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Implications of Mental Health and Educators

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Implications of Mental Health and Educators

Abstract

This study examined mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout in relation to educators in a rural, private school in the Pacific Northwest. Fourteen educators from the school participated in a compilation of short surveys to examine each research area individually. For full-time educators, the surveys showed that job resources positively correlated with mental health, job demands related negatively with job satisfaction, and mental health correlated negatively with exhaustion. After the surveys were analyzed, six of the full-time educators were invited to partake in a follow-up interview to further explore the possible correlations. In the interviews, educators mentioned the impact of a heavy workload, work relationships, and faith in God on their mental health. Correlations between mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout are complex and require further investigation to fully understand all the factors involved.

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Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

Implications of Mental Health and Educators

by

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B.A. Dordt University, 2014

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

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Abstract

This study examined mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout in relation to educators in a rural, private school in the Pacific Northwest. Fourteen educators from the school participated in a compilation of short surveys to examine each research area individually. For full-time educators, the surveys showed that job resources positively correlated with mental health, job demands related negatively with job satisfaction, and mental health correlated negatively with exhaustion. After the surveys were analyzed, six of the full-time educators were invited to partake in a follow-up interview to further explore the possible correlations. In the interviews, educators mentioned the impact of a heavy workload, work relationships, and faith in God on their mental health. Correlations between mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout are complex and require further investigation to fully understand all the factors involved.

Keywords: mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, burnout

The mental health of educators is often overlooked when considering the factors needed to support educators so they can flourish in their work and experience satisfaction and longevity in their careers. Keyes (2007, p. 1) studied mental health and found that only 20% of the adult population was “completely mentally healthy,” but those who rose to that level of health were most productive, functioned well psychosocially, and stayed physically healthier. Mental wellbeing seems to relate to educators’ ability to carry out their teaching duties effectively and to stay physically able and present in the classroom. Capone and Petrillo (2020) studied the mental health of 285 educators and confirmed that as mental wellbeing worsened, educators felt less satisfied and more burnt out in their work than those who reported a flourishing mental state. Mental health not only impacts the quality of educators’ work, but may also correlate with how satisfied they feel, and their likelihood of burnout.

To allow educators to thrive in their careers, it is imperative to look at the factors that contribute to mental health. A study by Johnson et al. (2005) on work-related stress, examined 26 different occupations and discovered the jobs that resulted with worsened mental wellbeing, correlated with higher amounts of stress and emotional labor. It is well established that “teaching is very stressful” (Arvidsson et al., 2019; Crowder et al., 2020; Froeschle & Crews, 2010; Johnson et al., 2005; Kuwato & Hirano, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). And the emotional toll is also an influential factor of mental wellbeing (Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Johnson et al., 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Stress and emotional demands negatively impact educators’ mental health and can be detrimental without proper resources or coping skills.

Work conditions present the context that contribute to educators’ mental health. Scanlan and Still (2019) used the Job Demands-Resources model of burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001) to separate work conditions into two categories, named “job demands”

and “job resources.” The work environment can add to educators’ stress or emotional exhaustion; these circumstances are called job demands (Scanlan & Still, 2019). In contrast, work resources are the conditions that bring support and “may help to maintain wellbeing” (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 2). Because teaching presents many stressors and involves emotional labor, it is vital for educators to recognize which conditions produce these negative outcomes, and how to respond in a way that diminishes their impact. Only by successfully balancing work demands and work resources can educators take hold of their mental wellbeing and flourish in their careers.

Work conditions not only influence mental health, but also correlate with job satisfaction. Scanlan and Still (2019) also studied the relationship of job demands and job resources with job satisfaction. They discovered a “positive correlation between job demands and exhaustion” (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 5). Also, Leithwood et al. (1999, as cited in O’Brennan et al., 2017, p. 165) found that exhaustion “can result in low levels of job satisfaction.” These findings suggest that work demands that deplete educators’ energy, produce a lower feeling of pleasure. Yet “in comparison to job demands, job resources appear more influential in supporting higher job satisfaction” (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 8). It would be beneficial for educators and administrators to understand and seek out resources that give support to maintain or improve educators’ job satisfaction.

Finally, the study of mental health is important because it is a major factor of burnout. Capone and Petrillo’s (2020) study on educators’ mental wellbeing and job satisfaction, also provided a correlation between mental health and burnout; educators who were “languishing” mentally, were more likely to experience burnout. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) researched and confirmed the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout. When educators experience

burnout, they also feel less effective in helping their students learn. This connection gives evidence that burnout does not only impact the educator, but also has the potential to negatively impact students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Therefore, educators must understand how work conditions impact mental health, so they can be sure to seek out the beneficial supports to aid their own career enjoyment and longevity, and for the betterment of their students.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to better understand educators' mental health by examining its main contributing factors and its implications for educators in their workplace. First, this study analyzed varying work conditions and any ties to mental wellbeing. This enables educators to recognize the benefits and detriments of their environments, so they can put up boundaries and seek out their needed resources or coping strategies. Second, this study explored the connection of work conditions and job satisfaction. Understanding these implications empowers educators to notice which circumstances give them pleasure and how that can influence mental wellbeing and educator burnout. Third, studying the relationship of mental health and burnout enlightens administrators and educators, so they can provide or seek out the necessary supports to remain mentally healthy. The insight of mental wellbeing is vital to enable educators to flourish in their careers by allowing them to negate negative work demands, improve their job satisfaction, and reduce their likelihood of suffering from burnout.

Research Questions

1. How do educators perceive that work conditions impact their mental health?
2. How do educators perceive that work conditions impact their level of job satisfaction?
3. How do educators perceive their mental health affects their feelings of burnout?

Definitions

Below is a list of pertinent terms with their definitions to depict how they will be used in this research study. The definitions are this researcher's unless otherwise noted.

Burnout: “A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach et al., 2001, as cited in Capone & Petrillo, 2020, p. 1758).

Job Demands: “Aspects of work that can cause stress” (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 2).

Job Resources: “Aspects of work that provide support to employees and may help to maintain wellbeing” (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 2).

Job Satisfaction: “A pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from...job experiences” (Capone & Petrillo, 2020, p. 1758; Locke, 1969).

Mental Health: “Emotional, psychological, and social well-being” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020).

Mental Wellbeing: Synonym for “mental health.”

Self-Efficacy: “Teachers’ judgment of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning” (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Work Conditions: “The working environment and all existing circumstances affecting labor in the workplace” (“Working Condition,” 2020).

Literature Review

Positive levels of mental health are vital for educators to find pleasure in their work and experience long-lasting careers. Educators today face many challenges to their wellbeing. Studies have shown that “teachers have a higher risk of mental disorders and work-related stress, compared with other workers” (Stansfeld et al., 2011; Wieclaw et al., 2006, as cited in Kuwato & Hirano, 2020, p. 1). There are multiple studies that confirm that teaching is one of the most

stressful occupations (Arvidsson et al., 2019; Froeschle & Crews, 2010; Johnson et al., 2005) and Kuwato and Hirano (2020) report that stressors, along with emotional labor, negatively impact mental health. Therefore, educators must be aware of how work conditions may be adding stress and deterring their mental health, or how work conditions are supporting them and benefiting mental wellbeing.

Educators' work conditions and mental health play a role in their job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is tightly connected to the work environment, so varying work conditions could influence the amount of enjoyment educators experience (Capone & Petrillo, 2020). Studies have found a correlation between job satisfaction and "psychological and social well-being" (Capone & Petrillo, 2012, & Capone et al., 2013, as cited in Capone & Petrillo, 2020, p. 1758), so mental health is inextricably related as well. It is imperative that educators realize how work environments impact their job satisfaction and mental wellbeing, so they can be proactive about staying healthy and thrive in their workplace.

Mental health also impacts educators by contributing to burnout. Burnout occurs because of "chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach et al., 2001, as cited in Capone & Petrillo, 2020, p. 1758), which exemplifies the connection between burnout and the mental wellbeing factors of stress and emotional labor. Capone and Petrillo's (2020) study provided evidence of a correlation among those who flourished mentally and those who experience low level of burnout. In addition to educators, the relationship between mental health and burnout is a concern for administrators, students, and stockholders, because burnout can "result in one's inability to effectively perform one's job" (Freudenberger, 1974, as cited in O'Brennan et al., 2017, p. 166). Hence, mental health must be supported for educators to remain mentally healthy, so they can excel in carrying out their duties and enjoy long-lasting careers.

Work Conditions and Mental Health

Work conditions greatly influence educators' mental wellbeing. Scanlan and Still (2019) researched the connections among working conditions, burnout, and job satisfaction. The study by Scanlan and Still (2019) included a population sample of mental health personnel to analyze the interconnections between work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout; these relationships extend to educators and other service occupations. To uncover any correlations, Scanlan and Still (2019) utilized a survey that included 25 questions that addressed job demands and job resources to measure work conditions, 16 questions from the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory to gauge the level of burnout, also one question to determine turnover intention, and one question to rate job satisfaction. Some of the survey results indicated that work stressors were "associated with exhaustion" and "had a small but significant influence on job satisfaction and turnover intention," while work assets "appear more influential in supporting higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intention" (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 8). The extent to which the workplace causes stress or delivers support impacts the mental health and wellbeing of employees. Understanding the distinction between work demands and resources is beneficial for recognizing which circumstances are helpful or harmful and to notice or prevent an imbalance of conditions.

Job demands encompass the conditions that lead to stress. Excess stress is problematic for educators. It is well recorded that educators "experience stress more frequently than many other professionals" (Froeschle & Crews, 2010, p. 290). A few examples of job demands are workload, long working hours, time pressure (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020), work-home interference (Scanlan & Still, 2019), lack of resources (O'Brennan et al., 2017), or a sense of powerlessness (Froeschle & Crews, 2010). Other studies have noted the negative effect of stress on educators (Crowder et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), even going so far as to

say that stressors “undermine the mental health of teachers” (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020, p. 2). Arvidsson et al. (2019, p. 1) completed a study on work-related stress and discovered that educators “scored among the lowest on physical health, psychological well-being and job satisfaction.” This is significant considering Johnson et al. (2005) examined 26 different occupations ranging from bar staff to accountants, and included police, nurses, social services, and the fire brigade as well as other professions. The jobs that resulted with worsened mental wellbeing, correlated with higher amounts of stress (Johnson et al., 2005). The research indicates that stressful work conditions could be damaging to mental health.

Research also suggests that a high level of job demands lead to emotional exhaustion. A few examples of job demands that could affect emotions are “collegial and workplace communication” (Schad & Johnsson, 2019), navigating interpersonal conflict (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020), lack of administrative support (Froeschle & Crews, 2010), and student counseling (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020). Near the ending stages of the study by Johnson et al. (2005), the researchers noticed that not only was there a relationship between mental health and stress, but also with emotional labor; stress and emotional demands are strongly related to mental health. Other studies have found a “positive correlation between job demands and exhaustion” (Dicke et al., 2018; Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 5), strengthening the evidence that stressful work conditions are associated with emotional exhaustion. It is important for educators and administrators to recognize what is emotionally demanded of educators and how that impacts their mental wellbeing.

In contrast, job resources have the potential to benefit the mental health of educators and allow them to flourish in their work. One job resource that assists educators is their self-efficacy or sense of job control. Studies show a correlation of educator self-efficacy and mental health

(Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Kuwato & Hirano, 2020); as educators remain mentally healthy, they feel more capable of performing their job effectively. Another sustaining job resource is interpersonal support, which can come in the form of rewards or recognition given by supervisors, constructive feedback (Scanlan & Still, 2019), or “social support in the workplace” (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020, p. 4). Kuwato and Hirano’s (2020) study found a correlation that showed mental health was benefited by positive interpersonal relations. Self-efficacy and support from colleagues and administrators contribute to a healthier mentality. Job resources depict how work conditions affect the stress and emotional levels of educators, which can correlate with mental wellbeing.

Work Conditions and Job Satisfaction

Work conditions also contribute to the amount of job satisfaction that educators experience. To see how occupational stressors, job satisfaction, and a sense of coherence relate with mental health, researchers Kuwato and Hirano (2020) sent out a survey to 681 Japanese high school educators, of which 370 educators responded from multiple public and private schools. The survey provided by Kuwato and Hirano (2020) included questions about work stressors and demands, the Sense of Coherence Scale, General Health Questionnaire, and one question to gauge job satisfaction. The responses of the high school educators revealed that “workload stressors, interpersonal stressors, high job demands, and low job control” correlated with worsened mental health (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020, p. 4). In addition, they found when educators’ mental wellbeing improved, so did their job satisfaction (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020). The findings from the study of Kuwato and Hirano (2020), suggested that certain work circumstances relate with mental health, which in turn associate with job satisfaction; there is a

possibility that work circumstances could then correlate with the level of pleasure that educators experience from work.

Other researchers have more specifically analyzed the relationship between work conditions and level of job satisfaction of educators. Work demands such as tension with students' parents, disagreements with other educators, and managing student misbehaviors contribute to "emotional exhaustion" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Capone and Petrillo (2020) found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and exhaustion, which remains consistent with previous research (Johnson et al., 2005, Leithwood et al., 1999). By combining the findings from Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) and Capone and Petrillo (2020), one could conclude that particular work conditions may lead to fatigue and lessen the amount of work contentment.

Research indicates that while stressful or exhausting work demands lower pleasurable emotions, job resources improve job satisfaction (O'Brennan et al., 2017; Scanlan & Still, 2019). When examining how positive work conditions impact job enjoyment, Scanlan and Still (2019, p. 8) discovered that "in comparison to job demands, job resources appear more influential in supporting higher job satisfaction." Since there is a stronger correlation between job satisfaction and work supports, it would be beneficial for educators to seek out the resources available to them. Specific job resources that most supported higher job satisfaction were "rewards and recognition, job control, feedback and participation" (Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 9); these supports are widely available and can be given with little cost, except the intentional time of supervisors. Furthermore, Capone and Petrillo (2020, p. 1758) observed a "positive relationship between job satisfaction and ...psychological and social well-being." The compilation of the study by Scanlan and Still (2019) with the study by Capone and Petrillo (2020) hint that if job resources

benefit job satisfaction, then those who experience more pleasure from their work may also demonstrate positive mental health.

Mental Health and Burnout

The level of burnout educators' experience and their state of mental health are strongly correlated (Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The implication of burnout is worth considering because it can "result in one's inability to effectively perform one's job" (Freudenberger, 1974, as cited in O'Brennan et al., 2017, p. 166), which greatly affects students. Arvidsson et al. (2019) completed a study to analyze factors of educator burnout. To carry out their research, Arvidsson et al. (2019) gave a baseline questionnaire to 769 employed educators and quantified the results from the 490 educators who responded. Later, Arvidsson et al. (2019, p. 7) invited a subgroup to partake in an exam and interview to further investigate the implications of work conditions, finding that "increased job demands was associated with an increased level of burnout." Additional studies have found that emotional demands, such as interpersonal conflicts with colleagues, students, and students' parents are "detrimental" to mental health (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020) and significantly contribute to burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Other positive correlations are "workload stressors" (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020), "prolonged stress" (Froeschle & Crews, 2010), and "depression" (Capone & Petrillo, 2020) which worsen mental health due to tension and exhaustion. Negative work conditions that continue to be unbalanced by job resources, create an environment that is conducive for burnout.

In contrast, job satisfaction negatively correlates with levels of burnout (Capone & Petrillo, 2020). Kuwato and Hirano (2020, p. 6) confirmed that educators who experienced more job enjoyment were "associated with better mental health." Plus, Capone and Petrillo (2020) and Scanlan and Still (2019) agreed that those who are "flourishing" mentally also experience more

enjoyment in their work and show a lower level of burnout, while a weakened mental health was associated with less satisfaction and “higher rates of teacher burnout” (Leithwood et al., 1999, as cited in O’Brennan et al., 2017, p. 165). Altogether, these studies suggest a relationship between the mental wellbeing of educators, the amount of job satisfaction experienced, and the likelihood of retiring early due to burnout.

Job resources that maintain or improve mental health, such as self-efficacy or a perceived level of job control, negatively correlate with burnout (Capone & Petrillo, 2020). Scanlan and Still (2019, p. 9) uncovered that the job resources of “rewards and recognition, job control, feedback and participation were most strongly associated with lower levels of burnout, lower turnover intention and higher job satisfaction.” Job control is a resource that ties closely with self-efficacy, so as educators perceived that they had command in how they taught students and felt capable in carrying those plans out, they experienced more job satisfaction and were less likely to result in burnout. Additional studies give evidence of a negative correlation between burnout and self-efficacy. Maslach et al. (2001) described a “a sense of personal and professional inefficiency” as one of the main factors of burnout and the burnout study by Arvidsson et al. (2019, p. 5) resulted in low self-efficacy as being one of “the strongest explanatory factors of high burnout.” Resources that support mental health, such as educators’ sense of self-efficacy, correlates with lowering levels of burnout.

Summary

In summary, the work conditions and mental health of educators connect with job satisfaction and burnout; all components are interrelated. Work conditions that can be categorized as job demands, lead to stress and exhaustion, and ultimately lower mental health, while job circumstances regarded as job resources, support mental wellbeing. The amount of job

demands and job supports associates with the levels of job satisfaction that educators experience. Educators who are less satisfied with their work, experience higher levels of work stressors, while those who experience more enjoyment live out a more balanced situation of job demands and resources and feel supported in their careers. Furthermore, those who flourish mentally, not only experience more job satisfaction, but also correlate with lower levels of burnout. Burnout is to be avoided because it has the potential to inhibit educators from performing their duties effectively, which then hinders their students' learning experience. It is important for educators to understand the importance of mental health because it is so strongly associated with work conditions and can have serious implications to the extent they are satisfied with their work and desire a long-lasting career.

Methods

This correlational study examined the relationships between work conditions, mental health, job satisfaction, and burnout. Separate studies have shown how stressful work conditions correlate with decreased mental health (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020), lessened job satisfaction (Scanlan & Still, 2019), and an increased rate of educator burnout (Froeschle & Crews, 2010), suggesting that these factors are interrelated. For this research study, the researcher invited educators from a Pacific Northwest school to participate in a four-part survey to gauge their personal levels in each of these four areas. After receiving and analyzing the results from the surveys, the researcher selected and interviewed a smaller sample of those educators to better understand the reasoning and patterns between the studied factors. Acquiring quantitative and qualitative information was imperative to determine the interrelationships and answer the research questions.

Participants

The research participants were educators from a small Pacific Northwest Christian school, located in a rural area. All fifteen of the full-time and part-time educators were invited to partake in the surveys to collect data of varying degrees of mental wellbeing, levels of satisfaction, feelings of burnout, and perceptions of work conditions. Fourteen of the fifteen educators were willing to participate, resulting in a 93% response rate. Out of the fourteen educators who completed surveys, nine work at the school full-time and five work part-time. Eighty-six percent of the educators classified themselves as White or Caucasian, 7% as a combination of ethnicities, and 7% choosing not to specify. Twelve of the educators were female and two were male. The educators were diverse in age with 64% over 50 years of age, 21% under 30 years old, and 14% between 40 and 50. This group of educators was also varied in amount of teaching experience with 36% having over 20 years of experience, 36% having 2-5 years, 21% having 10-20 years, and 7% having 5-10 years. From this group of educators with diverse experiences and perspectives, a smaller sample was chosen to be interviewed to further examine the research questions. The interviewees represented six diverse perspectives to delve deeper to confirm or deny connections between the areas of interest.

Materials

This research study was conducted with a comprehensive survey followed by an exploratory interview. The survey consisted of a compilation of questionnaires used by other researchers to determine the educators' mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and level of burnout. Appendix A shows the survey given out to the participants for this study. The survey began with a few demographic questions, such as name, ethnicity, age, and number of years of experience. To measure mental health, the survey included the Mental Health

Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes, 2009) with 14 questions and 6 answer options. The MHC-SF has been tested in various cultures to solidify that it rates well on internal reliability and consists of valid criterion (Lupano et al., 2017; Petrillo et al., 2015). The Job Demands Resources Questionnaire (Scanlan & Still, 2019) is made up of 25 questions on a 5-point Likert scale and aided the researcher in categorizing educators according to how supported or stressed they felt in the workplace. Studies have found that the Job Demands Resources Model has strong validity for assessing work conditions (Bakker et al., 2003; Demerouti et al., 2001). Educators' level of job satisfaction was determined by using the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS) (Pepe et al., 2017) which consists of 9 questions, on a 5-point scale ranging from highly dissatisfied to high satisfied. The TJSS was tested across multiple countries and provided reliable results and showed itself to be "an excellent screening tool" (Pepe et al., 2017). And educators' level of burnout was analyzed with the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti et al., 2010) which includes 16 questions on a 4-point Likert scale. Halbesleben and Demerouti (2005) along with Khan and Md Yusoff (2016) concluded that the OLBI was reliable and gave evidence of validity in determining mental health. After the educators took the survey, a few were invited to take part in a follow-up interview that expanded on their answers to allow the researcher to fully analyze trends and patterns; the specific questions asked during the interviews can be found in Appendix B. The initial survey reliably and accurately measured mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout and the following interview aided the researcher in fully interpreting and comprehending the results and trends.

Procedures

The research study began with gathering a large sample of participants to conduct the four-part survey. All educators at the rural Christian Pacific Northwest school were invited to

participate in the survey. The research survey was introduced and distributed during a staff meeting and given to individuals absent from the gathering. At the meeting, the researcher introduced the study by explaining how they could help their colleague by taking some time to honestly answer questions to a four-part survey. The answers to these questions would stay confidential and help the researcher determine if there were correlations between the different components. The researcher continued to mention that a request would be made to follow up with a few of them for a brief interview and that the compiled results would be shared with the group. To wrap up the introduction, there was a reminder that all individual answers would be kept confidential, and how only honest answers would help the researcher find any trends between the different factors, yet the four specific research topics were not disclosed. The researcher provided the educators the opportunity to opt out. After the introduction, the researcher handed out the compilation of surveys to those who were there and placed a survey with a note in the box of the educator who was absent. In this way, data was collected from 93% of educators from the Pacific Northwest school.

To decide which individuals to interview, the researcher compiled all the survey information and examined the results using correlations. Individual educators were chosen to become a part of the small sample by representing a unique perspective; whether high in one of the domains, low in another, or average. Altogether, the educators would provide a variety of perspectives on the four areas of interest. This smaller sample group was invited to the follow-up interview via email to help the researcher better understand possible trends from the survey answers. They were provided with the questions, informed that the interview would be about 30 minutes, and were told of a small incentive they would receive as a thank you. The potential participants were also notified that their answers would be recorded temporarily, yet any

recordings would be deleted once the project was completed. Also, all information collected from the interview would be kept confidential and their names would not be attached to the recordings, as everyone was assigned a number upon turning in their surveys. The researcher followed up with colleagues in person a few days after the email was sent if no response was received.

Interviews were carried out to solidify or better understand how to answer the research questions. The interview started off with pleasantries and educators were given a physical copy of the questions for visual reference. Each interviewee was asked all ten questions. The phrases or sentences in parentheses were typically not read aloud unless the interviewee needed that information for clarification. The questions were separated into three sets and each set of questions began in an open-ended manner, to allow for a variety of responses, and then the questions narrowed to directly answer the research questions and to either confirm trends or expand on divergent thinking in a positive manner. The researcher wrote down initial thoughts directly after each interview and later created a transcript of each conversation. Combining information from the surveys and interviews allowed the researcher to confirm or deny correlations for each of the research questions. The interviews with the smaller sample group aided in explaining the survey answers to solidify research findings.

In summary, this correlational study was comprised of two samples of educators with the small sample group taken from the larger group. The researcher used information from the surveys to gather quantitative data on the four major areas of interest: mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout. Using this data, the researcher performed a preliminary analysis of any possible trends, and then selected participants that embodied different aspects of each research area. Exploratory interviews were then utilized to further understand the answers

to the research questions. The combination of quantitative and qualitative information gave a strong indication whether relationships existed between the areas of interest.

Results

To calculate results, the surveys were scored, analyzed, and compared with interview answers. Since this survey was made up of four categories including mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout, each section required individual attention and ratings given for each component. Once the surveys were scored, they were entered onto a spreadsheet and converted into correlational graphs to analyze and visually see if there were any statistically significant trends that answered the research questions. T-statistics (t-stats) are used rather than p-values for accuracy due to the small sample size. After looking at the results for full-time educators and part-time educators separately, it became apparent that each group of educators was distinct; what was significant for full-time educators, was not necessarily significant for part-time educators and vice versa. Full-time educators had survey results that most directly answered the research questions, so the follow-up interviews consisted of those who taught full-time; part-time educators would require an additional study to interpret their results more fully. The analysis of the surveys and themes from the interviews helped explain how full-time educators from this small Pacific Northwest school answered each research question.

Work Conditions and Mental Health

The survey findings confirmed that there was a significant positive correlation between the total amount of resources perceived and the mental health of full-time educators; as educators felt more support, they experienced better mental health. Table 1 shows the t-stats of the correlation between resources and mental health for nine full-time educators, five part-time educators, and then all of them combined. In Table 1, "Total Resources" refers to the

relationship between all resources perceived and mental health and then the table lists each specific resource in order from most significant to least significant for full-time educators. The specific resources that were found to be significant were job control, supervisor support, and rewards and recognition. All results are tabulated with t-stats rather than p-values to keep the results most accurate due to the small sample size.

As noted in Table 1, the mental health of part-time educators did not correlate with the total amount of resources felt. However, there was a strong positive relationship between supervisor support and mental health for part-time educators; supervisor support was a significant positive correlation for both part-time and full-time educators. There was also a negative correlation between social support and mental health; as they perceived more support from their colleagues, the five part-time educators reported worsened mental health. The mental health of part-time educators was firmly linked to supervisor support and social support.

Table 1

Correlation Between Resources and Mental Health

Resource	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Total Resources	3.52*	0.05	2.84
Job Control	4.29*	-0.63	1.52
Supervisor Support	3.45*	2.05*	4.62*
Rewards & Recognition	2.73*	0.08	2.14*
Feedback	1.54	1.06	2.08*
Social Support	1.39	-3.35*	-0.23
Job Security	0.85	1.66	1.85
Participation	-0.24	-0.29	-0.51

*t-stat \leq -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

Furthermore, many resources were found to correlate with psychological wellbeing, which is one aspect of mental health. As seen in Table 2, the psychological wellbeing of part-time educators showed strong positive relationships in the resource areas of feedback, supervisor support, and job security, along with a substantial negative correlation with social support with a t-stat of -6.71. Full-time educators showed only one positive correlation with social support and psychological wellbeing. Psychological wellbeing proved to be the aspect of mental health that correlated most closely with the level of resources perceived by educators.

Table 2

Correlation Between Resources and Psychological Wellbeing

Resource	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Total Resources	1.84	1.10	2.38*
Social Support	2.49*	-6.71*	-0.37
Feedback	1.65	3.75*	2.28*
Supervisor Support	1.58	3.50*	3.24*
Job Control	1.49	0.01	1.16
Job Security	0.78	2.46*	2.09*
Participation	0.58	0.81	1.01
Rewards & Recognition	0.24	0.34	0.74

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

Job demands did not correlate with the mental health of educators. In contrast to resources which had a strong t-stat of 3.52, demands fell just short of being significant with a t-stat of -1.97 for full-time educators. Some specific demands that proved to relate negatively with mental health were recipient contact, physical workload, shift work, and cognitive demand; Table 3 lists the t-stats for the correlation between total demands and mental health and then for each demand starting with the most significant demand to least significant for full-time

educators. Demand did not correlate with the mental health of part-time educators at all, only certain demands correlated with the mental wellbeing of full-time educators.

Table 3

Correlation Between Demands and Mental Health

Demand	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Total Demands	-1.97	-0.06	-0.55
Recipient Contact	-2.83*	0.26	-1.51
Physical Workload	-2.44*	0.32	-0.05
Shift Work	-2.43*	0.49	-1.26
Cognitive Demand	-2.11*	0.38	-0.32
Time Pressure	-1.64	-0.70	-1.41
Work-Home Interference	-1.53	-1.06	-1.31
Physical Environment	-0.96	0.54	0.05
Emotional Demand	-0.23	-0.09	0.40
Workload	0.11	0.16	0.54

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

In addition, there were other significant correlations between certain work conditions and particular aspects of mental health. Even though demands in general were not significantly related with mental health, they did strongly correlate with psychological wellbeing for full-time educators with a t-stat of -2.88. As noted in Table 4, specific demands that were negatively linked with psychological wellbeing were recipient contact and shift work for full-time educators; as the demand grew stronger, the mental health of educators worsened. One other noticeable demand was cognitive demand which was found to negatively associate with social wellbeing. Table 4 also shows that rewards and recognition positively correlated with emotional wellbeing for both full-time and part-time educators, while supervisor support was significant for

full-time educators; resources were associated with improved emotional wellbeing. And for part-time educators, there was an extremely strong positive relationship between the demand of work-home interference and emotional wellbeing; as work intruded on their home life, they experienced improved emotional wellbeing. Table 4 lists significant psychological, social, and emotional correlations.

Table 4

Other Correlations Between Work Conditions and Mental Health

Work Condition	Aspect of Mental Health	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Total Demand	Psychological	-2.88*	0.71	-0.3
Recipient Contact	Psychological	-4.46*	1.20	-1.63
Shiftwork	Psychological	-2.90*	0.98	-1.18
Cognitive Demand	Social	-2.84*	-0.73	-1.46
Rewards & Recognition	Emotional	3.24*	-3.10*	1.53
Supervisor Support	Emotional	2.04*	-0.44	1.63
Work-Home Interference	Emotional	-0.64	7.64E+15*	0.26

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

The six full-time educators who were interviewed agreed that work conditions impacted wellbeing and determined there was a noticeable connection, verifying survey results. First, each of the educators mentioned a heavy workload or lack of time to accomplish tasks during the school day. At least a third of the educators mentioned that some of the pressure they felt is due to expectations they put on themselves; with freedom in their job and a passion to teach, they

sometimes felt the responsibility to take extra time to meet the goals they set for themselves. For example, one participant stated,

We have a lot of freedom in our curriculum. Right, so it's good because there's things that I can do that really fit my personality, or that fit my class's personality. And that's fun and exciting that I can change things. But at the same time, that takes so much time to find those things and to rewrite your lessons (Participant #14, personal communication, February 22, 2021).

With freedom in the teaching profession, comes the responsibility to accomplish tasks well and contributed to the heavy workload.

Second, every educator mentioned the impact of relationships; supportive relationships, whether with the administration, coworkers, or students' parents, contributed to a more positive work environment and improved their wellbeing, while relational conflicts were detrimental to the workspace and would negatively impact their wellbeing. Also, students' energy, good behavior, and academic or social-emotional growth was seen to energize and motivate educators in their work, while sometimes their constant energy and challenging behavior led to a worsened mentality. Educators' relationships with others in the school showed a strong impact on mental health.

A couple other themes that came through the interviews that contrasted or were not addressed in the surveys were the physical environment and spiritual impact. Most of the educators mentioned the physical space in some way, whether it was classroom arrangement, lighting, spacing, or resources available and how those environmental factors impacted their mental health. These statements differed with the survey findings because the physical environment exhibited a weak correlation with a t-stat of -0.96, yet many educators said they

were impactful regarding mental health. One other resource that half of the interviewees mentioned was the impact of devotions or being around people who were spiritually like-minded and how beneficial that was each day. One participant mentioned, “I love that we are able to do devotions in the morning here,” and continued to say that when she missed devotions “I always feel like I missed something. My day doesn’t start out quite right” (Participant #6, personal communication, February 23, 2021). The spiritual atmosphere was not a topic on the survey, so this either presents a weak correlation or it may be a topic that was overlooked or taken for granted by the other interviewees. Educators believed the physical and spiritual surroundings had some impact on their mental health.

Work Conditions and Job Satisfaction

Surveys showed that the job satisfaction of full-time educators related with the amount of demand experienced. Demands proved to have a significant negative correlation with job satisfaction with a t-stat of -2.78, as noted in Table 5. The pressures that negatively correlated with job satisfaction were shift work, workload, and emotional demand; as educators felt more demand, they felt less satisfied with their work. Table 5 also shows the detailed statistical information on each demand in relation to job satisfaction in order from most influential to least influential for full-time educators; t-statistics were used to preserve accuracy with the small sample size. A greater perception of demands was closely correlated with reports of decreased job satisfaction for full-time educators.

Table 5

Correlation Between Demands and Job Satisfaction

Demand	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Total Demand	-2.78*	0.33	-0.37
Shift Work	-3.22*	0.39	-1.31
Workload	-2.55*	0.29	-0.68
Emotional Demand	-2.51*	0.69	0.29
Physical Workload	-1.84	0.23	0.17
Recipient Contact	-1.43	-0.20	-1.02
Cognitive Demand	-1.13	-0.03	-0.02
Work-Home Interference	-0.98	0.08	-0.13
Time Pressure	-0.19	0.67	0.63
Physical Environment	-0.13	-0.84	0.06

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

More specifically, demanding work conditions substantially correlated with parent satisfaction with a t-stat of -3.89 for full-time educators. Table 6 notes the most significant correlations with parent satisfaction as shift work, work-home interference, physical workload, and emotional demand for full-time educators. Workload was just short of a solidified correlation with a t-stat of -1.99. For full-time educators, demands from work were inextricably tied with parent satisfaction.

Table 6

Correlation Between Demands and Parent Satisfaction

Demand	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Total Demand	-3.89*	-0.95	-2.80*
Shift Work	-6.53*	-0.26	-3.97*
Work-Home Interference	-2.27*	-0.67	-2.12*
Physical Workload	-2.13*	-0.20	-1.29
Emotional Demand	-2.12*	-0.43	-1.48
Workload	-1.99	-0.6	-2.02*
Recipient Contact	-1.85	-1.53	-2.42*
Cognitive Demand	-1.20	-1.26	1.61
Time Pressure	-1.03	-0.55	-1.29
Physical Environment	-0.99	-1.53	-1.54

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

One resource that proved to correlate substantially with the job satisfaction of full-time educators was social support. Table 7 shows that social support closely related with coworker satisfaction and parent satisfaction specifically, but not student satisfaction. Part-time educators also proved to have a significant correlation between social support and coworker satisfaction. As educators felt more support by their colleagues, they were more satisfied in one or more aspects of their work.

Table 7

Correlation Between Social Support and Satisfaction

Type of Satisfaction	T-stat for	T-stat for	T-stat for
	Full-Time Educators	Part-Time Educators	Total Educators
Total Job Satisfaction	3.89*	0.87	2.98*
Coworker Satisfaction	3.03*	2.12*	4.57*
Parent Satisfaction	2.52*	0.64	1.68
Student Satisfaction	1.65	-0.77	0.54

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

Part-time educators did not have a strong connection to job satisfaction, except for the resource of job control. Table 8 shows that job control noticeably correlated with the job satisfaction of those who teach part-time with a t-stat of 2.67; as part-time educators experienced more freedom and independence in their work, they felt more satisfied. Job control was also closely related to student satisfaction and parent satisfaction, but not coworker satisfaction, also seen in Table 8. Those who worked part-time and perceived the authority to make decisions in how they performed their job correlated significantly with job satisfaction.

Table 8

Correlation Between Job Control and Satisfaction

Type of Satisfaction	T-stat for	T-stat for	T-stat for
	Full-Time Educators	Part-Time Educators	Total Educators
Total Job Satisfaction	0.00	2.67*	1.85
Student Satisfaction	-0.91	2.19*	-0.16
Parent Satisfaction	0.66	2.12*	1.36
Coworker Satisfaction	0.50	0.46	1.29

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

When examining the different aspects of job satisfaction, there were a few more noticeable patterns associated with certain demands or resources. Table 9 shows that for full-time educators, the emotional demand and workload were negatively correlated with student satisfaction and recipient contact was negatively associated with coworker satisfaction; as emotional demand and workload demands increased, educators felt less satisfied in their work. Table 9 also shows that interestingly for part-time educators, there were a few negative relationships between resources and job satisfaction; as they experienced more job security, supervisor support, and feedback, their level of satisfaction decreased. Negative correlations were found between demands and the satisfaction of full-time educators, as well as resources with the satisfaction of part-time educators.

Table 9

Other Correlations Between Work Conditions and Job Satisfaction

Work Condition	Type of Job Satisfaction	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Emotional Demand	Student	-2.43*	1.14	-0.88
Workload	Student	-2.26*	0.42	-1.65
Recipient Contact	Coworker	-2.17*	-1.66	-1.55
Job Security	Coworker	0.89	-10.25*	-1.64
Supervisor Support	Coworker	0.18	-5.81*	-0.71
Feedback	Coworker	-0.67	-2.05*	-0.29

*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

The interviews with full-time educators confirmed the correlation of demands and resources with job satisfaction. The most prevalent theme throughout the interviews was the impact of relationships on satisfaction. When educators felt “heard” and “supported” by administration, coworkers, and students’ parents, they experienced more job satisfaction;

whereas, if they perceived a conflict or did not feel understood by one or more of the social groups, they felt less satisfied with their job. Yet even when their level of enjoyment dipped, they still had a passion for teaching students. One participant said, “I love the teaching part,” and later explained, “When there’s conflict and words that have been said, you know, it just affects your whole confidence level and you know your attitude toward the job, not toward the teaching, but toward the job” (Participant #11, personal communication, February 26).

Similarly, the amount of student learning and success seen also varied with educators’ perception of satisfaction. These relationships solidified the involvement of emotional demand and social support in satisfaction.

There was also a theme of the amount of time and energy available to carry out job duties well. Educators felt less satisfied as they got more tired; they mentioned getting more forgetful of their plans and having a harder time accomplishing their tasks as their energy lessened. One educator stated, “It’s not the satisfaction really, that fluctuates. It’s the amount of energy I have to put into what I do. And that kind of changes how satisfied I am with what I do” (Participant #6, personal communication, February 23, 2021). Just like educators had a limited amount of energy, they also experienced a limited amount of time. Because of the time-consuming tasks, sometimes educators felt like they were not able to fully plan lessons or do enough to meet all their students’ needs. The lack of time or energy is reflected in the surveys as shift work, workload, physical workload, and in some cases work-home interference. Educators’ level of energy and ability to carry out tasks seemed to change with their level of enjoyment.

A third of the interviewees also mentioned the possibility that confidence may play a role in satisfaction. As satisfaction changed due to the amount of perceived support or the amount of teaching experience, so did their confidence level. Confidence may be tied to social support,

emotional demand, or any of those pertaining to the workload or physical workload. The work conditions that correlate with job satisfaction, also have some connection with educators’ level of confidence.

Mental Health and Burnout

The initial survey results did not show a direct correlation between mental health and burnout, as noted in Table 10; however, there were a couple noteworthy connections with exhaustion and disengagement, which are the two components of burnout. Table 10 also shows how the mental health of full-time educators was negatively associated with exhaustion; as educators experienced lower levels of exhaustion, they would experience improved mental health. And the mental health of part-time educators positively related with disengagement; this sampling of part-time educators showed improved mental health as they became more disengaged from work. The relationship between mental health and burnout was quite different for full-time and part-time educators.

Table 10

Correlation Between Mental Health and Burnout

Aspect of Burnout	T-stat for Full-Time Educators	T-stat for Part-Time Educators	T-stat for Total Educators
Burnout	-1.09	1.52	-0.06
Exhaustion	-2.03*	0.19	-0.86
Disengagement	-0.05	3.47*	0.91

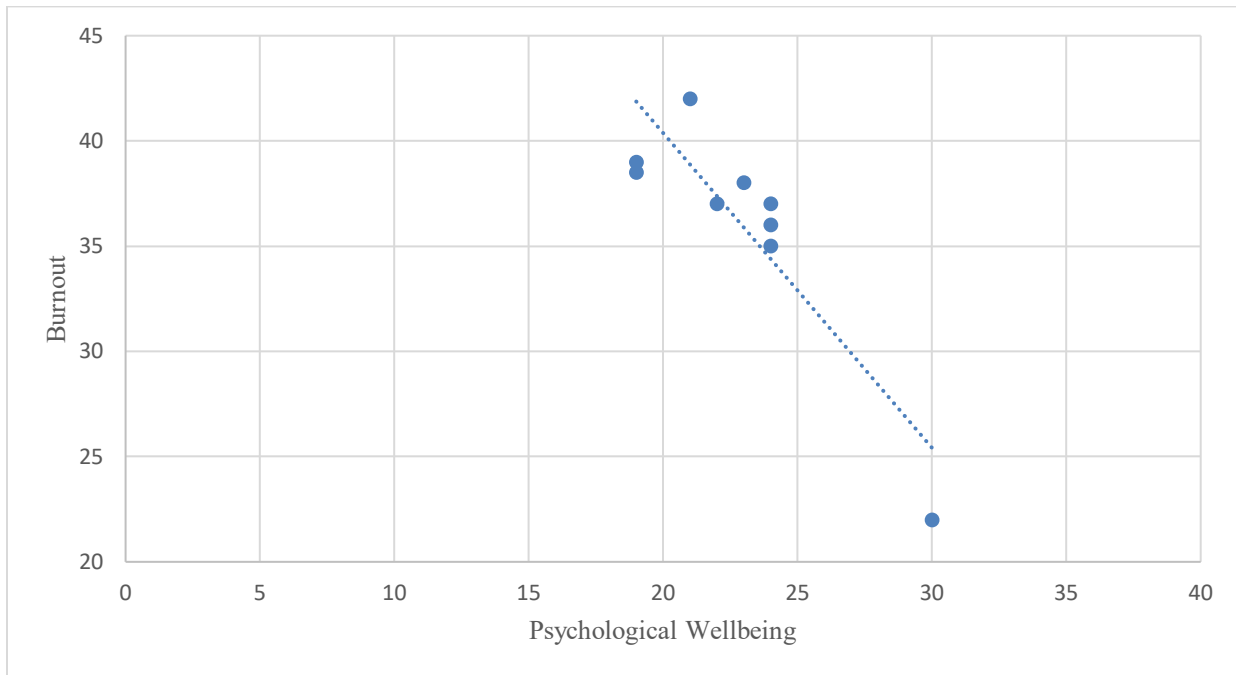
*t-stat ≤ -2 or $2 \leq$ t-stat which approximates $p < .05$

Figure 1 shows a substantial tie between psychological wellbeing and burnout for full-time educators. Psychological wellbeing strongly related with burnout with a t-stat of -5.01. When examining each component of burnout, psychological wellbeing was negatively associated

with exhaustion with a t-stat of -3.63 and disengagement with a t-stat of -2.66. The burnout of full-time educators strongly correlated with psychological wellbeing.

Figure 1

Correlation Between Psychological Wellbeing and Burnout



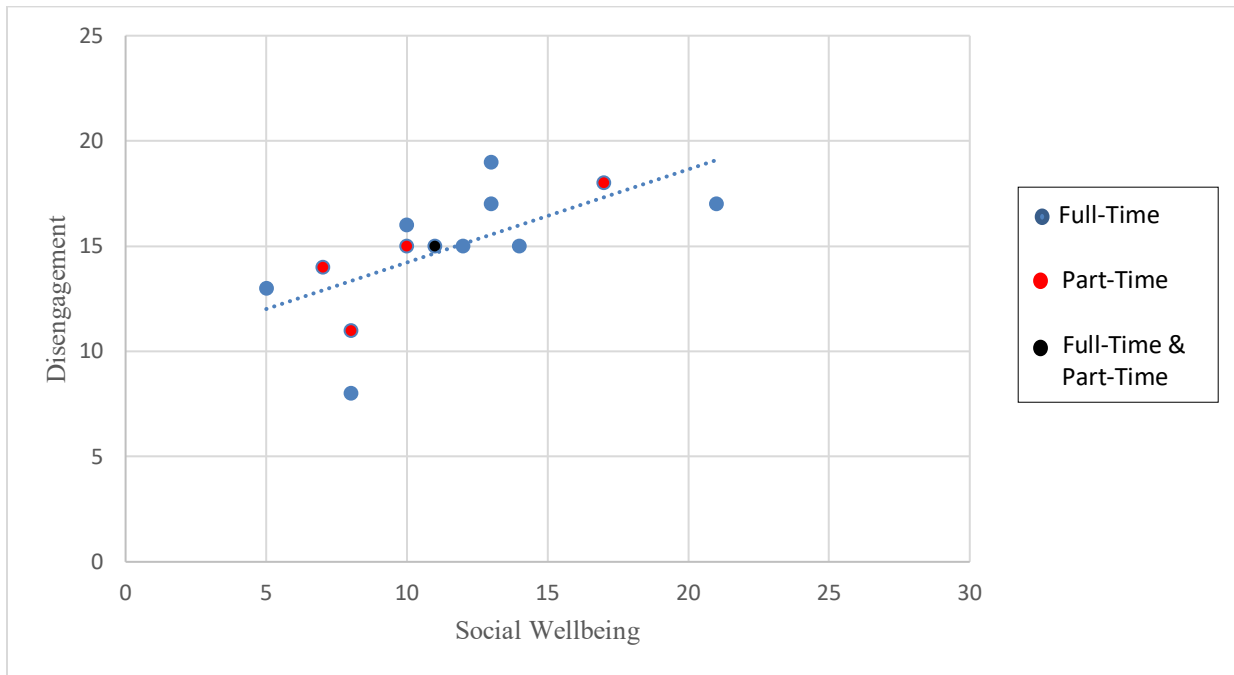
Note. This correlation only shows full-time educators.

One finding that was unique for part-time educators was a positive correlation between mental health and disengagement with a t-stat of 3.47, as seen previously in Table 10. Upon further examination, social wellbeing proved to correlate most strongly with disengagement with a t-stat of 2.74; as the social wellbeing of part-time educators improved, they felt more disengaged in their work. A positive relationship between social wellbeing and disengagement was also true for all educators with a t-stat of 2.96, but not for the group of full-time educators specifically. Figure 2 shows the data points for each of the participants; the red points represent part-time educators, while blue points represent full-time educators, and one black point shows where both a full-time and part-time educator overlap. Social wellbeing proved to positively

correlate with the disengagement of all educators and part-time educators, but not full-time educators.

Figure 2

Correlation Between Social Wellbeing and Disengagement



Note. The trend line is calculated according to all educators combined.

Interviews with the smaller sample of full-time educators confirmed the survey findings. When the researcher asked if there was any correlation between wellbeing and burnout, half of the educators perceived a strong connection and the other half more hesitantly concluded that one could affect the other or that they were related in some way. As interviewees described their mental health during lower burnout and higher burnout, a few themes that came through were workload, relationships, and meeting student needs, which correspond with psychological wellbeing. Psychologically, when educators experienced lower levels of burnout, they felt they could manage their workload well, maintain positive relationships (with administration, coworkers, students, students’ parents, and family), and were able to meet students’ needs and

share in their successes. In contrast, higher levels of burnout included too many tasks with too little time and energy, the strain of conflicts in relationships, and feeling unable to fully meet students' needs. This disparity in descriptions for low burnout and high burnout solidify the role of psychological wellbeing with the fluctuating levels of exhaustion and burnout.

A fourth theme that many educators mentioned was their relationship with God as something that helped them maintain a positive outlook and kept them steady. One educator mentioned how helpful it is to bring concerns to God, by saying "If I didn't have [God] in my life, I feel like maybe I'd be a pretty discouraged person...but because I do have my faith, I feel in a way that burden is kind of lifted" (Participant #6, personal communication, February 23, 2021). And someone else mentioned that even on challenging days, it is that faith relationship that "keeps me so steady" (Participant #13, personal communication, February 25, 2021). This contented perspective also fits with the survey findings since emotional wellbeing did not prove to correlate with burnout. The interviews further explained the lack of correlation between emotional wellbeing and burnout.

Discussion

Overview of the Study

The aim of this study was to better understand the relationship of mental health in conjunction with work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout for educators. Mental health is a vital component that has a lasting impact on educators personally and in their careers; it is the way educators perceive themselves and the world around them, affecting their current ability to carry out their job well (Keyes, 2007), to find enjoyment in their work, and can impact their decision to stay in the teaching career (Capone & Petrillo, 2020). It benefits educators to better understand their mental health, to know what contributes to changes in their mental health, and

to recognize how wellbeing impacts their lives and professions. Once mental health is better understood, educators can learn how to support a healthy working lifestyle that enables them to thrive.

To study mental health at a local school, educators were given four short surveys to complete and six of them were chosen for follow up interviews. After surveys were dispersed and collected, the correlational results were tabulated and analyzed. The full-time educators who displayed distinct perspectives had the opportunity to participate in a follow up interview to further explore each research question. The interviews supported or gave new insight into the survey results.

Summary of Findings

Work Conditions and Mental Health

The first research question examined the relationship between work conditions and mental health. Previous research found a connection “between job demands and exhaustion” (Dicke et al., 2018; Scanlan & Still, 2019, p. 5), and found that stress and emotional exhaustion correlate with worsened mental health for educators (Johnson et al., 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). A few resources that related significantly with mental health were self-efficacy (Capone & Petrillo, 2020), job control, and interpersonal support (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020). These studies suggest that demanding work conditions that contribute to exhaustion may negatively impact mental wellbeing, while social support, confidence, and freedom in the workplace may benefit mental health.

The survey and interview results on resources supported previous research quite well, but the outcomes on demands were different. At this Pacific Northwest school, the resources that were substantially linked to mental health of full-time educators were job control, supervisor

support, and rewards and recognition; this was consistent with previous research and even presented stronger correlations. The mental health of part-time educators also had a positive correlation with supervisor support but had a negative relationship with social support. Results were different from previous research in that demands fell just short of a significant relationship with mental health for full-time educators and there was no correlation for part-time educators. Specific demands that were important for full-time educators were recipient contact, physical workload, shift work, and cognitive demand; each of these demands can contribute to exhaustion, lining up with the findings of other researchers, but emotional demand did not correlate with mental health with only a t-stat of 0.40 for this group of educators. The aspect of mental health that strongly correlated with demands was psychological wellbeing for full-time educators only. Mental health was solidly associated with the resources perceived by educators.

To expand on these results, the interviewees elaborated on their work conditions and how different resources and demands impacted them. A couple significant work conditions that many educators noted was the freedom they experienced in their work and the heavy workload; educators noted that even though they enjoyed different freedoms in their work, it sometimes added on to an already heavy workload. Another impactful work condition was relationships with others in their work environment; support from coworkers, administration, and families related with feeling energized and encouraged, while perceiving a lack of support left educators feeling conflicted and exhausted. And many mentioned how their physical surroundings, such as lighting, cleanliness, or classroom arrangements impacted their mental state. Freedom in their work, a heavy workload, work relationships, and the physical environment were perceived to change with their psychological wellbeing.

One area that was not addressed in the surveys was the impact of the spiritual environment. At least half of the educators interviewed mentioned the benefit of starting the day off with devotions as a staff or the encouragement of being with those who are spiritually like-minded, one educator said, “The spiritual side of things, like the community that’s there being like-minded in that sense. I think that’s huge” (Participant #13, personal communication, February 25, 2021). The role of faith and being surrounded by others who shared that same faith, allowed educators’ emotional wellbeing to remain stable despite any variation in workload, social relationships, or other work conditions. This observation is consistent with the fact that there was no correlation in my study between emotional wellbeing and mental health; one did not change with the other.

Work Conditions and Job Satisfaction

The second research question explored the connections between work conditions and job satisfaction. Scanlan and Still (2019, p. 9) discovered that job resources have a stronger relationship with job satisfaction than demands, with “rewards and recognition, job control, feedback and participation as most strongly associated” with increased satisfaction, while job demands as “associated with higher levels of exhaustion.” Other researchers demonstrated that exhaustion and job satisfaction were negatively related (Capone & Petrillo, 2020, Johnson et al., 2005, Leithwood et al., 1999). Job satisfaction also relates with greater feelings of self-efficacy (Capone & Petrillo, 2020) and job satisfaction has proven to correlate with mental health because “higher job satisfaction was related to fewer self-reported mental health challenges” (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020, p. 5). These discoveries suggest that resources increase the job satisfaction of educators while certain demands may decrease feelings of happiness and that educators’ level of contentment may also relate with mental health.

Results for the small, Pacific Northwest school reversely showed that demands correlated most strongly with job satisfaction for full-time educators, rather than resources. The most influential demands were shiftwork, workload, and emotional demand. In the interviews, the amount of energy educators experienced was mentioned as influencing how well they could carry out their tasks as a educators; as they would get more tired, they would not be able to work as fast or teach as well. One educator noted, “There’s just some days I come really tired and so I feel like I leave things out... And then I don’t feel satisfied with what I’ve done that day” (Participant #6, personal communication, February 23, 2021). Lack of time was another constraint that kept them from achieving all that they desired and hindered them from fully meeting their students’ needs. Another educator observed,

Because of my lack of time, I’m not able to prepare lessons that I’m super proud of, where it’s like I’m settling for a lesson that’s maybe not as engaging, or you know, maybe missing some certain elements of it (Participant #13, personal communication, February 25, 2021).

The amount of energy and time was perceived to impact the quality of job performance and therefore influenced the level of satisfaction felt when reflecting on the workday.

There was also a significant relationship between demands and parent satisfaction for full-time educators. The most influential demands that correlated with lessened parent satisfaction were shift work, work-home interference, physical workload, and emotional demand. The connection between demands and parent satisfaction may suggest that this school perceives more demand from students’ parents, adding to their workload or interfering with their time at home, although only a third of the interviewees mentioned parents in relation to job satisfaction.

Overall, it seems the demand on energy and workload line up with the finding that job demands lead to exhaustion.

There was not a noticeable correlation between resources and job satisfaction, but a couple individual resources were evident; social support was significant for full-time educators, while job control was a contributing factor for part-time educators. Most of the interviewees mentioned the impact of their social environment and how they sometimes “felt wonderfully supported and other times not felt supported” (Participant #11, personal communication, February 26, 2021) as their perception of their interpersonal relationships fluctuated, so did their level of satisfaction. This would help solidify the idea that parent relationships could influence the amount of satisfaction experienced by full-time educators. Interestingly, there was a negative relationship between supervisor support and parent satisfaction for part-time educators. In addition, a third of the educators also mentioned how the amount of confidence they felt, impacted their level of satisfaction. The change in confidence level could reinforce the research that states how self-efficacy correlates with the level of job enjoyment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Social support was the greatest resource in supporting job satisfaction and may be one factor in aiding self-efficacy.

Mental Health and Burnout

The third research question investigated the association between the mental health of educators and their feelings of burnout. A correlation between mental health and burnout was established with a study by Capone and Petrillo (2020), who noted that those who exhibited flourishing mental health experienced lower levels of burnout. Also, a negative link was found between self-efficacy and burnout by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007), so as educators felt more

capable in their work, they experienced less burnout. Previous research showed that as the mental health of educators improved, they reported lower levels of burnout.

Initial findings for the small, rural school did not verify the correlation between mental health and burnout. However, the surveys and interviews did establish a substantial relationship between psychological wellbeing and burnout for full-time educators with a t-stat of -5.01. The educators who were interviewed mentioned workload, relationships, and their ability to meet student needs as most influential in determining burnout; each of these components was associated with psychological wellbeing. The ability to meet student needs also aligns with self-efficacy; those who felt they could meet student challenges successfully, experienced less burnout.

One other theme was the impact of faith in God; educators expressed that their faith enabled them to maintain a steady outlook and helped lift their burdens. This steady outlook was associated with emotional wellbeing and could help explain why emotional wellbeing did not correlate with any aspects of burnout. Faith assisted educators in maintaining a positive and consistent outlook no matter the circumstances and enabled them to overcome challenges.

Findings for part-time educators included a correlation between mental health and disengagement with a t-stat of 3.47. The aspect of mental health that correlated closely with disengagement was social wellbeing with a t-stat of 2.74 for part-time educators, and was significant for all educators, yet not for full-time educators. As the mental health of part-time educators improved, they experienced higher levels of disengagement.

Recommendations

Based on the results for this Pacific Northwest school, educators would benefit from maintaining positive relationships, finding ways to lessen workload pressure, and fostering

spiritual growth. First, educators should strive to uphold positive relationships with others, whether supervisors, coworkers, parents, or students. Educators who experienced more administrative or social support reported improved mental health, increased job satisfaction, and lessened feelings of burnout, whereas relational conflicts were perceived to negatively impact educators. Second, educators should enjoy the freedom provided at their jobsite, yet create boundaries on their workload and time. Educators who perceived that work took much of their time and energy were less satisfied and more prone to exhaustion, so finding ways to lessen the load and get recharged outside of work could increase their level of satisfaction and reduce their risk of burnout. Third, educators should strive to grow spiritually in community and individually. Many educators noted the benefits of being surrounded by people who were spiritually like-minded and viewed staff devotions, as well as their personal relationship with God, to be a source of refreshment and stability, enhancing their mental health and decreasing feelings of burnout. By nurturing relationships, establishing boundaries on workload, and seeking spiritual nourishment, educators could improve their mental health, increase their level of job satisfaction, and reduce their chances of experiencing burnout.

This action research project compiled much data for full-time and part-time educators in the areas of mental health, work conditions, job satisfaction, and burnout. Because the survey results of full-time educators most directly answered the research questions and were the focal point for this report, research could continue by examining part-time educators more fully, especially the findings that contrasted with full-time educators. Another area to research would be to explore the impact of parent-educator relations on job satisfaction, as that showed to correlate strongly with this group of educators. A continuation of this study may involve

research on part-time educators specifically or how parent-educator interactions correlate with job satisfaction.

One possibility for the differences between the results for this small private school and the other studies may be due to faith. It is possible that the lack of correlation between demands and job satisfaction or mental health and burnout could be influenced by the role of faith in educators' lives, helping to keep educators' outlook positive and consistent. Further research may examine if faith could be a factor in lessening the impact of work demands, or in reducing levels of burnout, or if varying levels of spirituality correlate with mental wellbeing. The relationship between faith and mental health of educators would be an area to study more thoroughly.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study was the small sample size. All fifteen educators at a Pacific Northwest school were invited to partake in the research study. Out of the fourteen who participated, nine were full-time and five were part-time. All those who were interviewed were full-time educators. The results in the study are reflective and accurate for individuals at that rural private school. Another limitation is that the researcher was an educator at that small school. It is possible that some results may change slightly in different schools around the nation to reflect their local culture, yet the major findings should remain reliable, given a similar sample of educators. Any differences from previous research show that these issues are complex and there may be other factors to consider in further research studies.

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Appendix A

Survey

Hello!

If you can spare a few minutes, please take the time to answer a few short surveys. The expected length of time may be approximately 20 minutes.

Do remember that any information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for my research project. No personal or individual information will be shared without your permission.

Please answer as honestly as possible, to allow for accurate research.

Thank you so much! 😊

~Krista Bosman

↓ START HERE ↓

Name: _____

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- I'd rather not say

What is your ethnicity?

- _____
- I'd rather not say

What is your age?

- Under 30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- Over 50
- I'd rather not say

How many years have you taught at this school?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- Over 20 years

How many years have you taught in all?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- Over 20 year

What is your type of employment?

- Part time
- Full time

JD-R

Place a checkmark in the box that best represents to the extent you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My achievements are recognized by my supervisor / manager					
2. The job requires me to keep track of more than one thing at a time					
3. My work requires a lot of concentration.					
4. The job gives me a chance to use my personal initiative or judgement in carrying out the work					
5. Only the management decides what everybody has to do					
6. My work is emotionally demanding					
7. My supervisor is concerned about the welfare of the people that work for him/her					
8. The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work					
9. I always have enough time to perform my tasks					
10. I receive feedback on my performance from other people in my organization (such as my manger or coworkers)					
11. I get enough feedback about the quality of my performance					
12. My supervisor/manger inspires me to do my best work					
13. My colleagues are willing to give me help if I ask for it					
14. My job is physically taxing					
15. It is physically taxing for me to get used to my working times					
16. My achievements are recognized by my colleagues					
17. My performance is rewarded properly					
18. My supervisor uses his / her influence to help me solve problems					
19. The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work					
20. My working hours allow me to meet my family and personal obligations					
21. My physical working conditions – climate, light, noise, design of the workplace, and material – are alright					
22. My job requires working very hard or very fast					
23. I feel my job is secures					
24. My contact with persons to whom I have to offer services is demanding					
25. I have good relationships with my colleagues					

OLBI

Place a checkmark in the box that best represents to the extent you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I always find new and interesting aspects in my work				
2. There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work				
3. It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way				
4. After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better				
5. I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well				
6. Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically				
7. I find my work to be a positive challenge				
8. During my work, I often feel emotionally drained				
9. Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work				
10. After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities				
11. Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks				
12. After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary				
13. This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing				
14. Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well				
15. I feel more and more engaged in my work				
16. When I work, I usually feel energized				

MHC-SF

Place a check mark in the box that best represents how often you have experienced or felt the following during the past month:

During the past month, how often did you feel...	NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE	ABOUT ONCE A WEEK	ABOUT 2 OR 3 TIMES A WEEK	ALMOST EVERY DAY	EVERY DAY
1. happy						
2. interested in life						
3. satisfied with life						
4. that you had something important to contribute to society						
5. that you belonged to a community (like a social group, or your neighborhood)						
6. that our society is a good place, or is becoming a better place, for all people						
7. that people are basically good						
8. that the way our society works makes sense to you						
9. that you liked most parts of your personality						
10. good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life						
11. that you had warm and trusting relationships with others						
12. that you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person						
13. confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions						
14. that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it						

TJSS

Place a checkmark in the box that best represents your level of satisfaction with your current position.

	Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied
1. The quality of your relations with co-workers.					
2. The extent to which your co-workers encourage you and support you in your work.					
3. Your overall satisfaction with your co-workers.					
4. The extent to which students act in a self-disciplined manner.					
5. Your satisfaction with the behavior of students in your school.					
6. Your overall level of satisfaction with student discipline in your school.					
7. The degree of interest shown by parents in the education of their children.					
8. The extent to which parents are supportive of the school and its programs.					
9. Your overall level of satisfaction with parents and your work.					

Thank You!

Appendix B

Survey Questions

Set #1: Work Conditions

1. **Describe the work conditions you experience at school.** (physical or social surroundings, or anything work related) Which ones impact you the most?
 - Are there work conditions that support you or energize you in your work? Which ones? How so?
 - Are there work conditions that make you feel stress or exhaustion? Which ones? How so?
2. **Is there a balance** between helpful work conditions (that give energy or support) and unhelpful work conditions (that contribute to stress or exhaustion)? Or are they unbalanced? How so?
3. Do **work conditions relate with your wellbeing** in any way? Emotionally, mentally, socially?

Set #2: Job Satisfaction

1. **How satisfied** do you feel about work right now?
2. Does your **level of satisfaction change or fluctuate** over time? How so?
3. Are there **work conditions that increase or decrease** your feelings of job satisfaction? (Or does your level of job satisfaction impact your perception of work conditions?)

Set #3: Burnout

1. To what extent **do you feel engaged and motivated** in your work **or discouraged and exhausted**?
2. Do you experience **feelings of burnout**?
3. How would you **describe your wellbeing** (emotional, mental, social) **when:**
 - a. Work is energizing or motivating?
 - b. Work is discouraging or exhausting?
4. Does your **emotional, mental, or social wellbeing relate with your level of burnout**? Why or why not? (If we think of burnout as a continuum, where low burnout means that you are motivated and energized regarding work, and high levels of burnout mean feelings of exhaustion and discouragement.)