic proved to have an enormous impact on each of the participants. The most prevalent descriptors when asked about their teaching experience during the pandemic was being overwhelmed, exhausted, and stressed. Many of the participants described this in terms of uncertainty of what was to come with the next impending wave, or the emotional and mental exhaustion revolving around getting sick or subsequent impact on work and family. One of the

research participants, Charla, described anxiety circulating around "feelings of helplessness when it comes to where we're at with the pandemic, while also teaching and not being in control of a variety of things that are going on." Another participant, Emma, described the overwhelm in terms of teachers being "expected to be joyful, happy, calm" and "control ourselves, both within the school and community" despite all that has been happening these past two years.

Another consistent experience of teachers was feeling disorganized with the shift away from normalcy within their teaching. This was due to a variety of factors including pandemic regulations imposed on schools and communities, such as cohorting of classes, increased safety precautions, and intermittent shifts to online learning. Tina said "I felt disorganized all the time. I never felt I was at my best self" or "delivering it as I would in a normal [teaching] situation." Betty also discussed the lack of clear direction from government and administration as "nobody had direction," added to the anxiety experienced by teachers. Participants also expressed stress and hopelessness as a result of teaching in the pandemic. Tanya commented that "we have been in this for a bit" and could not "see an end to it," while Charla found herself in survival mode and just "trying to make it to the next break or holding out hope for things in the future."

Finally, student learning loss and the weight of that falling on teachers was discussed by teachers like Kimberly, who indicated the initial shift to online learning, accompanied by the government stating nothing would decrease students' overall grade, led to "a lot of gaps in knowledge" and an attitude of apathy. "I was putting lots of work into my work, but it wasn't appreciated [or completed] by students," she commented.

Grief Experienced During the Pandemic

Despite the experience of each interviewed individual being unique, they shared a common pathway through grief regarding teaching in the pandemic. Each of them experienced

the initial shock, fear, and confusion during the impetus of the pandemic, aligned with what Kübler-Ross (1969) characterized as the denial stage of grief. This stage appeared to be the one participant revisited numerous times as new restrictions were announced or waves commenced. The other shared stage of grief consistently referred to was anger. The anger was felt towards the global situation and its impact on the world of education, but also anger being "directed at other people to just be cooperative and get this done," as Emma expressed. The anger was also expressed as "frustration with the government and not feeling like they were supporting teachers" as well as "frustration with the disengagement from kids," as Tanya stated. Betty discussed being angry, but "I didn't have anyone to be mad at because there was nobody to blame." The stage of anger in the grief framework is often felt as anxiety, which was confirmed by all the participants. "A lot of anxiety about being in a community where they don't wear masks" or even "really take precautions," commented Kimberly. Tanya also spoke to this anxiety regarding becoming "sick and once it finally happens, that [anxiety] doesn't go away because you can always become sick again."

The struggle to progress to the final stages of grief was consistent in each of the participants' journeys. Most of them continued to oscillate between the first stages of anger, bargaining, and depression. The acceptance and meaning stages, characterized by moving on and finding purpose or hope in the future (Kessler, 2019), appeared to be a struggle for the participants at this point of time. During Charla's interview, she summarized this with her comment, "finding meaning. That's a hard one at the moment." This question elicited an emotional response and tears from both Tanya and Charla, when asked to analyze their grief regarding the pandemic and teaching. The struggle to find meaning and see the "light at the end of the tunnel" seemed to be overwhelming and out of reach for all participants interviewed.

Burnout Experienced During the Pandemic

Unanimously, each of the participants expressed they had or were currently experiencing symptoms of burnout. Each of the participants referred to feeling emotionally exhausted, plagued by procrastination and a lack of motivation, as well as compassion fatigue, which flowed into their personal lives. These are all indicative of burnout (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019). Most of the participants expressed trouble with concentration, sleep, being creative and finding joy in the work that used to be fulfilling. Tanya stated that you can be doing "all of the things you should be to try to stay healthy and not be emotionally exhausted, but no matter how much rest you get, you still feel tired." Betty also commented on her current state of burnout and said "I don't have the energy anymore. I'm not fighting. So, burnout is real and I'm tired."

Another contributor exacerbating burnout, were the extra tasks and responsibilities placed on teachers during the pandemic response. This has been evident in dealing with increasing mental health concerns of students and in filling the academic gaps created by intermittent attendance and online instruction. Emma commented on this extra burden placed on educators to deal with increasing mental health concerns and stated, "I'm a trained teacher. I'm not trained to deal with trauma, and for the most part, with students and staff, that is what we are dealing with." Tanya commented on the overwhelm to get students caught up and that "you never feel like you're making progress forward." This not only has an impact on your professional life, but as Betty commented, it flowed into her personal life because "you must compartmentalize all the other life we are dealing with. So, when it all starts to bubble up, you don't have the compassion to deal with people you care about, let alone thirty kids who might make your day chaotic." The impact of teaching through this pandemic has had an overwhelming impact on the teachers who

participated in this research. This was another question that elicited an emotional response from half of the participants.

Grief and Burnout: Impact on Agency and Efficacy

Consistently it was expressed that the grief and burnout experienced in these past two years, related to teaching during the pandemic, had resulted in a negative impact on professional agency and efficacy. Every participant reported experiencing a loss of motivation, student apathy having a demotivating effect, increased responsibilities, and the loss of normalcy in teaching (i.e., online learning, classroom cohorting, monitoring of enhanced safety measures), have resulted in decreased agency and efficacy. Tina discussed the impact of student apathy and stated students were "emotionally exhausted and mental health was at an all-time low, making it tough to motivate them to want to do anything, even to do the fun activities. It was tough to feel effective."

Emma commented that the stress of the pandemic has created a "gradual impact that has caused a huge effect on me. We have a learning loss and it's up to teachers to fix it. As a teacher, I feel like we are fighting a losing battle, and this has really diminished my beliefs in what I can do." Charla expressed her concern regarding efficacy as, "students don't seem to be interested or want to get work done, nor do they care to do their best work and it sucks the joy out of teaching." Tanya discussed the increased responsibilities having a negative impact on teacher-student relationships when she said, "there's no time really left to build those deep connections with kids, and it adds to the feelings that you are unable to do a good job supporting students."

The loss of space dedicated to a classroom because of cohorting last year also had an overwhelming negative impact on professional agency and efficacy. It seemed to add more to the plates of teachers to be exceptionally organized, despite their burnout. Betty commented that

"last year was harder than this year because I didn't have my own space. Kids ran my classroom because they were the ones in there all day. The result was always feeling disorganized and never feeling like I had control of my teaching." Despite the sharing of classroom spaces not being common among all participants, they all found that teaching during the pandemic has unequivocally had a negative impact on their teaching in the areas of motivation, student apathy and subsequent teacher demotivation, and overarching professional attributes of efficacy and agency.

Teaching During the Pandemic and Career Satisfaction

All the participants discussed having a decreased sense of satisfaction following teaching during the global pandemic. Some had very low satisfaction and were pondering other career options for their future. Charla, Tanya, and Betty discussed looking at other career opportunities. Charla commented that "the last two years have definitely had me questioning what else I can do?" Betty commented that "with the increased demands, I feel like both my physical and mental health this year has really suffered and makes me consider if this job is worth it." Tanya commented that she might not "want to leave education altogether, but it has made me rethink what I do want to do."

The other participants identified the struggle and negative impact on career satisfaction, but also acknowledged that they are holding out hope for a better future, post pandemic. Tina made a comment that her joy in teaching is not there in the same way and her "overall satisfaction and happiness has decreased, but I'm hoping that it's going to get better." Emma commented that she still feels she can make a difference and "even though some days I feel depleted, when push comes to shove, I still have things to do."

The polarization of participants pondering other career options and remaining hopeful for teaching in a world not entrenched in a global pandemic, was enlightening if this data could be generalizable to a larger population of educators in terms of attrition. This would mean that 50% of teachers are pondering other career options following teaching through this global pandemic. To support teachers and halt this potential attrition, Ford et al., (2019) suggests the need for administration, both local and divisional, to make "school-level structures more enabling of teacher voice, choice, and collective decision making could very well influence individual perceptions of autonomy and control for teachers" (p. 626), positively impacted their well-being, and sense of efficacy, through social supports.

Mitigating Through Administrative Supports

The final research question centered around what administrative supports, both local and divisional, could potentially assist in mitigating the symptoms of grief and burnout, and had many of the participants pause and reflect. There was not an easy answer to this question due to the nature of the pandemic's impact on education and the number of uncontrolled variables. However, the answers of the participants concentrated around two ways that symptoms of grief and burnout could potentially be mitigated for teachers, and this was (a) through a shift in focus and (b) through more support in schools and classrooms.

All the participants responded that post-pandemic teaching required administration (divisional and local) to be cognizant that academics and benchmark assessments might not be the pertinent focus for the next few years, rather, a focus on students' mental health and well-being with a return to consistent in-person instruction should be prioritized. Tanya responded and said, "instead of high stakes assessments, maybe we need to shift more to looking at how we support kids to actually want to come to school and be engaged." This was true before the

pandemic, but the urgency to respond post-pandemic is essential. Betty pointed out that the divisional push to complete assessments "always falls onto students completing more and teachers collecting more, which has a negative impact on students who are already struggling to attend and find success." Participants agreed that a pedagogical shift may be required to adequately meet the diverse needs of the students in our schools and classroom, following the pandemic.

The other response advocated for by the research participants was an increase in supports. This support came in varied forms including in-class educational assistant support, recruitment of more substitute teachers, with the already short supply becoming exceptionally scant amidst the pandemic, with the fear of getting ill a real threat to many retired or health-compromised substitutes, as well as greater empathetic support provided to teachers from administration regarding the grief and burnout experienced. Charla commented that it is important for administration to "understand that we are going through a lot and need to grieve through this in different ways" and need allowance for things like "mental health days" when needed because it can be a real "struggle to push through this job on a daily basis." Emma also pointed out "more than anything, its empathy. We need our [divisional] administration to be empathetic towards us because we've given so much. Acknowledge that we are burnt out."

Overall, the responses regarding support for symptoms of grief and burnout experienced by teachers from divisional and local administration centered around advocating for understanding, greater supports, empathy, and value placed on what needs to be done to effectively meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all our students.

Research Conclusions

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and how it contributed to teachers' symptoms of grief and burnout, investigating the impact on professional agency, efficacy, and satisfaction, while assessing ways administration and leadership could support and potentially mitigate some of the symptoms of these symptoms experienced by teachers. Throughout each interview, it was consistently discussed the incredible impact teaching through the pandemic has had on each of the teachers' who were interviewed. At times, the emotional exhaustion was palpable, even through the screen. Tears accompanying stories of hopelessness, anxiety, and devastation about the impact on the perceived efficacy, passion, and capacity of each of the educators. It was clear each of these professionals had and were going through various stages of grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969), many oscillating between the stages of anger and depression. All the participants desired to move forward through the grief, recognizing that in order to "achieve the acceptance stage, it is important to acknowledge one's feelings and emotions including sadness, anxiety, fear, and anger" (Valliani & Mughal, 2021, p. 2), and expressed wanting to be able to move forward and on from this time in their lives.

According to the participants interviewed, confirming assumptions made prior to conducting this research, teaching during the pandemic negatively impacted teachers' overall mental health, well-being, and contributed to indicators of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, depletion of compassion and empathy, as well as a decreased sense of accomplishment, especially regarding professional efficacy and agency (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019). Among all the participants, even those who were attempting to be more positive, looking to the future for a reorientation of the profession and a return to what teaching was before the pandemic, they all expressed a level of exhaustion that had never been felt before, along with

deep sadness surrounding their personal beliefs regarding their capacity to continue teaching and leading effectively. This lack of confidence, as a byproduct of teaching through the pandemic, requires supports and deliberate focus to reinvigorate and foster a sense of well-being in our teachers, mitigating these mentioned symptoms of burnout.

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

Through this research, it was clear that greater supports and holistic attempts at healing from the grief and burnout caused by teaching through the pandemic was necessary. Emphasizing the well-being of teachers as we move to into the next chapter of education will require administrative supports, both divisional and local. One such theory explaining this need to cultivate well-being is within Deci and Ryan's Self-determination Theory (2000), which "postulates three universal, innate psychological needs: for autonomy (ownership, responsibilities, and self-actualization), belongingness (close relationships, interpersonal regard, and support), and competence (feeling capable to bring out desired outcomes and effectively cope with challenges" (Spilt et al., 2011, p. 462). As humans, we have a need to have these actualized to feel a positive and meaningful connection to the work we do as teachers. As a result of teaching through the Covid-19 pandemic, much of these characteristics of self-determination were eroded, leaving teachers with feelings of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and decreased professional efficacy, characterized as burnout. "Teachers are potentially suffering from elevated burnout that may lead to high turnover rates in the near future" (Kotowski et al., 2022, p. 414). This negative impact on the well-being and possible attrition of educators needs an intervention from leadership, both at the local and divisional level.

Social supports, focused on forging relationships, based on mutual-respect, empathy, and understanding (Turner et al., 2022) could be the part of the proactive solution offered to teachers

experiencing symptoms of grief and burnout. "It could include simply being concerned about teachers' overall well-being and ensuring that the school acknowledges the time and effort spent by teachers to perform their job" (Lawrence et al., 2018, p. 197). This was expressed by research participants, wanting to be seen for the work they do and for all the effort expended during this unprecedented time in education.

Additional supports that could be created for teachers' well-being following this pandemic is by utilizing the PERMA well-being model, coined by Seligman (2012) to improve well-being through positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Turner and Theilking (2019) discuss expanding on this PERMA model and honing in on four major strategies for administration and leadership to support the well-being of teachers including utilization of a person's character strengths, providing the aforementioned social support, focusing on building a positive workplace environment, and creating opportunities for teachers to celebrate the positive aspects of their work. Though the research participants did not have knowledge of these theories and frameworks, they did advocate for administration and leadership to provide more recognition of all they do for students and add to the profession. "School leaders, as influential shapers of school conditions and processes, play a central role in addressing the psychological needs of teachers within schools" (Ford et al., 2019, p. 618).

For teachers to effectively lead and mentor young people, while cultivating meaningful learning opportunities, it requires "happy, healthy teachers who feel well and whole in their work" (Cherkowski & Walker, p. 1). This is especially true when dealing with diverse student populations exhibiting various psychological, social-emotional, and academic challenges. Teachers "need to preserve and maintain their psychological well-being before dealing with the various challenges in the education sector" (Ibrahim, p. 2). The emphasis for administration and

leadership needs to be in creating and cultivating supports for teachers to feel like they can heal and move forward from the grief and burnout experienced as a byproduct of their experiences during the global pandemic.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the vast amount of literature related to teacher burnout, limited research has been conducted that connect Kübler-Ross' Grief Theory (1969) and the conceptualization of burnout indicators (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019) with how the Covid pandemic has contributed to teachers experiencing both professional grief and burnout. This emerging topic of research could highlight the emotional and mental impact of the global pandemic on not only student learning and achievement, but also on educator job satisfaction and attrition. With more research and investigation, patterns could be identified related to grief and burnout, and school divisions could respond with modifications and support that assist teachers and students.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding that despite teachers continuing to teach and persevere through pandemic teaching, they are not superhuman and that they too grieve because of the societal upheaval resulting from the global pandemic, and the impact on the job that is so much more than that for many teachers. These symptoms of grief lead to increasing levels of exhaustion, stress, anxiety, and eventual burnout. With greater awareness of this, more emphasis can be placed on provision of supports for teachers from local and divisional administration, to ensure they are getting the support they need and continue to have a positive impact on teaching and learning in their classrooms and with their students. Through this, we can collectively heal and move forward into the next chapter in the world of education.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

1) What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?

2) Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?

3) Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing symptoms of burnout?

4) How have these feelings of grief and burnout impacted your sense of agency and efficacy as a teacher?

5) How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall satisfaction with your career?

6) What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?

Appendix B: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Infographic
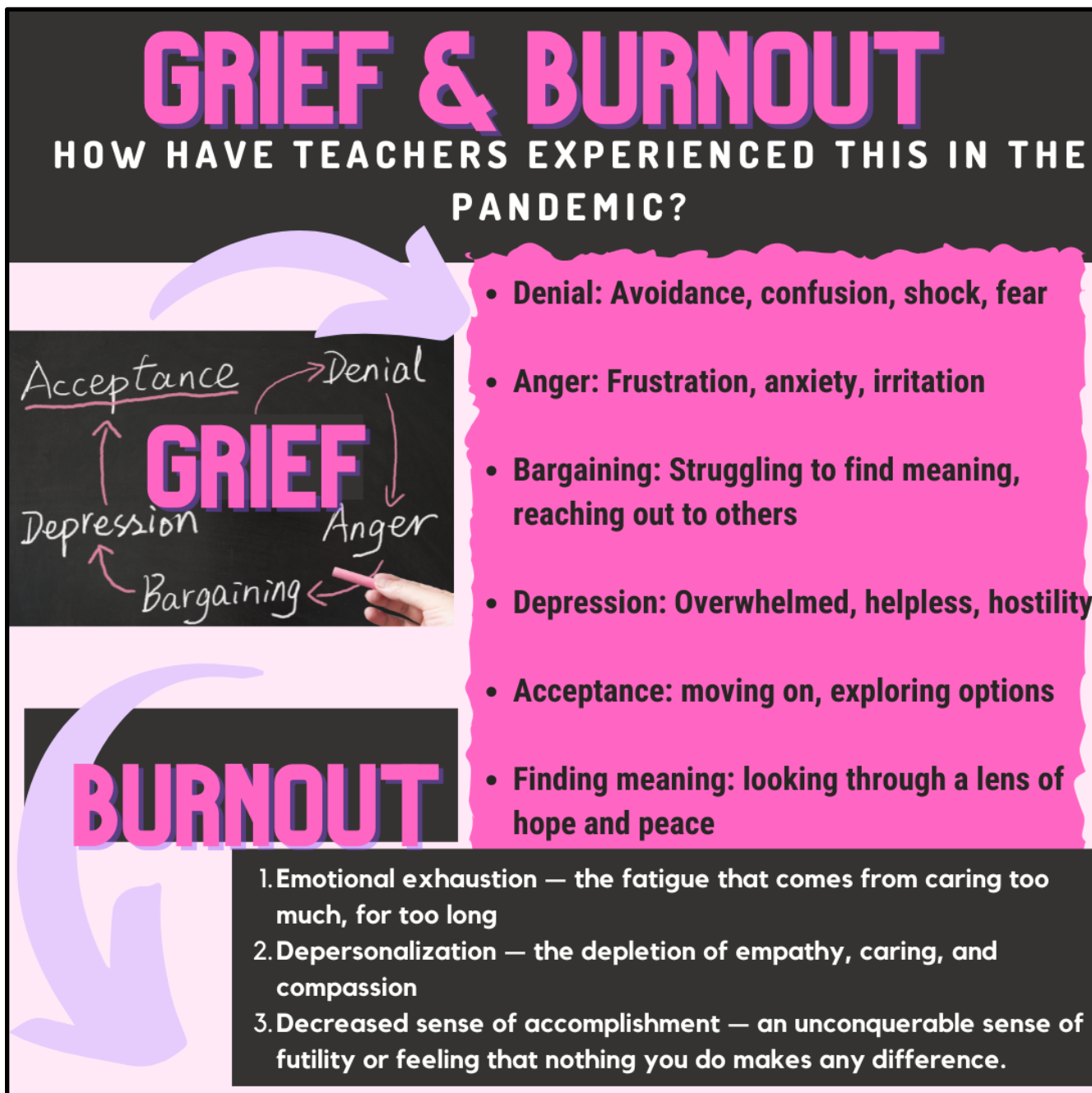
Appendix C: Participant Introduction Letter

February 26, 2022

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student in the Master of Education in Educational Policy Studies program at the University of Alberta. The purpose of this letter is to you to take part in a research assignment for my EDPS 509 Research Design and Data Analysis course. My assignment is intended to investigate the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had and contributed to teachers' symptoms of grief and burnout. Your participation would involve an hour interview that would be conducted using a digital platform and video call. The data collected will then be sent to you following the interview for you to look at and confirm the accuracy of the data and information collected. Your participation is voluntary; there will be no consequence to you should you decline to participate or decide to withdraw from participating.

To gather data for my research assignment, I will be asking you semi-structured interview questions. These questions will be distributed to you prior to the actual interview for you to look at and understand prior to the date of the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Please note:

- You may choose not to answer any question.
- You may opt out of this research assignment once responses have been submitted.
- To do so, please submit your request by email by March 18th, 2022, and I will destroy all data.
- I will send you a transcription of the interview as well as a summary of the main points I understood to you to make by email; you will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcription and my interpretation of it.
- Should any concerns, complaints, or questions arise from your participation, you may contact me or my instructor, Dr. Jose da Costa (jdacosta@ualberta.ca).

All data will be handled in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants:

- Participant names will not be revealed. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms or numerical coding will be used in all written representations of the data.
- Hard copy data will be locked in my personal Google Files and will be destroyed on completion of my graduate program.
- Digital data will be stored on my computer under a secure password-protected system and will be destroyed on my completion of my graduate program.
- Data will be used to complete my EDPS 509 course, my graduate program, and may be used in future presentations and publications in educational contexts.

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in my research. If you wish to participate, please sign the attached consent form, and return it via email (sfraser@ualberta.ca) by February 18, 2022. I have included two copies of the consent form: one is to be signed by you and the other is for your own records.

The plan for this research has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, you can contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Should you wish a copy of my research findings, I would be pleased to provide one on your request.

Sincerely,

Shannon Fraser

Graduate student in the Educational Policy Studies

Faculty of Education, University of Alberta

sfraser@ualberta.ca

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

EDPS 509 Research Assignment: Grief and Burnout: Teaching through the Pandemic

Researcher: Shannon Fraser

Date Range of Research: February 14, 2022 - March 18, 2022

I, _____ (name of participant), hereby consent to participate in the research, Grief and Burnout: Teaching through the Pandemic

I understand that my participation includes:

- • an hour interview questioning with Shannon Fraser
- • the interview will be completed using Google Meet and transcribed using the extension *Scribbl*, which I will have access to once complete.

As per the Letter of Information, I understand that:

· My participation in this research is voluntary.

· I may withdraw from the research without penalty until March 30, 2021.

· All information gathered will be treated confidentially.

· No identifying information will appear on written representations of the data: pseudonyms or numerical coding will be used to convey the data.

· The data will be used for the purposes of completion of the Master of Education in Educational Policy Studies program and may be used in future presentations and publications in the educational context.

· The plan for this research has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, I can contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

Appendix E: Script for Introduction of Interview

This was used in each of the interviews as a script, be consistent and cover the same information with each participant.

Hello. Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this research project. As indicated on the consent form, this participation is voluntary and at any time you feel like you don't want to be part of this, you can withdraw from the research without penalty until March 30, 2022. All information gathered will be treated confidentially and no identifying information will appear on written representations of the data: pseudonyms or numerical coding will be used to convey the data. This information and data collected will be used in completion of the Master of Education course EDPS 509 and final research project and may be used in future presentations and publications in the educational context. Were there any questions you had based on what I sent or anything you've seen/heard up until this point.

I will begin this interview by giving you the basic overview of the research when it comes to grief and burnout. Grief is characterized by any normal or natural reaction to any type of loss. Typically, grief gets looked at in terms of death, but it can be a loss of anything. It is really defined as a conflicting set of feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar, pattern, or behavior. So, of course that's death. But it can also be a divorce. A loss of a job. The transition from what my job used to what it is now.

The theoretical and conceptual framework I'm using for this research is based on Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' theory and stages of grief. As a psychiatrist who worked with terminally ill patients for her research, she developed a theory that people go through grief in stages. In her book, *Death and Dying*, she identifies five different stages of grief in her framework.

The five stages of grief are depicted in the infographic provided. The first stage is denial, characterized by avoidance, confliction with shock and fear. The next stage is anger, typically played out with anxiety and frustration. Then bargaining and the struggle to find meaning, but also trying to figure out how you're going to exist in this state now with this loss. Then depression, which is characterized by feelings of helplessness and being overwhelmed. Finally, there is acceptance, where you are attempting to move on and finding a new normal.

In the past 10 years, David Kessler, who worked closely with Kubler-Ross, came up with the sixth stage called, meaning, which is a stage where you find peace and purpose within the grief you are experiencing. I gave you the infographic, so you could have a visual reference as we go through. David Kessler did an interview in March 2020 with Harvard Business Review, where he discussed grief within the pandemic. He discusses the grief experienced during the pandemic being centered around the loss of normalcy, or the loss of connection, or the loss, and fear surrounding, social, political, or economic upheaval. He also talked about anticipatory grief, so you're anticipating it to last longer or you're anticipating getting the virus. He classifies this as anticipatory grief and when it manifests itself it looks and feels like anxiety.

These stages of grief are not static, and people can oscillate between the different stages of grief. These feelings of grief and that unresolved loss, then transitioning into feelings of, where do I go next? And feelings of helplessness. This can then lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout.

Burnout is characterized by three different things. 1.) emotional exhaustion. This is the fatigue that comes from caring too much for too long. 2.) depersonalization and feeling completely depleted of empathy and caring and compassion and then finally, 3.) a decreased sense of accomplishment, an unconquerable sense of futility or feeling that nothing you do really

makes a difference. Taken together, Kubler-Ross' theory and stages of grief and the Nagoski and Nagoskis' conceptualization and symptoms of burnout, I am looking at the extent to which this global pandemic has contributed to teachers' experiencing symptoms of grief and burnout.

Do you have any questions before we move on to the research questions?

Appendix F: Research Respondent Validation

**Pseudonyms have been used for each of the research participants

Research Participant: Tina
Years of Teaching Experience: 12

Questions	Responses
What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?	● **Exhausting (repeated multiple times)** ○ "Emotional and mental exhaustion." ○ "Teaching both online and in the classroom was very tough and exhausting." ○ "Overwhelming amount of extra tasks." ● **Feeling Disorganized (without a classroom of own, because of cohorting)** ○ "I felt disorganized all the time. I never felt I was at my best self" or "delivering it as I would in a normal [teaching] situation."
Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?	● **Various stages of shock, fear, and anxiety about job and personal life** ○ "Found it difficult to find where I fit into our school community going through this pandemic." ● **Struggling to find purpose** ○ "Why am I putting myself through all of the stress and everything going on at school" when "I could potentially be home with my own kids." ● **Transition to apathy at work** ○ "Overwhelming feelings of everything." ○ "You kind of just tried to avoid school as much as possible and avoid thinking about it as opposed to loving it and having passion for it."
Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing symptoms of burnout?	● **Burnout in the past two years, but not currently** " ○ I have in the past, but I don't believe I am right now in the moment" ○ "Last year I had to adjust and adapt to so many things, that emotional exhaustion was there." ● **Compassion fatigue** ○ Too much on the plates of teachers to meet the needs of students online, in-person, and be compassionate and understanding always. Accommodating every request. ○ "It was hard to continue that level of compassion for every area of your life. It was frustrating."

How have these feelings of grief and burnout impacted your sense of agency and efficacy as a teacher?	• **Professional efficacy and agency have decreased during the pandemic** 　○ "So many variables to have to worry about with the pandemic." 　○ Increased health measures, supervision, limited capacity for running labs or giving students movement breaks, all had an impact on teaching and learning in the classes. • **Increasing student apathy negatively impacted efficacy and agency** 　○ "They were emotionally exhausted" and "mental health was at an all-time low" making it "very tough to motivate them to want to do anything, even to do the fun activities." 　○ "It was tough to feel effective."
How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall satisfaction with your career?	• **Satisfaction with career very low** 　○ "Decreased satisfaction with my career for sure. Decreased happiness with my career and that stress carries home as well" • **Apathy of students** 　○ Lack of student motivation made it "really hard to stay motivated myself." • **Joy in teaching not there in the same way; hopeful for the future** 　○ "Overall satisfaction and happiness have decreased, but I'm hoping that it's going to get better."
What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?	• **Not sure what supports specifically** • **Prioritize student mental health** 　○ "Target mental health with the kids" because "as soon as they get better, my job is going to be a million times easier." • **Divisional Virtual Education has helped** 　○ Not having to do both synchronous and in-person learning has improved professional life and the workload has decreased slightly.

Research Participant: Kimberly
Years of Teaching Experience: 6 years

Questions	Responses
What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?	**Frustration with gaps in student learning and completion** - Following the initial shift to online learning, students were told that the work for the remainder of the year would not count towards their grade. This led to "a lot of gaps in knowledge" and attitude of apathy **Extra work being added to teachers' plates.** **"**I was putting lots of work into my work, but it wasn't appreciated [or completed] by students."
Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?	**Denial first, then anger and anxiety** "A lot of anxiety about being in a community where they don't wear masks" or "really take precautions." "Feeling overwhelmed with everything" and it seems "like we had a lot more jobs put on our plates" while also making sure everyone is "spaced out and also be the mask police."
Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing symptoms of burnout?	**Yes, to emotional exhaustion** "Putting so much effort into my job to have the students not care about it, is exhausting." - Apathy of students decreased overall energy output when creating teaching and learning activities
How have these feelings of grief and burnout impacted your sense of agency and efficacy as a teacher?	**Exhaustion** "I'm not putting as much effort into creating the best lessons or the best projects for the students because they're not caring about it. So why am I going to put in all of my effort?" **Procrastination** - Putting off marking or putting in decreased effort, has resulted in "late, late nights, which then just add to my exhaustion."
How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall	**Satisfaction has decreased** - More work has been added to the plate, with decreased student buy-in, making the act of teaching secondary to catching students up.

satisfaction with your career?	○ "I have so much more work because I need to do something for a certain group of students" and then with them now having such a "wide range of abilities in the class, it makes it hard to plan and teach to everyone." ● **Don't want to give up. Just tired** ○ "Satisfaction with my career? I wouldn't say that I want to quit teaching, but it's obviously not as good as it was a couple of years ago."

What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?	● **Support given from division in the form of more substitute teachers**
	   ○ Prioritizing the recruitment of subs into the division, will make it easier to take a day off or be sick without the worry of being away.
	   ○ "Making it more enticing to be a sub."
	● **"Local administration has done a good job of helping to mitigate grief and burnout."**

Research Participant: Charla
Years of Teaching Experience: 6 years

Questions	Responses

What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?	● **Uncertainty**
	   ○ "It's definitely been a struggle" to find "the light at the end of the tunnel."
	   ○ Work, life, contracting covid, regulations and protocols
	● **Survival Mode**
	   ○ Trying to just make it to the next break or holding out hope for things in the future, that would be a return to normal (i.e., diploma marking)
	● **Anxiety and feeling overwhelmed**
	   ○ "Feelings of helplessness when it comes to where we're at with the pandemic, while also teaching and not being in control of a variety of things that are going on."

Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?	● **Bargaining, denial, depression, and anger, not yet acceptance or meaning**
	   ○ Gone through the different stage's multiple times during the pandemic. "I've gone through denial. I've gone through anger."
	   ○ This question elicited the greatest emotional response. It was apparent that the grief was being felt and that the depression stage was the current stage being experienced.
	   ○ "Finding meaning. That's a hard one at the moment."

Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing symptoms of burnout?	● **Emotionally exhausted**
	   ○ Looking to the new semester as a reset, but "already feeling emotionally exhausted" four weeks in.
	   ○ Two-year anniversary of the pandemic beginning, and it "feels like a death and that you're reliving those moments."
	   ○ Can't find the motivation to put into schoolwork. "Feeling of dread attempting to get marking done" and feeling a "depletion of empathy."

How have these feelings of grief and burnout impacted your sense of agency and	● **Impacted efficacy and agency greatly**
	   ○ Questioning whether you are making a difference because of student apathy
	   ○ "Students don't seem to be interested or want to get

efficacy as a teacher?	work done, and nor do they care to do their best work and it sucks the joy out of teaching."

How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall satisfaction with your career?	● **Pondering other career options**
	  ○ "The last two years has definitely had me questioning what else I can do?"
	  ○ "I don't know if I can do this for another five years"
	  ○ "It is not what it used to be."
	  ○ The stability of the income and job opportunity is what continues to be the anchor.

What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?	● **Not sure what the solution is**
	● **Recognition of the struggle**
	  ○ "Understanding that we are going through a lot" and "need to grieve through this in different ways is good."
	  ○ Allowing mental health days when needed and that it is a struggle to push through this job on a daily basis.

Research Participant: Emma
Years of Teaching Experience: 30+years

Questions	Responses
What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?	**Overwhelming** "Teachers have been expected to be joyful, happy, calm" and "control ourselves both within the school and community" despite all that has been happening these past two years. **The weight of increasing responsibilities** - Catching students up academically, but also "truly dealing with trauma and crisis." - More than what teachers can handle or have the ability to handle. - Feeling "empathetic distress and compassion fatigue."
Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?	**Experienced stages of grief, especially anger and bargaining** "Anger was directed at other people to just be cooperative and get this done. It's not a big deal." "Bargaining was with others as well. Why are people not being cooperative? Do they not see the science?" **Attempting to find meaning** "Grief is the cost of caring" and we have both our "personal grief, which comes secondary to our professional grief." - Many have had to treat it "like it's a job, until we get to the end of this and our grief cycle."
Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing symptoms of burnout?	**Feeling all areas of burnout** - Exhaustion/lack of energy- "I've never had such trouble sleeping." "The stress is impacting my concentration and memory." - Loss of creativity and joy in things that previously "filled the cup." **Dealing with more=burnout** "I'm a trained teacher. I'm not trained to deal with trauma, and for the most part, with students and staff, that is what we are dealing with. There is so much unidentified trauma."
How have these feelings of grief and burnout	**Large impact on agency and efficacy** "A gradual impact of stress has caused a huge effect on me."

impacted your sense of agency and efficacy as a teacher?	○ "We have a learning loss" and "it's up to teachers to fix it." ○ "As a teacher, I feel like we are fighting a losing battle" and this has "really diminished my beliefs in what I can do." ○ "It has taken away a lot of my belief in myself."

How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall satisfaction with your career?	● **Significant impact on my career satisfaction**
	  ○ "My satisfaction used to drive me, but now I feel like many of these visions and desires I have had for the school and children, are unattainable."
	  ○ "I have felt like I have had to lower my standards and expectations from everyone-students and staff."
	● **Can still make a difference**
	  ○ "Even though some days, I feel depleted. When push comes to shove, I still have things to do."
	  ○ Despite the challenges, the choice to find meaning and purpose is still present. "Call me stupid, but I still love my job."

What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?	● **Empathy and Holistic Support**
	  ○ "I think more than anything, it's empathy. We need our administration to be empathetic towards us because we've given so much."
	  ○ Acknowledge the efforts of staff and provide on the ground support in the schools. "Acknowledge that we are burnt out."
	  ○ Meet us where we are at and see our schools for what they are. Be cautious with any cuts and deliberate with supports provided.

Research Participant: Tanya
Years of Teaching Experience: 6 years

Questions	Responses

What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?	• **Going through the motions**
	  ○ Cohorts, isolation, cart teaching, teaching online, "I think we are going through the motions."
	• **Feelings about the present and future**
	  ○ "We had been in this for a bit and didn't see an end to it."
	• **Scattered emotions and stress**
	  ○ "I felt this year more than ever the fear and potential of getting sick" and "everybody's experience with Covid has been so different."

Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?	• **Experienced stages of grief (anger, frustration, and anxiety)**
	  ○ "Frustration with the government and not feeling like they're supporting teachers" as well as "frustration with the disengagement from kids."
	  ○ "Anxiety. I've had a ton of anxiety about being sick and then it finally happens and once it does, that doesn't go away because you can be sick again."
	• **Nothing to look forward to**
	  ○ "You don't really have anything positive to look forward to because you don't know what's coming tomorrow."
	• **Relationship with colleagues stronger than ever**
	  ○ "We all have the same struggles" and are able to "connect and find common ground" within the struggles.

Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing symptoms of burnout?	• **Burnout experienced**
	  ○ "I would say I have felt burnout one hundred percent."
	  ○ Emotional exhaustion "I can really identify with" as I "never feel well rested" and I am "always tired"
	  ○ "You are doing all the things that you should be doing to try to stay healthy and not be emotionally exhausted" but "no matter how much rest you get, you still feel tired."
	• **Overwhelmed by all the tasks**
	  ○ "I've never been a person to think of teaching as a job, but this year more than ever, I've had to remind myself that it is just a job."
	  ○ Getting students caught up, along with all the other safety protocols we had to enforce, "you feel like you're never making progress forward."

How have these feelings of grief and burnout impacted your sense of agency and efficacy as a teacher?	● **Negative impact on agency and efficacy**
	  ○ "Gaps are slowly revealing themselves" and "nothing seems to make the kids excited about learning anymore."
	  ○ With all the increasing responsibilities, "there's no time really left to build those deep connections with kids" and adds to feelings that you are "able to do a good job at supporting students."

How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall satisfaction with your career?	● **Physical and mental health impact**
	  ○ "With the increased demands, I feel like both my physical and mental health this year has really suffered" and it makes me "really consider if this job is worth it."
	● **Satisfaction low**
	  ○ "I'm worried that even if things don't go back to totally the way they were, that they're not going back to a place that I'm going to want to remain in this career."
	  ○ "When I first started teaching, I knew I made a difference to kids, whereas now, I don't ever really feel that way."

What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?	● **Shift in focus**
	  ○ "Instead of high stakes assessments, maybe we need to shift more to looking at how we support kids to actually want to come to school and be engaged."
	  ○ "Teachers are being pulled in both directions, like we feel the weight of the rigor of academics" but also needing to "support students' emotional needs, and I think you can't always do both."
	● **More supports**
	  ○ "Increased social-emotional supports like increasing EA times to help within the classroom to keep kids included."
	  ○ Providing "more support to parents outside of the school."
	  ○ Continuing to have a social worker on staff to support students.

Research Participant: Betty
Years of Teaching Experience: 9 years

Questions	Responses
What has been your experience these past two years of teaching during the pandemic?	**Overwhelmed** - By constant changes and shifts in education and pandemic response. "After every announcement, sitting in my [vehicle] thinking, what do I do? What now?" - Extra put on the plate as a teacher, meeting students online, in-person, and asking "when do I get to turn off my computer? And the answer was never." **Disorganized** - Lack of clear direction from the government or administration, "nobody had direction." **Focus on getting students caught up after learning loss** - This past year, the focus has been catching students up and reintegrating them into what school entails. "So now I have this group of grade eights (for example) who are really in grade six, and learning loss aside, social skills are lacking because they missed out on learning how to be a teammate, and how to exist in a group of friends."
Within the definition and information provided regarding grief, how have you experienced feelings of grief related to your profession of teaching, during these past two years?	**Experienced grief- Denial, anger, and bargaining** - It started with "denial that this wasn't real" until it "moved to anger that first summer break between 2020 and 2021. I was just exhausted and emotionally drained, tired of answering everyone's questions about the next school year." "I was mad, and I didn't have anyone to be mad at because there was nobody to blame." - The question of "how am I going to get through this year" and pondering "what can I do if I quit teaching?" - Still in the bargaining stage and back at "surviving the rest of this year." **Not yet at acceptance or meaning** - Have not experienced this stage of grief, within the pandemic.
Based on the definition of burnout and indicators provided, have you or are you currently experiencing	**Burnout experienced** - Intermittently experienced in a real way, usually dependent on what is happening at school. "I don't have the energy anymore. I'm not fighting. So, burnout is real and I'm tired. I think I slept all last long weekend." **Flows into personal life** "My husband would ask why I was so cranky, because I

symptoms of burnout?	would snap at nothing." ○ You must "compartmentalize all the other life we are dealing with. So, when it all starts to bubble up, you don't have the compassion to deal with the people you care about, let alone 30 kids who might make your day chaotic."
How have these feelings of grief and burnout impacted your sense of agency and efficacy as a teacher?	● **Loss of motivation** ○ "I have definitely not been my best teaching self these last couple of years." ○ Work to avoid a negative mind frame. "It took me a long time to understand that I could still try to be a good teacher and didn't have to throw in the towel quite that quickly because I was frustrated that I couldn't do it all." ● **Loss of classroom/space has had a negative impact** ○ Last year was "harder than this year because I didn't have my own space. Kids ran my classroom because they were the ones there all day." ○ The result was always feeling "disorganized and never feeling like I had control of my teaching."
How has teaching during the global pandemic impacted your overall satisfaction with your career?	● **Satisfaction low** ○ "Maybe I can get through this year, but seeing how behind the kids are, not just academics, but socially, it's made me rethink whether I want to teach junior high forever, and I don't think the answer is yes." ○ "It's really made me rethink what I want to do forever." ○ "I don't think I would leave education altogether, but it has made me rethink what I do want to do."

What support from administration (local and divisional) do you think could assist in mitigating some of the symptoms of grief and burnout?	**Shift in focus** - Divisional push for completion of assessment "always falls onto students completing more and teachers collecting more" which has a negative impact on students who are already struggling to attend and find success. - This could be mitigated if divisional staff assist in the completion of this or also in a shift of emphasis. "If it's the head office telling us that we need to do this, why don't they bring in some staff and support so that a teacher can still run a class?" **More supports** - Divisional staff could add more support for teachers in this time following the pandemic. Instead of "always relying on teachers using their unpaid time," they could provide more in-school support for teachers. - Recognize that "burnout is at an all-time high."