Early-Career Teachers' Understanding and Description of Emotional Self-Awareness and Stress Tolerance Emotional Intelligence Competencies Within Their Teaching Experiences

by

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ABSTRACT

Using the Stein and Book (2011) EQi 2.0 model of emotional intelligence (EI), this qualitative, descriptive study investigated how 11 female K-12 early-career teachers in an Ohio urban school system understood and described their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experiences. The research originates from a literature review highlighting factors contributing to the high attrition rates among early-career teachers.

Data were collected anonymously through participants' responses in a secured, electronic ABCDE Guided Log. The researcher used Stroh's (2015) Systems-Thinking Iceberg Theory as a framework for analyzing the data. Four themes emerged as experiencing difficult emotions, the fight, flight, freeze response, persevering through adversity, and challenges faced. Participants recounted threatening experiences triggered by structural elements such as student behavior, psychological safety, ambiguity, and feeling unsupported leading to a pattern of compromised teacher self-efficacy. A recurring pattern of compromised teacher self-efficacy emerged as teachers recounted perceived threatening experiences (events above the surface) triggered by structural elements and discussed their subsequent thoughts (mental models) reflective of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies.

This research contributes to understanding the challenges faced by early-career teachers and the role of emotional intelligence in mitigating these challenges. It ultimately aims to provide educational leaders with insight to enhance the support of early-career teachers, thereby contributing to reducing attrition rates. Overall, the study underscores the correlation between emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, and encounters with perceived threats among early-career teachers, contributing to a deeper understanding of their challenges and the importance of emotional intelligence in creating supportive educational environments.

Keywords: Emotional Self-Awareness, Stress Tolerance, Teacher Self-Efficacy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Q: Why did the 21st century ask uncertainty for a date?

A: Because it heard uncertainty was the only thing certain in the 21st century!

The 21st century is an age of rapid change where the unknown is often the only known and uncertainty the norm. Consequently, this uncertainty often leads to stress and burnout, wreaking havoc on wellbeing. Teaching, often prone to stress and burnout (Cheng et al., 2022; Herman et al., 2018), demands that educators thrive within a system that sometimes undermines their personal and professional wellbeing (Collie, 2021). Subsequently, Abitabile (2020) observed an alarming trend: 40% of early-career teachers exit the profession annually, with 50% leaving before retirement. Furthermore, Steiner and Woo (2021) pinpointed burnout and diminished self-efficacy as pivotal elements affecting teacher wellbeing.

Educators typically aspire to make a transformative impact on students' lives, but this desire comes with managing various stressors in the classroom. These stressors include diverse communication, learning, leadership styles, social behaviors, and cultural expectations (Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019; Salami, 2010). Emotional Intelligence (EI), the ability to understand and regulate one's emotions while understanding those of others, plays a crucial role in how individuals respond to stress (Goleman et al., 2013). Studies have linked high EI, particularly emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance, to reduced stress and increased self-efficacy among teachers (Abitabile, 2020; Hattie, 2009; Steiner & Woo, 2021). With the rising attrition rates among early-career teachers, partly due to heightened stress levels, educational leaders must grasp how these teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies.

Recent educational shifts, intensified by the pandemic, underscore the need for change. Many are still weary of returning to emotionally taxing work environments (Bermejo-Martin et al., 2021). This reality places educational leaders in challenging positions, like principals covering multiple classes in auditoriums due to staff shortages (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022). While various concepts exist to address these challenges, such as understanding the interplay of brain function, emotions, behavior, and the impact of emotionally intelligent individuals (Adler et al., 2017; Amen, 2021; Breuning, 2016), more cohesive approaches are necessary. For instance, insights into how early-career teachers perceive their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance may aid in reducing attrition rates and enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Farmer, 2020; Quinn, 2016).

Camacho et al. (2018) explored the wellbeing and retention of 160 urban teachers, uncovering the pivotal role of stress-related factors such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and confusion in determining whether or not teachers remained in the classroom. They discovered teachers who received professional and social-emotional support encountered fewer stress-related incidents. This suggests that teachers were receptive to psychological support, acknowledging the inherent stressors in their profession. Despite shedding light on the impact of stress on teacher retention, the study did not offer insight into teachers' perceptions of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance emphasizing the value of expanding research in these components of emotional intelligence (EI).

Stein and Book's (2011) EQ-i 2.0 emotional intelligence framework highlights several EI competencies, notably emotional self-awareness (the ability to recognize and comprehend emotions and their ramifications on oneself and others) and stress tolerance (the capacity to manage stressful or challenging situations). Given the emotional nature of education and the

diverse systemic stressors within the field, it is critical to explore how early-career teachers understand their capacity for emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies (Brown, 2021; Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Van der Kolk, 2015). Discovering answers to the following questions will provide insight into early-career teachers' understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies:

1. How do early-career teachers in urban school settings articulate and understand their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences?
2. How do early-career teachers in urban school settings articulate and understand their stress tolerance skills in the context of their teaching experiences?

Further research and literature are needed to grasp how early-career teachers understand their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within the context of the teaching experience. Such insight may inform strategic support for early-career teacher professional development. Given the high attrition rates among teachers, primarily due to stress-related factors, student achievement is at risk (Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Thus, the study aims to elucidate how early-career teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experiences, particularly in an urban setting.

While research on pre-service teachers and their Emotional Intelligence (EI) is growing (MacCann et al., 2020), there remains a lack of studies focused on early-career teachers' perspectives regarding their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies in the teaching experience. Furthermore, most EI research has been centered on individuals in corporate and healthcare professions (Alferaih, 2017). This study has critical significance given the alarming annual exit rate of 40% among early-career teachers (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Several quantitative studies exploring Emotional Intelligence (EI) have utilized burnout inventory scales, mixed emotional intelligence measurement tools, and perceived job demands inventories to measure burnout and self-efficacy (Bracket et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2019). A few studies have employed a systems-thinking approach to investigate EI and self-efficacy among educators (Bracket et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2019). Additionally, certain studies have explored wellness topics such as nutrition and mindfulness in education (Amrein et al., 2017; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). While research on EI exists, there is still a noticeable lack of in-depth exploration regarding emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance among early-career teachers, which could offer solutions and support for strategic retention efforts (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Farmer, 2020; Quinn, 2016).

Problem Statement

It is not known how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experiences. Concernedly, a significant portion of early-career teachers, particularly those in their first five years, exit the field annually, with over 40% citing decreased wellbeing as a contributing factor (Abitabile, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Enhancing these competencies could mitigate this trend, as research suggests that emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance are vital components of Emotional Intelligence (EI) that can be developed (Goleman et al., 2013; Stein & Book, 2011; Tan, 2013). Additionally, the demands of teaching in the 21st century, marked by various stressors and challenges, highlight the necessity of equipping teachers with practical tools to meet the diverse needs of students (Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019; Salami, 2010). While some school systems attempt to address these stressors through wellness programs, they often fail to address the necessary metacognition and mindset shifts or the systemic issues

such as classroom overcrowding, testing mandates, and funding gaps, intensifying teacher burnout (Amrein et al., 2017; Kamenetz, 2015; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Podolsky et al., 2016; Stark & King, 2022; Stefanovic et al., 2021).

Moreover, the pandemic has further strained teachers, leading to increased departure rates and emotional exhaustion, with many teachers expressing reluctance to return to toxic work environments (Loi & Pryce, 2022). Thus, many educational leaders are in precarious situations, often filling in as substitutes due to teacher shortages. Yin et al. (2013) conducted a study with 1,281 teachers and found that teachers who could express authentic emotions experienced higher job satisfaction than those who surface-acted or suppressed emotions. At the study's conclusion, the researchers recommended future research on the role of EI in teacher work experiences. Given the critical role teachers play in students' success and the demonstrated benefits of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies in managing the challenges of teaching (Hattie, 2009; Jennings et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2013), there is an urgent need for deeper exploration into how early-career teachers understand and describe these competencies within their teaching experiences. Addressing this gap in understanding is essential as continued high rates of teacher attrition jeopardize student achievement and undermine the educational system as a whole (Abitabile, 2020; Bracket et al., 2019; CASEL, 2019; Hattie, 2009; Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Purpose Statement

This study aimed to investigate how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and articulate their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experiences. By exploring these phenomena, this research addressed the alarming trend of high attrition rates among early-career teachers and the resulting impact on

student achievement and the educational system (Rahman, 2022). By gaining insights into teachers' perceptions of these essential competencies and their implications for teacher wellbeing and retention, this study may help educational leaders by providing insight that informs potential interventions and support mechanisms to enhance teacher resilience and effectiveness in the classroom. Through a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by early-career teachers and the role of emotional intelligence in mitigating these challenges, this research endeavored to contribute to the creation of a more supportive and sustainable educational environment for both teachers and students.

Research Questions and Approach

The researcher of the study sought to understand how early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance related to their teaching experiences. Accordingly, the researcher focused on the following research questions:

1. How do early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences?
2. How do early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their stress tolerance skills in the context of their teaching experiences?

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an emerging concept in education, with educators recognizing its personal and professional benefits (CASEL, 2019; Vesely et al., 2013). Understanding EI, regarding emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within the context of teaching experiences, can empower educators to navigate challenges more effectively (CASEL, 2019; Vesely et al., 2013). The researcher employed a qualitative, descriptive analysis approach to look deeper into these concepts. Utilizing the EQ-i 2.0 framework (Stein & Book, 2011), the

researcher explored emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies among participants. A modified version of an ABCDE Guided Log, based on Stein and Book's (2011) Data Collection Chart for Understanding Perceptions, Attitudes, and Behaviors, captured participants' descriptions of triggering events and subsequent analysis.

Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory is a framework for investigating beneath the surface of events to explore underlying behavior patterns and influential factors such as policies, environmental structures, relationships, and mental models. This theory complements the ABCDE Guided Log by facilitating exploration beyond the superficial aspects of a triggering event. By enabling participants to go beneath the surface, the ABCDE Guided Log aided in expanding their understanding of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies as educators. The research investigated how participants established connections between identified stressors and their subsequent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Stroh's Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory was a valuable framework for drawing conclusions based on the data.

Significance of Study

This study was critical because it explored how early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies related to their teaching experiences. Although there is a dearth of studies on EI and burnout, there remains a gap in the literature on early-career teachers in an urban system understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies. More research is needed to understand how early-career teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experience. Some training programs focus on cultivating EI in workers (Bharwaney et al., 2007; Boyatzis et al., 2013; Gavin, 2018); however, there is still much to learn about how early-career teachers in an urban school system understand

and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies related to the teaching experiences.

The findings from the study hold potential benefits for school districts wrestling with rising teacher attrition rates (Abitabile, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Understanding how early-career teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies can illuminate the additional support necessary for the success of this demographic. As a result, school districts can take proactive measures to strengthen emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance among their educators. Enhanced emotional self-awareness fosters empathy and emotional regulation (Goleman et al., 2013; Stein & Book, 2011), while increased stress tolerance equips teachers to navigate daily systemic stressors more effectively. These competencies enable early-career teachers to cultivate healthy student relationships and make informed decisions that promote student success (CASEL, 2019). Furthermore, research indicates that organizations benefit from improved performance, cohesive team dynamics, and transformational leadership when employees exhibit emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Goleman et al., 2013).

Role of the Researcher

Because it is not known how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experience, the researcher conducted a qualitative, descriptive analysis focusing on 11 early-career teachers across grades K -12 in an urban school setting (Trochim et al., 2016). Using the ABCDE guided logs as the primary data collection method, the researcher explored the understandings and descriptions of self-selected, stressful experiences of a small sample of early-career teachers from grades K- 12 in an urban school system (Trochim et al.).

Using a convenience sampling approach, the researcher identified participants who are early-career teachers between years one and five and work in an urban school system (Cozby & Bates, 2020). After sample selection, the researcher reviewed informed consent guidelines and study parameters, allowing participants sufficient time to fill out the informed consent form. The research audit trail consisted of data collection on a secure online private platform. Teachers opting to participate in the study received a QR code to review and sign the electronic informed consent, provide basic demographic information, select a pseudonym to protect their identity and complete the electronic ABCDE Guided Logs as described in the study design. Participants had two weeks from learning about the study to complete the ABCDE Guided Logs, but most elected to complete both forms back-to-back. To protect the integrity of their responses, participants used a pseudonym to complete an automatically time stamped, electronic ABCDE Guided Log. The audit trail included downloading, reviewing, and coding logs per submission while taking reflective notes.

These logs were automatically stored in a secure, cloud-based system. Participants were instructed to complete at least two guided logs over a two-week period. Participants responses were electronically recorded under their pseudonym. The researcher compiled and organized each log immediately upon receipt of each entry. Data analysis began as submissions were received. The researcher reviewed and coded the data using Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory Framework to identify emerging patterns and themes.

Research Assumptions

This study assumed there needs to be more awareness of how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies. The researcher assumed participants responded candidly to the

demographics survey and guided logs. Participants were assured their information would remain confidential to help increase the likelihood of reliable responses. Informed consent forms were provided and reviewed by participants before receiving access to participate in the study. The researcher reinforced with participants they could drop out of the study at any time (Trochim et al., 2016).

There were three proposed limitations to this study. The study focused on a small sample; however, this enabled the researcher to capture a targeted picture of the participants' understanding of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance related to their teaching experience. The narrow focus on these two emotional intelligence competencies can inform future professional development opportunities and teacher preparation programs. Another limitation centered around what participants chose as stress experiences; they may focus on specific incidents, ongoing stressful experiences, or secondary traumatic stressors. Although the research could specify stressors, it may enhance the findings to see what participants organically select. This allowed for more authenticity within the data (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Another limitation may come from the researcher's extensive knowledge of EI, which can lead to confirmation bias. The researcher addressed personal assumptions before data collection and during data analysis to overcome this limitation. Additionally, the researcher used member checking to confirm the accuracy of participants' responses.

Definition of Terms

Accountability: Any process, activity, or relationship intended to support, encourage, or adhere to a designated standard to achieve a specific goal.

Burnout: An overwhelming or emotionally exhausted mental state (Brown, 2021).

Early-career teachers: For this study, early-career teachers are professionals who have taught between one and five years.

Emotional Intelligence (EI): Emotional Intelligence is a set of emotional and social skills that determines how humans view themselves and their experiences, how they communicate and interact with others, how they handle adversity, and how they use their emotions to guide their decisions and actions (Bermejo-Martins et al., 2021; Goleman, 1995).

Emotional Labor: Uncompensated, invisible mental and emotional work done to keep others happy (Resnick, 2021).

Emotional self awareness competency: According to the EQ-I 2.0 framework of emotional intelligence, it is the ability to identify and understand feelings and the impact these feelings have on others. Emotional self-awareness is the bedrock for the other emotional intelligence competencies, such as stress tolerance as it informs behaviors and decision-making (Stein & Book, 2011).

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is being present with an internal locus of control and allowing internal and external stimuli to exist without judgment (Tummers, 2013).

Personal development: Any activity or process intended to improve or enhance well-being.

Professional development: Any formal or informal activity or process intended to improve or enhance professional efficacy.

Self-care: Self-care is the active practice of refreshing, renewing, and healing of oneself (Tummers, 2013).

Self-efficacy: The beliefs or mental models shaped by experiences that determine how one perceives their identity, environment, and choices (Bandura et al., 1999).

Stress tolerance competency: According to the EQ-I 2.0 framework of emotional intelligence, it is the ability to manage unpleasant experiences and stressors without developing adverse effects on the mind and body. This includes having the capacity to remain calm while confidently making choices to help manage the event (Stein & Book, 2011).

Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory: A framework for separating a problem or experience from its root cause such as patterns of behavior, environmental factors, systemic issues, and mental models.

Urban school system: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city (National Center for Educational Statistics, nd).

Wellbeing: Actively experiencing positive emotions, healthy relationships, personal mastery, and satisfaction with life (Seligman, 2018).

Organization of Dissertation

In Chapter 1, the researcher introduced the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, the researcher's role, assumptions, and key terms. In Chapter 2, the researcher provided the study's literature review. In Chapter 3, the researcher outlined the research design and methodology (including the target sample, recruitment procedures, data collection and analysis processes, and the study's limitations). In Chapter 4, the researcher analyzed the results. Finally, in Chapter 5, the researcher summarized the entire study, discussed implications and limitations, and specified areas for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has never been a more urgent time to look closely at the system educators are expected to thrive in, both personally and professionally (Podolsky et al., 2016). Unfortunately, teaching is a helping profession where stress and compassion fatigue are often experienced as occupational hazards (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Abitabile (2020) reported that teachers were leaving the profession annually at a rate of eight percent or before retirement at 50% due to stress. Additionally, Steiner and Woo (2021) revealed that burnout and low self-efficacy topped the list of stressors impacting teacher wellbeing and low job satisfaction.

Most educators entered the field to affect change and have transformational impact on children. Affecting change and having a transformational impact are big, hairy, audacious goals with unique stressors. These stressors come in the form of various communication styles, learning styles, leadership styles, climate and culture expectations, ways of being, social behavior, student behavior, and parent/caregiver connections (Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019; Salami, 2010). To avoid burnout and decreased self-efficacy that may stem from these various stressors, teacher wellbeing must be a priority.

Teachers have the most impact on student achievement and thus are essential assets (Hattie, 2009). However, if teachers are not at their best, hampered by low emotional self-awareness and stress-tolerance, they will continue to leave the profession, and student achievement will suffer. Describing how early career-teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance thus becomes critical (Abitabile, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Moir's (1990) research on early-career teachers delineates distinct phases where individuals may encounter challenges related to emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance: the survival and disillusionment phases, occurring typically within the first year. The survival phase, spanning from September to October, sees early-career teachers grappling with many responsibilities, including classroom management, and mastering new curriculum materials (Moir). This period often induces cognitive dissonance as teachers confront the stark contrast between their idealized teaching expectations and the profession's actual demands. Transitioning into the disillusionment phase, extending from October to February, brings additional stressors, such as parent-teacher conferences and formal evaluations, contributing to uncertainty regarding one's effectiveness as an educator (Moir). Consequently, self-doubt and other negative emotions tend to intensify among many early-career teachers during this phase.

Literature Review

Wellbeing

Seligman (2018) defined wellbeing as the active experience of positive emotions, fostering healthy relationships, achieving personal mastery, and feeling satisfied with life. A state of wellbeing manifests in enjoying an active lifestyle, finding purpose in work, and establishing meaningful connections with others (Adler et al., 2017; Seligman, 2018; Tummers, 2013). Furthermore, wellbeing centers on optimism, mindfulness, and a sense of humor (Adler et al., 2017; Tummers, 2013). Regularly experiencing wellbeing suggests operating from an internal locus of control and possessing the capacity to effectively reframe stressors in a positive light (Adler et al., 2017; Tummers, 2013). Consequently, teachers who cultivate a sense of wellbeing are more likely to demonstrate healthy, adaptive responses to stressors, thereby

reducing the risk of burnout and fostering higher self-efficacy (Adler et al., 2017; Tummers, 2013; Turnipseed, 2018).

Emotional Labor

In establishing working definitions for burnout and low self-efficacy, it is essential to consider the concept of emotional labor as a foundational element. Resnick (2021) defined emotional labor as the unseen mental and emotional effort individuals invest to maintain others' happiness without compensation. Hochschild (2019) introduced this concept in "The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling" to explore how workplace demands impact individuals' social-emotional and cognitive burdens. Teachers often encounter numerous workplace demands that necessitate suppressing their authentic selves and emotions to align with the implicit norms of their school's culture (Stark et al., 2022). Consequently, regular emotional labor can detrimentally affect wellbeing and contribute to burnout and diminished self-efficacy (Adler et al., 2017; Tummers, 2013; Turnipseed, 2018).

Teachers may find themselves compelled to conceal their genuine emotions during emotionally charged situations while managing classroom environments (Wang et al., 2019). This form of emotional labor, known as performative emotional regulation, contrasts with genuine emotions (Wang et al., 2019). Sustaining a facade of emotional composure entails suppressing one's authentic self and emotions to uphold positivity. This behavior, such as displaying a false smile or feigning wellbeing, often serves as a gateway to burnout and diminished self-efficacy (Cheung et al., 2011; Stark et al., 2022; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

Martinez-Monteagudo et al. (2019) corroborated that teachers with limited emotional regulation capabilities were more prone to emotional exhaustion (burnout) and decreased self-efficacy due to emotional labor. Consistently repressing emotions conveyed a sense of

insignificance, leading to reduced self-efficacy and the adoption of unhealthy coping mechanisms (Schwartz & Gladding, 2012). Conversely, regular experiences of genuine positive emotions promoted wellbeing and diminished the likelihood of emotional exhaustion (Jensen, 2019; Kinman et al., 2011; Seligman, 2018; Tummers, 2013). Jennings et al. (2019) further supported this notion by studying teachers engaged in adult social-emotional programs, concluding that those who frequently experienced positive emotions were less likely to report burnout.

Burnout

Prolonged periods of job-related stress may develop into chronic stress and burnout (Brown, 2021; Maslach & Schaufeli,1993; Oberle et al., 2020). Burnout is the mental and emotional status of being overwhelmed or emotionally exhausted (Brown, 2021; Maslach & Schaufeli,1993; Oberle et al., 2020). Teachers who chronically ruminated over negative thoughts, such as adverse student behaviors or unrealistic demands, were more likely to experience anxiety and burnout (Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019). Burnout erased the sense of wellbeing and significantly impaired teachers' abilities to perform regular responsibilities (Brown, 2021; Maslach & Schaufeli,1993; Oberle et al., 2020). Teacher burnout occurred when perceived professional expectations and abilities clashed with job realities (Brown, 2021; Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019). Moir's (1990) disillusionment phase among early-career teachers highlights this can be a reality for teachers during their first year as well.

Burnout impacts self-efficacy by inviting cynicism, reducing empathy, and blurring the vision of one's ability (Martinez-Monteagudo et al. 2019; Sapolsky, 2004; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015). Work-induced emotional exhaustion has become dangerously prevalent, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to identify burnout as an official

medical diagnosis due to its insidious nature on workplace productivity (Robinson, 2020). In contrast, mitigating burnout grows the capacity for increased productivity, personal accomplishments, and workplace efficacy; consequently, teachers can build productive relationships and effectively deliver meaningful instruction (Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019; Payne, 2020).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura et al. (1999), encompasses beliefs or mental models forged by experiences that shape one's perception of identity, environment, and choices, guiding teacher behavior within and beyond the classroom (Farmer, 2020). This concept is associated with self-confidence and satisfaction within specific domains of life, such as the teaching role (Goleman, 1998). Particularly for teachers, including those in the early stages of their careers (Moir, 1990), belief in their teaching abilities supersedes actual teaching ability founded on doubt and fear (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

Mental models expand the understanding of self-efficacy (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). These models, encompassing beliefs, assumptions, and ideas, act as filters shaping how individuals comprehend, experience, and respond to the world, thereby influencing self-perception (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Developed through interactions with family, friends, authority figures, and cumulative life experiences, mental models shape the lenses through which teachers view themselves and their students (Amen, 2021; Brown, 2021; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). For instance, individuals who internalize messages promoting perfection as the sole standard during childhood may grapple with a mental model of perfectionism and its impact on self-efficacy (Amen, 2021; Brown, 2021; Goleman et al., 2013; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau,

2016). Additionally, mental models influence how individuals perceive and respond to stressors, determining whether they are experiencing a perceived threat (Amen, 2021; Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019). Consequently, a teacher's mental model shapes their interpretation of tasks and assigns meaning to their professional role, influencing whether the job is viewed as onerous or an opportunity for growth and development (Amen, 2021; Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019).

Mental models often stem from limiting beliefs triggered by painful experiences, emerging as a mechanism for self-preservation (Amen, 2021; 2006). When teachers perceive their professional efficacy as flawed or inadequate due to a never-good-enough mental model, they may feel compelled to overextend themselves to compensate for these limitations (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Left unexamined and unaddressed, these negative mental models, or limiting beliefs, can erode feelings of self-efficacy and contribute to burnout (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2006; Stark et al., 2022; Tait, 2008). External pressures from the job, such as high-stakes testing and unfavorable district report cards, can further entrench these negative mental models (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2006; Stark et al., 2022; Tait, 2008).

Brown (2012) observed a negative relationship between self-efficacy, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. Teachers with lower self-efficacy and perceptions of control are more prone to overextension, depleting their physical and emotional resources (Brown, 2012; Gill et al., 2015; Merida-Lopez et al., 2020). Similarly, Bumen (2010) found a connection between self-efficacy and burnout, identifying student engagement as a critical factor influencing a teacher's sense of efficacy. Those with lower confidence in managing classrooms are more likely to leave the profession due to reduced self-efficacy, lack of social and emotional support, and burnout (Bumen, 2010; Merida-Lopez, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Mental models can serve as valuable assets. Positive mental models enhance self-efficacy and overall wellbeing (Amen, 2021; Chang, 2009; Goleman et al., 2013; Senge, 2006; Tait, 2008; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Fortunately, recognized mental models can adapt when individuals are open to transformative efforts (Amen, 2021; Chang, 2009; Gill et al., 2015; Goleman et al., 2013; Senge, 2006; Tait, 2008; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). An advantageous mental model for educators might involve viewing students as individuals with unique beliefs and challenges that do not impact a teacher's personal or professional identity (Amen, 2021; Goleman et al., 2013).

Engaging in teaching and learning involves vulnerability, often eliciting feelings of anxiety and diminishing self-efficacy (Butakor et al., 2021;). Professional vulnerability entails accepting the possibility of being partially right or wrong (Butakor et al., 2021). Embracing this vulnerability while not allowing outcomes to define personal or professional identity forms the foundation of positive self-efficacy (Amen, 2021; Brown, 2021; Goleman et al., 2013). Teachers must master content and adapt their teaching approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles, ensuring meaningful content delivery (Amen, 2021; Brown, 2021; Goleman et al., 2013). An efficacious teacher exudes confidence in their ability to adapt without questioning their professional competency (Amen, 2021; Brown, 2021; Goleman et al., 2013). Teaching, essentially a reciprocal learning process for educators and students, is evaluated by student test scores, rendering it inherently vulnerable. Nevertheless, cultivating positive self-efficacy and reframing educational pressures enhance teachers' capacity to navigate the uncertainties inherent in teaching (Amen, 2021; Butakor et al., 2021; Brown, 2021; Goleman et al., 2013).

Strengthening Emotional Intelligence (EI) in adults can help mitigate burnout and low self-efficacy generated from teacher vulnerability (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013;

Turnipseed, 2018). In addition, understanding the neurological components of emotions and subsequent behaviors helps facilitate discourse on sustainable efforts to increase teacher wellbeing (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The last decade has provided a plethora of new research on the brain and its neurological impacts on social and academic successes and informed the need for cultivating teachers' EI competencies (Gill et al., 2015; Kolb & Whishaw, 2021; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

How Neuroscience Informs the Problem

Exploring neuroscience and human capacity offers more insights into the significance of burnout and low self-efficacy in teachers. When stressed, the brain sends signals to go into freeze, flight, or fight mode, prompting a shutdown of the prefrontal cortex to divert resources to the lower half of the body for action (Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012). Neuroscience is significant for a teacher because the prefrontal cortex is where executive functions take place, such as planning, organizing, critical thinking, and emotional regulation (Payne, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Van der Kolk, 2015). If the body is in freeze, flight, or fight mode, thinking critically, including teaching, is impaired (Payne, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Van der Kolk, 2015).

The limbic system, which includes the amygdala, is responsible for behavior and emotions (Breuning, 2016). It dictates how the brain receives stimuli; thus, meaning is made after being filtered through emotions (Merriam & Bierman, 2014). The heart of a teacher's job rests on the ability to plan, organize, think critically, and regulate emotions amid a diversity of personalities, learning abilities, and classroom adversity (Merriam & Bierman, 2014; Van der Kolk, 2015). Because emotions impact how stimuli (e.g., interaction and information) are perceived, chronic duress increases the likelihood of burnout, and the ability to carry out

classroom executive functions decreases along with professional efficacy (Merriam & Bierman, 2014; Payne, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Sousa, 2010; Van der Kolk, 2015).

This neurological process is hard-wired within us from our ancestral days, where fighting and fleeing were normal aspects of the lifestyle and evolved into who we are today (Medina, 2014; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015). Although animals are no longer chasing us, the brain registers all threats, perceived or real, prompting us to act for our safety (Berns, 2010; Medina, 2014). Today, these ongoing perceived threats for teachers take the form of high-stakes exams, limited resources, unrealistic demands, rapid change, and uncertainty, heightened by current pandemic-era pressures and can lead to a chronic state of stress (Farmer, 2020; Medina, 2014).

Prolonged exposure to stress triggers an overflow of flight or fight hormones in the brain, adversely affecting its healthy functioning, even if the threat is perceived rather than real (Sapolsky, 2004; Van der Kolk, 2015). Human physiology is adapted to handle stress only for short durations, and persistent stress responses disrupt neural pathways, impede growth, and contribute to burnout (Elias, 2019; Medina, 2014; Sapolsky, 2004; Van der Kolk, 2015). Consequently, educators encounter challenges in managing stress perceptions and efficacy as the ability to distinguish genuine threats becomes blurred (Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Van der Kolk, 2015).

Understanding neuroplasticity highlights the intricate connection between chronic, toxic stress and brain function (Medina, 2014). Neuroplasticity, the brain's capacity to learn, is shaped by repetitive experiences such as stress, social interactions, emotions, diet, exercise, and meditation (Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Van der Kolk, 2015). Through repeated exposure to specific stimuli, the brain forms or strengthens pathways, facilitating easier access to stored information

in the future (Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Van der Kolk, 2015). Neuroplasticity occurs in response to positive and negative information encountered over time (Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Van der Kolk, 2015). For instance, if a teacher consistently faces negative stressors with a student, this can lead to automatic negative responses, even when mentioning the student's name (Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Van der Kolk, 2015).

When educators receive support in the workplace and feel less threatened, the prefrontal cortex, responsible for executive functions crucial to teaching, can function optimally (Breuning, 2016). Restoring the prefrontal cortex's function enables teachers to effectively manage job-related stress, demands, and expectations, fostering increased self-efficacy (Breuning, 2016; Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015). Given that brain development and neuroplasticity are influenced by social-emotional experiences, Emotional Intelligence offers a framework for reshaping perceptions of overwhelming demands and limited resources, thereby mitigating burnout and enhancing self-efficacy among educators (Bracket et al., 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Stefanovic et al., 2021; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

Emotional Intelligence: A Framework for Social-Emotional Needs

Enhancing Emotional Intelligence (EI) diminishes the impact of difficult emotions contributing to burnout (Lee et al., 2019). When stimuli are appraised through negative mental models, triggering adverse emotional responses, the likelihood of unfavorable reactions increases (Kolb & Whishaw, 2021; Sapolsky, 2005; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015). Teachers with higher levels of EI may have different appraisal of a stimuli as compared to those with lower EI levels who may perceive the same stimuli as a threat (Lee et al., 2019; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

The Evolution of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is a set of emotional and social skills that determines how we view ourselves and our experiences, how we communicate and interact with others, how we handle adversity, and how we use our emotions to guide our decisions and actions (Bermejo-Martins et al., 2021; Goleman, 1995). Emotional Intelligence was initially referred to as social intelligence, a term coined by E. L. Thorndike in the early 1920's, which was described as the ability to understand others and behave wisely (Kaufhold & Johnson, 2005; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Howard Gardner's (2008) Theory of Multiple Intelligence expands Thorndike's social intelligence definition by adding the concept of interpersonal intelligence, communication and connection with others, and intrapersonal intelligence, the ability to be self-aware of strengths and weaknesses, and emotional states.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) built on Thorndike and Gardner's foundation to define Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a part of social intelligence which includes the ability to correctly identify, express, and regulate personal emotions and the ability to accurately assess feelings in others to assist with developing and achieving goals. Their four-part model of EI consists of the ability to identify and use emotions to understand and manage self and understand the emotions of others (Mayer et al., 2004).

In 1995, Daniel Goleman determined IQ was as important as EI regarding professional performance (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). He studied the emotional part of the brain (limbic system) in connection to the executive functioning part of the brain (prefrontal cortex) to ascertain what determined optimum performance (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). As a result, Goleman realized IQ tells what the issue is, and EI informs how to perceive the problem and how to best proceed (Cherniss & Goleman, 2003). Goleman's findings led to expanding the

field of EI with his Emotional Competence Framework (Goleman, 1995). The Emotional Competence Framework divides into Personal Competence (how we handle ourselves) and Social Competence (how we interact with others (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). Emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation outline Personal Competence, while empathy and social skills outline Social Competence (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). He found there were no differences in gender when it comes to EI (meaning women are not more astute) and that EI is malleable and continually develops over time (Goleman, 1998).

Around the time Goleman launched EI as we know it today, Reuven Bar-On outlined five themes of EI and 15 subcomponents which became known as the Bar-On model of EI (see Figure 1). Because EI was still an emerging idea often met with criticism, Bar-On, in partnership with Steven Stein, created a tool to validate the strength and value of Emotional Intelligence (Stein & Book, 2011). To measure EI, they made the Emotional Quotient Inventory or EQ-I (Stein & Book, 2011). This tool is widely used globally, particularly in assessing the EI competencies of high-level corporate executives (Goleman et al., 2013). The EQ-I 2.0 composite scale measures five themes and 15 subscales as outlined by MHS in Figure 1.

Figure 1

EQ-I Composite Scale

SELF PERCEPTION	SELF EXPRESSION	INTERPERSONAL	DECISION MAKING	STRESS MANAGEMENT
Subscales	*Subscales*	*Subscales*	*Subscales*	*Subscales*
self-regard	emotional expression	interpersonal relationships	problem solving	flexibility
self-actualization	assertiveness	empathy	reality testing	stress tolerance
emotional emotional self-awareness	independence	Social responsibility	impulse control	optimism

Note. Multi-Health Systems, Inc. Model of Emotional Intelligence measured by the EQ-I 2.0 tool created by Bar-On, Stein, and Book (Stein & Book, 2011).

Emotional Intelligence is emerging in education as social-emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a leading voice in building SEL capacity for both students and adults. According to CASEL (2019), SEL encompasses the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, mindset, and behaviors necessary for effectively managing emotions, achieving goals, fostering relationships, and making responsible decisions. Drawing upon Goleman's Framework of Emotional Competence, CASEL (2019) has developed a comprehensive model consisting of five core SEL competencies: emotional self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and

responsible decision-making. While various models of Emotional Intelligence exist, they all aim to explore how individuals perceive, process, and utilize emotions to comprehend themselves and others and to make informed decisions (Bermejo-Martins et al., 2021; CASEL, 2019; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). This literature review adopts the structure of the CASEL framework while employing a hybrid competency approach (O'Boyle et al., 2011) to examine EI competencies and their implications for burnout and self-efficacy in the field of education.

Emotional Self-Awareness

A teacher with high emotional self-awareness demonstrates the ability to recognize their emotions and understand how they influence themselves and those around them (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011;). Conversely, a deficiency in emotional self-awareness may lead to a lack of confidence and low self-esteem among educators (CASEL, 2019; Stein & Book, 2011). Such teachers may struggle to acknowledge and manage their feelings effectively, resulting in prolonged emotional labor (CASEL, 2019; Stein & Book, 2011). In contrast, a self-aware teacher confidently recognizes their strengths and weaknesses, utilizing these insights to tackle challenges and support others (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). This heightened emotional self-awareness significantly bolsters self-confidence and self-efficacy (Carstensen & Klusman, 2021; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013).

Educators often adopt a relentless approach in pursuit of effecting change and making a transformative impact, perpetuating the societal expectation of them as superheroes in the classroom. Teachers lacking emotional self-awareness often compensate for these unrealistic expectations by depleting their physical and emotional reserves, leading to burnout (Chan, 2007;

Robinson, 2020). These unattainable standards detrimentally affect educators' self-efficacy. However, sustained Emotional Intelligence (EI) support has been found to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and confidence within and beyond the classroom setting (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Vesley et al., 2013).

Research conducted by Butakor et al. (2021) has uncovered a significant relationship between emotional self-awareness and work engagement among educators. Their findings also revealed a positive association between emotional self-awareness and teachers' self-efficacy. Specifically, teachers with heightened emotional self-awareness tend to hold optimistic perceptions of their roles in the classroom (Butakor et al., 2021). Conversely, a study involving 160 urban teachers exploring emotional self-awareness and stress found that teachers' effectiveness in the classroom diminished under extreme stress (Camacho et al., 2018). Given the insights gleaned from the research by Butakor et al. (2021) and Camacho et al. (2018), it becomes imperative to delve into teachers' perceptions and descriptions of their emotional self-awareness.

Stress-Tolerance

A teacher with robust stress tolerance demonstrates resilience confronting challenges and maintains emotional regulation amidst adversity (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). Recent studies highlight that the difficulties educators face today contribute to a surge in burnout cases (Patti et al., 2018). Furthermore, stress tolerance in a teacher is apparent in their ability to establish, pursue, and evaluate personal and professional goals (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). Conversely, teachers lacking stress tolerance may need more motivation to strive for goals and encounter difficulties envisioning a personal vision.

Research conducted by Merida-Lopez et al. (2019) revealed that emotional intelligence (EI) is a valuable resource in aiding teachers in managing stressors while pursuing their objectives. Additionally, they found that educators with higher EI levels were better equipped to identify emotions associated with work pressures and employ adaptive strategies for self-management (Merida-Lopez et al., 2019). The capacity to navigate work-related stressors to achieve goals and effectively manage emotions triggered by potential obstacles has mitigated burnout and bolstered teacher efficacy (CASEL, 2019; Merida-Lopez, 2019; Stein & Book, 2011).

Social Awareness

Social awareness involves empathizing with the thoughts and emotions of others and accurately interpreting and responding to social cues (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). A teacher high in social awareness understands others' perspectives and validates their feelings, even when they differ from their own (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). Conversely, a lack of social awareness makes it challenging to interpret social cues or relate to others' emotions (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). Given the increasing responsibilities faced by educators today, including issues of equity and inclusion, social awareness is essential for effectively managing critical conversations, addressing implicit biases, and driving organizational change (CASEL, 2019). With adequate emotional intelligence (EI) and coupled with burnout, meeting these demands becomes possible.

Relationship Skills

Teachers who excel in relationship skills demonstrate the ability to effectively navigate healthy interpersonal dynamics, including collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution (CASEL, 2019; Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). Dolev and Leshem (2017) discovered a positive correlation between educators who applied Emotional Intelligence concepts and interpersonal skills, increasing teacher efficacy among students. For instance, one teacher identified how low confidence hindered their ability to connect with students fully and adjusted their approach accordingly (Dolev & Leshem, 2017). By effectively managing emotions and stress levels, teachers gain the emotional capacity to meet the diverse needs of students, navigate conflicts, and foster positive relationships without being overwhelmed by stress-induced reactions (Stickle et al., 2019). Confident and competent teachers prioritize building healthy relationships with students and tend to have a heightened sense of self-efficacy (Stickle et al., 2019).

Self-aware, emotionally intelligent educators possess the resilience not to internalize external events (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019; Patti et al., 2018; Petsos & Gorozidis, 2019; Stein & Book, 2011). Insecurity and self-doubt can impede early-career teachers from effectively connecting with students and parents due to uncertainty about themselves (Moir, 1990). However, understanding one's identity and appreciating the diversity of perspectives brought by students and parents facilitate meaningful connections (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019; Patti et al., 2018; Petsos & Gorozidis, 2019; Stein & Book, 2011). Self-aware, emotionally intelligent educators engage confidently in constructive conversations by empathetically listening to students and parents, devoid of judgment and free from the constraints of insecurities and self-

doubt (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Martinez-Monteagudo et al., 2019; Patti et al., 2018; Petsos & Gorozidis, 2019; Stein & Book, 2011).

Responsible Decision Making

Responsible decision making entails understanding decisions' ethical and moral implications and demonstrating critical thinking skills in decision-making processes (CASEL, 2019' Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011;). Emotions play a significant role in decision-making and relationship management, ultimately impacting teacher effectiveness (Cherniss & Goleman, 2003; Cranston, 2017). Teachers proficient in this competency acknowledge that decisions may not always yield favorable outcomes but proceed with deliberate actions—a hallmark of high self-efficacy (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011). Responsible decision-making involves decisiveness and employing critical thinking to assess the consequences of actions (CASEL, 2019; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2004; Stein & Book, 2011).

Brown (2012) affirmed that self-efficacy can enhance or hinder self-management, emotional self-awareness, and decision-making skills, as these rely on a reservoir of physical and emotional resources. Teachers with high self-efficacy are motivated to achieve goals and demonstrate effective decision-making, whereas those with low self-efficacy may exhibit demotivation, indecision, and negative attitudes toward goal-setting and achievement (Goleman et al., 2013; Stein & Book, 2011; Tang et al., 2001).

The Myth of Self Care

Self-care is the active practice of refreshing, renewing, and healing oneself and has become a buzzword over the last few years (Tummers, 2013). If self-care is about renewal and reinvigoration, encouraging self-care may seem like a viable solution for teacher burnout and

low self-efficacy. Many organizations invest in employee wellbeing by hosting a wellness week or a wellness challenge emphasizing the importance of self-care (Amrein et al., 2017; Nguyen & Larson, 2015;). Unfortunately, these well-intended efforts produce negligible impact because the initiatives lack the time and systems thinking framework necessary to affect change (Gillison et al., 2018; Senge, 2006). Behavior change in health cannot be relegated to short-term, inconsistent practices (Gillison et al., 2019).

Mental Models Around Self Care

Numerous barriers prevent individuals from prioritizing self-care, including a perceived lack of time, competing priorities, and confusion about self-care (Tummers, 2013). Despite the recognized benefits of activities like healthy eating, exercise, yoga, meditation, and mindfulness for stress management and increasing self-efficacy, many individuals struggle to prioritize self-care due to a lack of understanding of its significance and the importance of consistent practice over time (Gollwitzer, 2014; Nguyen & Larson, 2015).

Dismissing the importance of self-care practices, such as mindfulness, meditation, and yoga can be traced back to the foundations of Western education, which traditionally prioritizes cognitive development over holistic well-being (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). This emphasis on the intellect often leads to a disconnect from the body, hindering individuals, including educators, from recognizing the importance of mind-body connection and the benefits of self-care practices in enhancing emotional self-awareness and management (Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Shapiro et al., 2018; Weiler, 2016; Van der Kolk, 2015). However, mindfulness practices have been shown to facilitate greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience, thereby mitigating burnout and enhancing self-efficacy (CASEL, 2019; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Shapiro et al., 2018).

Mindfulness involves maintaining present-moment awareness with an internal locus of control, allowing internal and external stimuli to exist without judgment (Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Tummers, 2013). By cultivating mindfulness, individuals can develop the capacity to respond effectively to stimuli and manage stress, resulting in increased energy, improved breathing, and reduced tension (Tummers, 2013; Weiler, 2016). However, reaping the transformative benefits of mindfulness requires consistent practice and integration into one's lifestyle, as it can reshape neuroplasticity, enhance self-efficacy, and alleviate burnout (Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Tummers, 2013; Van der Kolk, 2015; Weiler 2016). Achieving this regular commitment to mindfulness often involves leveraging emotional self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making, which are core emotional intelligence competencies (Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Tummers, 2013; Wellies, 2016; Van der Kolk, 2015). Cultivating a systems-thinking mindset within a learning community can further support individuals in sustaining their mindfulness practice (Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Senge, 2006).

Approaching Self-Awareness and Stress-Tolerance Development Through a Systems Thinking Approach

The escalating issues of burnout and diminished self-efficacy among teachers in American schools can no longer be overlooked. Employing a systems-thinking framework for developing Emotional Intelligence (EI) among educators offers a promising avenue to tackle this concerning trend. Such an approach involves addressing the entire interconnected system as a unified entity, considering its constituent elements, their interactions, and the cumulative impact of their dynamics over time (Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015).

A school system, depicted in Figure 2, represents a multifaceted ecosystem comprising interconnected components, including teachers, students, curriculum, parents, and the wider

community, all working toward the common goal of facilitating learning and fostering student achievement (Kowch, 2019; Lin et al., 2020).

Figure 2

School System

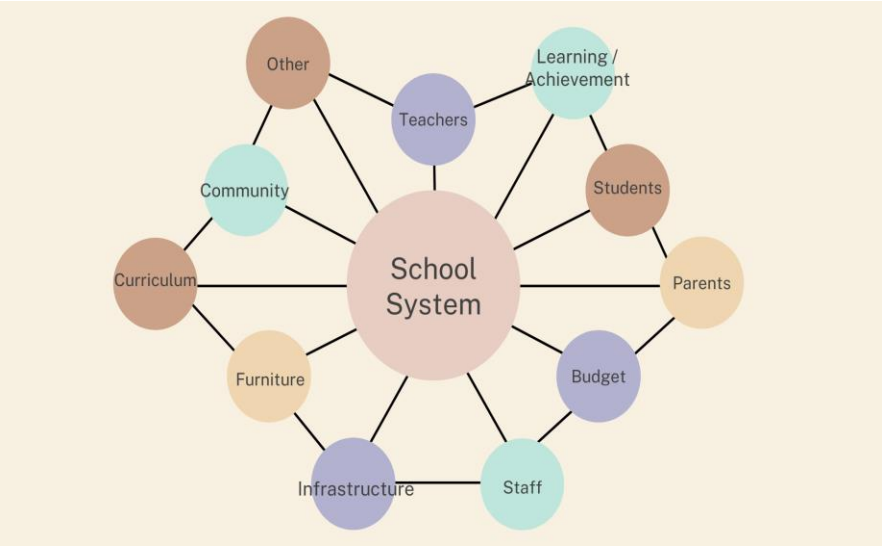
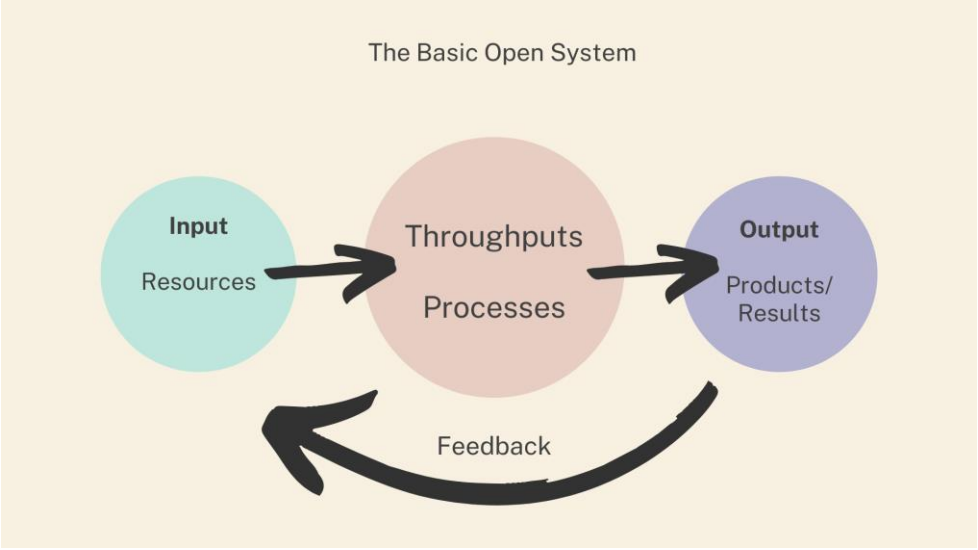


Figure 3

Basic Open System Diagram



Systems thinking involves analyzing a given system's inputs, processes, and outputs. This approach emphasizes continuous feedback, identifying patterns, understanding mental models,

and aligning actions with overarching goals, with gradual but critical adjustments made over an extended period (Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). To address Emotional Intelligence (EI), a systems-thinking framework aims to help teachers grasp the rationale behind the need for change, the significance of collaboration, and the precise definition of desired outcomes (Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). Dolev and Leshem (2017) demonstrated the efficacy of applying a systems-thinking approach to cultivate EI competencies among educators. This method led to reported enhancements in emotional regulation, the establishment of meaningful relationships, and increased confidence in achieving both personal and professional objectives (Dolev & Leshem, 2017).

A systems-thinking framework is geared towards long-term, sustainable change (Senge, 2006). Behavioral shifts require time and consistency (Gillison et al., 2019). To support teachers in recognizing and reframing entrenched mental models contributing to burnout and low self-efficacy, a systems-thinking approach offers the integration of essential components necessary for gradual transformation over time (Gillison et al., 2019; Senge, 2006). For instance, while a one-day professional development session may impart information, it lacks the depth and structured framework required for enduring change (Gillison et al., 2019; Imants & Van der Wal, 2020; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Ng et al., 2012; Senge, 2006).

Types of Systems-Thinking Frameworks for Increasing Emotional Self-Awareness and Stress-Tolerance Capacity

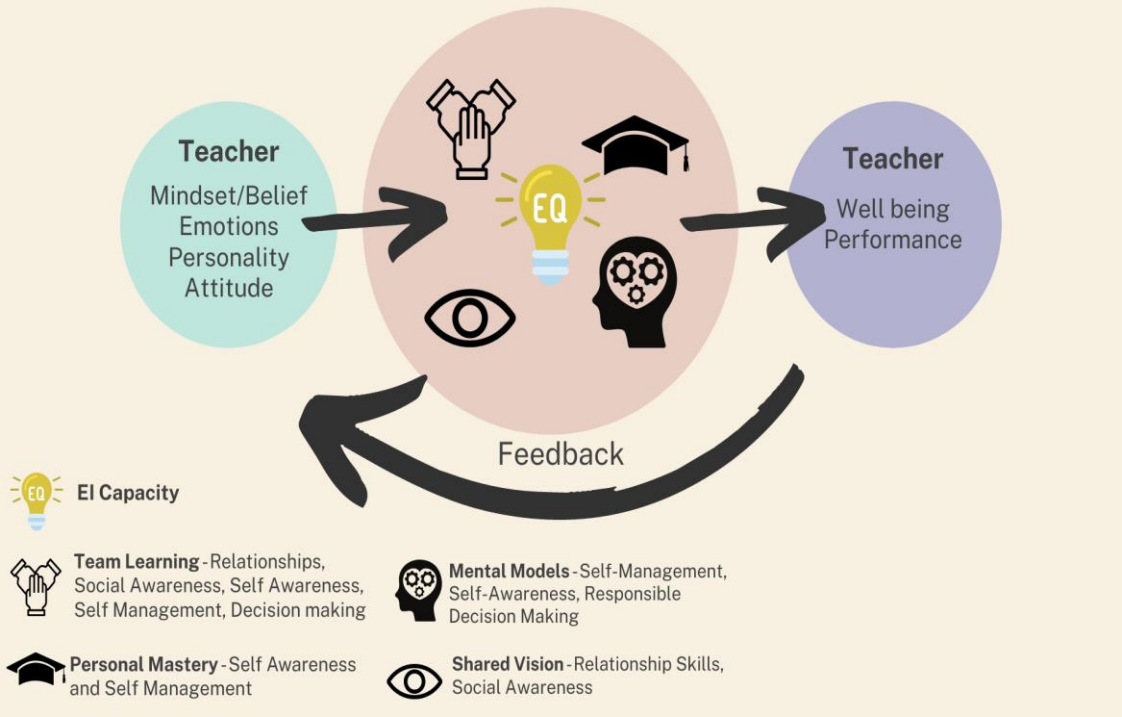
Fifth Discipline Framework

Senge (2006), in his work "The Fifth Discipline," introduced a systems-thinking method for fostering learning communities, offering a promising framework for delivering Emotional Intelligence (EI) support to educators. Applying a systems-thinking approach to establish an

emotionally intelligent learning environment involves integrating all facets of an organization, including standard operations, curriculum, collaboration, and relationship-building to attain the desired objective (Senge). The systems-thinking framework in "The Fifth Discipline" comprises critical elements such as personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning (Senge).

Figure 4

Illustration of Fifth Discipline Framework (2006) Fused With CASEL (2019) EI Competencies



The Fifth Discipline framework illuminates different cognitive and behavioral patterns and offers guidance for altering these patterns, inherently incorporating mindfulness of emotions (Goleman & Senge, 2014; Prati et al., 2003; Senge, 2006). By assisting teachers in recognizing patterns leading to burnout and low self-efficacy and equipping them with tools to enhance their Emotional Intelligence (EI) capacity, job satisfaction may increase, and health issues may decrease. Moreover, this framework provides a perspective for appraising challenges in ways

that facilitate rather than hinder progress (Bracket et al., 2019; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Prati et al., 2003; Senge, 2006).

The Fifth Discipline systems-thinking framework is a continuous structure that empowers teacheres to refine their vision and goals to attain personal mastery and enhance self-efficacy (emotional self-awareness and self-management) (Goleman et al., 2013; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). It offers a framework for addressing mental models (beliefs and assumptions shaping self and others' perceptions) and leveraging those mental models conducive to progress toward goals (emotional self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making) (CASEL, 2019; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). This framework encourages and facilitates teams in developing, nurturing, and implementing a shared community vision (relationship skills and social awareness) (CASEL, 2019; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). Within this framework, team members continuously learn together while cultivating authentic relationships crucial for receiving feedback and support essential for goal achievement (relationship skills, responsible decision-making, social awareness, self-management, emotional self-awareness) (Medina, 2014; Schwartz & Gladdings, 2012; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

When a team focuses on overcoming inhibiting mental models to establish an equitable and inclusive environment, a systems-thinking approach can materialize this shared vision and enhance the capacity for necessary mental and emotional shifts (CASEL, 2019; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). Each team member works on reframing unconstructive mental models regarding equity and inclusion while honing the personal skills needed to implement the work in the classroom and create an inclusive space (CASEL, 2019; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). This ongoing process, coupled with regular feedback and support, heightens personal mastery and self-efficacy

while fostering the social-emotional well-being of the team (Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015).

Additionally, two other frameworks offer supplementary support for employing a systems-thinking model to expand EI. Similar to the Fifth Discipline framework, they include elements such as enhancing personal mastery or self-efficacy, addressing mental models or beliefs, establishing and operating under a shared vision, and learning collectively over time as a team (Bracket et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2017; Jennings et al., 2019; Dolev & Leshem, 2017).

RULER Framework

Another framework employing a systems-thinking approach for Emotional Intelligence (EI) development is RULER, which stands for Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating (Bracket et al., 2019; Nathanson et al., 2016). Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, RULER offers a systematic structure for involving all stakeholders (students, parents, staff, and administration) in enhancing EI competencies (Brackett et al., 2019; Nathanson et al., 2016). This comprehensive, long-term approach integrates EI into every aspect of the school by utilizing the framework to shape curriculum, coaching protocols, and learning cohorts (Bracket et al., 2019).

The RULER theory of change model outlines components that effectively influence a school's ecological systems (Bracket et al., 2019; Nathanson et al., 2016). It first outlines intervention components such as leadership training, educator and family coaching, and EI-related lessons and resources (Bracket et al., 2019; Nathanson et al., 2016). Next, it spells out implementation factors about individuals, classrooms, schools, and families, which enhance proximal outcomes like emotional climate and EI (Bracket et al., 2019; Nathanson et al., 2016). According to their theory of change, predicated on these implantation factors, the proximal

outcomes impact distal outcomes such as learning, well-being, relationships, and decision-making (Bracket et al., 2019; Nathanson et al., 2016).

CARE Systems Thinking Framework

The Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) framework is another EI development model employing a systems-thinking approach to enhance teacher well-being (Jennings et al., 2019). This framework integrates systematic professional development throughout the school structure to nurture teacher EI (Jennings et al., 2019). Teachers engage in cohorts to enhance their EI competencies by participating in stress management activities, emotional regulation exercises, mindfulness practices, and workshops on personal and professional efficacy (Jennings et al., 2017; Jennings et al., 2019). Furthermore, they regularly convene with their groups to enhance emotional self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Jennings et al., 2017; Jennings et al., 2019).

Through the CARE systems-thinking approach, Jennings et al. (2019) observed a significant reduction in psychological distress over time for CARE cohorts. Moreover, these cohorts exhibited improved self-efficacy and emotional regulation abilities, leading to decreased burnout related to emotional labor (Jennings et al., 2019). The CARE model spotlights the potential of employing a systems-thinking approach to address EI within a learning community (Jennings et al., 2019).

Summary

Leadership is pivotal in fostering staff development of Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Cherniss & Goleman, 2003; Goleman et al., 2013; Prati et al., 2003; Stefanovic et al., 2021). Educational leaders, guided by their Emotional Intelligence, should adopt essential behaviors to enhance self-efficacy and alleviate burnout among teachers (Abitale, 2020; Cherniss & Goleman,

2003; Goleman et al., 2013; Prati et al., 2003; Stefanovic et al., 2021). Equipped with emotional self awareness and relationship skills, leaders must take time to genuinely see and hear their team members by actively listening to their concerns, engaging in conversation beyond teacher evaluations, and recognizing staff contributions (Abitale, 2020; Cherniss & Goleman, 2003). Furthermore, leaders should provide consistent, honest feedback and regular encouragement (Abitale, 2020; CASEL, 2019; Goleman et al., 2013).

To boost self-efficacy and mitigate burnout, leaders must adopt a systems-thinking approach to foster an emotionally intelligent culture (CASEL, 2019; Goleman et al., 2013; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006; Stefanovic, 2021). This endeavor requires collaborative learning (CASEL, 2019; Cherniss & Goleman, 2003; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Goleman et al., 2013; Senge, 2006; Warren, 2012), woven into every aspect of the learning community system to address teacher burnout and enhance self-efficacy (Senge, 2006; Goleman & Senge, 2014; CASEL, 2019). A total commitment and a long-term implementation plan are critical for the necessary neuroplasticity, leading to behavior change, reduced burnout, and increased self-efficacy (Bracket et al., 2019; CASEL, 2019; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Kolb & Wishaw, 2021; Senge, 2006; Van der Kolk, 2015).

Teachers want to feel good about their career choice and maintain a passion for their work (Adler et al., 2017). They seek to preserve a sense of self-efficacy amid external pressures such as high-stakes testing and unrealistic expectations (Adler et al., 2017; Berg, 2018). Teachers desire the psychological safety to perform their duties without compromising their identity (Bahl, 2017). While increased pay offers temporary relief, it fails to address burnout's underlying mental and emotional components (CASEL, 2019; Shapiro et al., 2018).

Effectively addressing systemic burnout and bolstering self-efficacy among early-career teachers in urban settings requires a systems-thinking approach to cultivate EI competencies (CASEL, 2019; Senge, 2006). This change initiative begins with a commitment from leadership (Stefanovic, 2021), an acknowledgment of the significance of EI, and its relevance for the learning community (Goleman et al., 2013; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006). Moving forward entails adopting a systems-thinking approach supported by mental models that facilitate success in overcoming burnout and enhancing self-efficacy within the learning community (CASEL, 2019; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Senge, 2006; Stein & Book, 2011).

Building on the insights from this literature review, the proposed qualitative descriptive study aims to explore how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress-tolerance competencies. By focusing on these two EI competencies, the study delved into areas contributing to attrition among early-career teachers (Steiner & Woo, 2021). This research offers valuable insights for educational leaders to better prepare and support early-career teachers and inform the design of professional development programs addressing emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance in urban school systems (Camacho et al., 2018).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explored the perceptions and descriptions of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies among early-career teachers within an urban school system in the Midwestern region. In today's rapidly changing society, early-career teachers encounter many stressors compared to previous generations (Callahan, 2016), often facing a steep learning curve at the outset (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Gardiner, 2012). Therefore, investigating how teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance in relation to their teaching experiences may offer insights for educational administrators, colleges, and school systems to mitigate the rising attrition rates among early-career teachers.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences?
2. How do early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their stress tolerance skills in the context of their teaching experiences?

Emotional Intelligence is an emerging concept in education (CASEL, 2019). Educators can personally and professionally benefit from a better understanding of EI, particularly as it relates to sub-competencies of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within teaching experiences (Bermejo-Martins et al., 2021). Therefore, using the Stein and Book (2011) EQ-I 2.0 framework for emotional intelligence, specifically emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance, the researcher conducted a qualitative descriptive analysis to discover answers to the proposed research questions.

The ABCDE Guided Log enabled participants to go beneath the surface of an event to understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within their teaching experiences. The goal was to see with guided reflection, what participants identify as stressful experiences, what they believe about these stressful experiences, how they feel about these stressful experiences, and how they understand and describe responses to these experiences. Additionally, the guided logs allowed participants the space to reframe these stressful experiences.

After collecting the ABCDE Guided Logs, the researcher reviewed and coded the data using Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory Framework to identify emerging patterns and themes. Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory is a framework used to move beyond the surface of an event to explore patterns of behavior -- influential factors such as policies, environmental structures, relationships, and mental models created by individual assumptions, beliefs, values, and life experiences. The researcher used this framework to assist with drawing conclusions about how participants understand and describe what is underneath the iceberg of those stressful experiences. After this analysis, the researcher concluded and made recommendations for future relevant research opportunities.

Methods

The researcher proposed the following steps to select participants upon approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Youngstown State University:

1. Submit Youngstown State University's IRB approval form to the targeted urban school system's Department of Strategic Performance Initiatives: Research and Planning Division for approval to move forward with research using their teachers.

2. Once approved, the researcher will meet with the director of the Peer Assistance Review (PAR) team to discuss the study parameters, informed consent, and identify willing participants for the study who meet the early-career criteria of years one through five.
3. The PAR director will send study information and a link to teachers between years one through five inviting them to participate in the study. The information contained an explanation of the study, the purpose of the research, and the measures built into the study to ensure confidentiality and safety.
4. The researcher will share a pre-recorded informational video explaining the details and parameters of the study and include the video with invitation to participate.
5. Participants can download a hard copy of the study description and the informed consent form.
6. Volunteers who agree to participate anonymously will spend about five minutes reading and completing the electronic informed consent form.
7. Once the informed consent is signed, participants will receive a link to an electronic demographic sheet, select a pseudonym for the study, and review an oral explanation of the next steps of the research process.
8. After participants complete the electronic demographic sheet (a five-to-seven-minute task), they will receive a link to electronic ABCDE Guided Logs. To maintain anonymity, participants will only use their pseudonym on the logs. It will take participants on average about seven to ten minutes to complete, which is contingent upon how much reflection is given per section.

A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explore how participants understand their world (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Because it is not known how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within their teaching experiences, the researcher conducted a qualitative, descriptive analysis focusing on a sample of five to ten early-career teachers across grades K -12 from a local urban school district (Trochim et al., 2016). Using an ABCDE Guided Log as the primary data collection method, the researcher explored how these early-career teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance as they process self-selected stressful experiences via the ABCDE Guided Log (Trochim et al., 2016). In these logs, which are modified versions of Stein & Books (2011) data collection tool, participants over two weeks documented stressful teaching experiences, as follows:

- Identify and describe a stressful teaching experience.
- Share beliefs about the situation, in the moment.
- Share how they responded and how they felt about their responses.
- Reflect on other ways to interpret initial thoughts about the stressful event.
- Describe how they would have preferred to have responded to the stressful teaching experience and why.

Study Sample

The study used purposive, convenience sampling to identify participants who are early-career teachers with between years one and five of experience in a Midwestern urban school district (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The goal was to achieve a representative sample of 10 to 15 early-career teachers from elementary, middle, and high

schools. The researcher partnered with the district's early-career teacher support office to identify potential participants.

Using a convenience, sampling approach (Cozby & Bates, 2020), The researcher identified participants who are early-career teachers between years one through five. The researcher reviewed the informed consent rules and parameters of the study with potential participants during an informational webinar. Participants who elected to participate were provided a link to an electronic informed consent form, and upon completion, received a link to complete an electronic demographics survey to provide baseline information, choose a pseudonym for the study, and share how they understand and manage stress. After the electronic demographics survey was completed and submitted, the participant received a link to the ABCDE Guided Log and had two weeks to complete at least two logs.

Role of the Researcher

This study assumed there needs to be a greater understanding of how early-career teachers in urban school systems understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance (Stein & Book, 2011) within their teaching experiences. Thus, the researcher conducted a qualitative, descriptive analysis focusing on 10 to 15 early-career teachers across grades K-12 from a Midwestern, urban school district (Trochim et al., 2016). Using ABCDE Guided Logs as the primary data collection method, the researcher explored the understandings and descriptions of early-career teachers' stressful experiences from grades K- 12 in an urban school system (Trochim et al., 2016). Participants were assured that their information would remain confidential to help increase reliability in responses. Informed consent was provided and reviewed with participants, ensuring they can drop out of the study at any time (Trochim et al., 2016).

Data Collection

Using a purposeful, convenience sampling approach (Cozby & Bates, 2020), the researcher identified potential participants who are early-career teachers between years one and five in partnership with a local urban school district. Each willing participant completed an electronic informed consent form which is stored with all other study documents in a secure, cloud-based system. After the participant submitted the completed informed consent form, they automatically received access to a demographics survey which included identifying a pseudonym for the study and space to share their basic understanding of stress. Using Morrisey's (1987) two-sentence suggested format for interviewing, the following is a list of questions designed to gather baseline information on participants' understanding of stress:

1. Stressful experiences are characterized as unpleasant or unexpected, challenging events. How do you define stress? Share an example of a recent stressful experience at work.
2. There are various ways to manage stress that some may classify as effective and others ineffective. How do you manage stress? Share 2-3 methods, even if you believe they are ineffective.
3. Stress can show up in the body internally and externally. Describe the physical manifestations of stress in your body.

Once the electronic demographic sheet was submitted, the participant received a link to ABCDE Guided Log with detailed instructions. To protect the integrity of their responses, participants only used their pseudonyms and the date each time they completed an ABCDE Guided Log. All logs were organized and electronically stored per submission. The researcher allotted time to process and transcribe data as the logs came in during the two weeks.

At the conclusion of the two weeks, the researcher reviewed and coded the data using Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory Framework to identify emerging patterns and themes. After this analysis, the researcher concluded and made recommendations for future relevant research opportunities.

Building trust while assuming neutrality with each participant is a top priority. To build trust, the researcher shared the intentions and motives of the demographic survey and the use of the ABCDE Guided Logs in writing and during the informational webinar. Additionally, the researcher informed participants of their anonymity throughout the process and the ability to withdraw from the study without penalty or judgment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To further build trust and ensure confidentiality, demographic surveys and ABCDE Guided Logs were stored on a secure online platform with only pseudonyms instead of actual names.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), including organizing data with a coding system to highlight themes and patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Initial data analysis of the demographics survey occurred within 24 hours. The researcher reviewed ABCDE Guided Logs as they came in; however, final data analyses occurred after all ABCDE Guided Logs were received. Coding and categories were based on the research questions and were comprehensive and congruent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, conclusions were drawn based on a synthesis of the information.

Validity/Limitations

To increase validity, the researcher conducted member checks and shared data from the guided logs with participants to ensure accuracy (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The research also employed an audit trail, member checks, and peer reviews to help with external validity

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, a standardized design helped ensure the study's replicability, allowing future researchers to draw similar conclusions (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

There are three limitations to this study. First, the study focused on a small sample; however, this enabled the researcher to capture a targeted picture of the participants' understanding of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance related to their teaching experience. The targeted focus on two emotional intelligence competencies can inform future professional development opportunities and teacher preparation programs. Another limitation may center around what participants chose as a stress experience (e.g., they may focus on a specific incident, ongoing stressful experience, or secondary traumatic stress). Although the research could specify which kind of stressor to respond to, it may enhance the findings to see what they organically selected without too much structure. This allows for more authenticity within the data (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Another limitation may come from the researcher's extensive knowledge of EI, which can allow for confirmation bias. The researcher addressed personal assumptions before data collection to overcome this limitation. Additionally, the researcher used member checking to confirm the accuracy of participants' responses.

Ethical Considerations

As an educator and wellness professional, I am enthusiastic about understanding the growth and development of professionals in various fields. I am also curious about how they make sense of their personal and professional realities, especially with their work experience. For example, Steiner and Woo (2021) ranked burnout high among the stressors impacting teacher wellbeing and a significant factor for why early-career teachers leave the field before year six. As a qualitative educational researcher, I am particularly interested in understanding more about what contributes to early-career teachers' understanding of their emotional self-

awareness and stress tolerance related to their teaching experience. With attrition rates in education rising, particularly among early-career teachers, I focused my dissertation research on discovering how early-career teachers, particularly in urban settings, understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance related to their teaching experience (Stein & Book, 2011).

The theoretical framework for this study was the Stein and Book (2011) EQ i- 2.0 model of Emotional Intelligence, focusing on emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance. The literature supports the idea that increased emotional self-awareness and capacity for stress tolerance enables a person to handle stress and challenging work environments (Bumen, 2010; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Merida-Lopez, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021; Turnipseed, 2018). It also suggests that teachers with higher emotional self-awareness and capacity for stress tolerance tend to have a higher sense of wellbeing (Bumen, 2010; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013; Merida-Lopez, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021; Turnipseed, 2018). In addition to using the EQ-i 2.0 emotional intelligence framework and the corresponding ABCDE Guided Log, the researcher incorporated Stroh's (2015) Systems Thinking Iceberg Theory as a framework to enhance the understanding of the patterns and themes that emerge from the data.

Because I am a wellness professional and a certified EQi-2.0 coach and facilitator, I must be intentional about remaining neutral to the interview data and withhold pre-judgment. Working with school leaders on EI makes me privy to information about leadership challenges from these personal interactions. Consequently, I must refrain from inserting a macro-understanding of relationship dynamics into the experiences shared by study participants.

Two of my top Gallop StrengthFinders (Rath, 2007) themes are strategic and activator; however, the learner is in the top five and will need to take the front stage as a researcher. The

other two themes contribute to the tendency to coach and fix, again remembering that is different from the purpose of the study. I am not conducting action research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study aimed to gain information on how they understand their world rather than help them make sense of it and how to use it to inform their growth and development. Additionally, remembering the study's purpose was not to reduce attrition rates directly; however, the study could provide valuable intel for school leaders and decision-makers responsible for developing policy.

Summary

This study was designed to understand how early-career teachers in an urban school system understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance related to their teaching experiences. A qualitative descriptive approach was ideal for exploring how these teachers understand and navigate the systemic stressors in education within the context of these EI competencies. The data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations were designed to meet the standards in the field and provide a framework for replicable studies.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Chapter Four presents the findings from a qualitative, descriptive study aimed to discover how early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies in the context of their teaching experiences. Early-career teachers between years one through five, across grades K-12, from an Ohio urban school district participated in this study to answer the following research questions:

1. How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences?
2. How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their stress tolerance competency in the context of their teaching experiences?

This chapter presents the study findings derived from the research questions outlined above. The findings are organized into thematic categories that emerged during the data collection process. These categories were adjusted to match the data analysis, creating a systematic framework for illuminating how early-career teachers perceive and articulate their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies.

Study Sample

A purposive, convenience sampling approach was used to identify early-career teachers between years one and five of experience in an Ohio urban school district. Partnering with the school district's research and development department, the researcher recruited 11 early-career teachers across grades K-12 to participate in the study. The sample consisted of 11 female teachers between the ages of 24 and 35, with one working on a second career as a new teacher. Most teach in elementary schools, except one high school and two middle school teachers.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Number of Participants	11
Gender	All Female
Type of School	Kindergarten- 8
	Middle School- 2
	High School-1
Ethnicity	Black-2
	White-9
Age Range of Participants	24-35

The proposed recruitment process was revised per the partnering district's Department of Strategic Performance and Research and Planning request. As a result, the researcher had to contact principals individually and get signed permission to introduce the study opportunity to the early-career teachers in their buildings. Some principals flagged teachers who met the study requirements and allowed the researcher to introduce the study parameters and answer questions in person or via email. One principal opted to have the researcher present during a staff meeting. With the permission of several building principals, the researcher reviewed the study parameters and the informed consent while providing a hard copy of the content with a link to complete it online if interested in moving forward. This provided an opportunity for questions and answers for those interested in moving forward.

The initial study timeline was two weeks; the researcher adjusted the start and conclusion of the data collection process to ensure participation reached a minimum of 10 teachers. The study took longer than two weeks because the researcher had to wait for permission from each

building principal to reach out to staff. Therefore, recruitment and data collection took place September 8, 2023 through November 10, 2023.

Data Collection Process

The research audit trail consisted of data collection on a secure online private platform. Teachers opting to participate in the study received a QR code to review and sign the electronic informed consent, provide basic demographic information, select a pseudonym to protect their identity, and complete the electronic ABCDE Guided Logs as described in the study design. Participants had two weeks from learning about the study to complete the ABCDE Guided Logs, but most elected to complete both forms back-to-back. To protect the integrity of their responses, participants used a pseudonym to complete an automatically time stamped, electronic ABCDE Guided Log. The audit trail included downloading, reviewing, and coding logs per submission while taking reflective notes.

Coding and Category Identification

Using guidelines from Merriam and Tisdell (2016) the researcher reviewed the dataset as one complete story composed of different narrative lines. Next, the researcher methodologically separated the data according to the five sections of the ABCDE Guided Log: Activation, Beliefs, Consequences, Debate, and Effect. This allowed the researcher to review the data to look for kinds of activating experiences, types of mental models and beliefs, and chosen courses of action. Reading the data categorized by the sections of the ABCDE Guided Log made it easier to do a comparative analysis of the information. From the constant comparative analysis, the researcher used axial coding to highlight initial codes: Overwhelmed, Frustration, Discouraged, Shut Down, Impulsive Reaction, Self-Care, Extract Lesson, Student Behavior, Psychological Safety, Feeling Unsupported, Ambiguity, and Teacher Self-Efficacy (see Table 2). As coding

continued, three themes emerged from the data as answers to the research questions as well as an emerging themes from the dataset as a whole (See Table 2).

Table 2

Initial Codes, Themes, and Research Questions

Initial Codes	**Themes**	
Overwhelmed Frustration Discouraged	Experiencing Difficult Emotions	Research Question 1
Shut Down Impulsive Reaction	The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response	Research Question 2
Self-Care Extract Lesson	Persevering Through Adversity	Research Question 2
Student Behavior Psychological Safety Feeling Unsupported Ambiguity Teacher Self Efficacy	Challenges Faced	New Finding-Emerging Theme

Peer Review

Initially, the researcher proposed to include member checks as a part of the validation process. However, due to the sensitive nature of the district policies and the contingency on which teachers agreed to participate, it was decided to rescind this option to maintain

confidentiality. Therefore, the researcher identified two colleagues to review the data for alignment and accuracy.

Conceptual Framework

Educators can personally and professionally benefit from understanding emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experiences (CASEL, 2019; Vesely et al., 2013). Emotional self-awareness is a bridge to understanding stressful experiences (Immordino-Yang, 2015). At its foundation, stress is the limited capacity to deal with a perceived threat of resources (Herman et al., 2018; Nerurkar, 2024). Stress occurs when there is a perceived threat to our survival or energy resources, and the emotional states impact this perception (Kolb & Whishaw, 2021; Van Der Kolk, 2014). Metacognition provides insight for understanding the thoughts and responses to this perceived threatening experience.

Thus, a qualitative descriptive analysis approach enabled exploration into how early-career teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching experiences as understood by the Stein and Book (2011) EQi 2.0 model of EI. Data for these phenomena consisted of the participants:

- sharing an activating unpleasant experience (A),
- discussing their beliefs and thoughts at the time of the event (B),
- outlining the consequences of their beliefs and response to the triggering event (C),
- debating current thoughts with alternative ways to interpret the experience (D),
- and discussing any new revelations about the event based on their overall reflection on the experience (E).

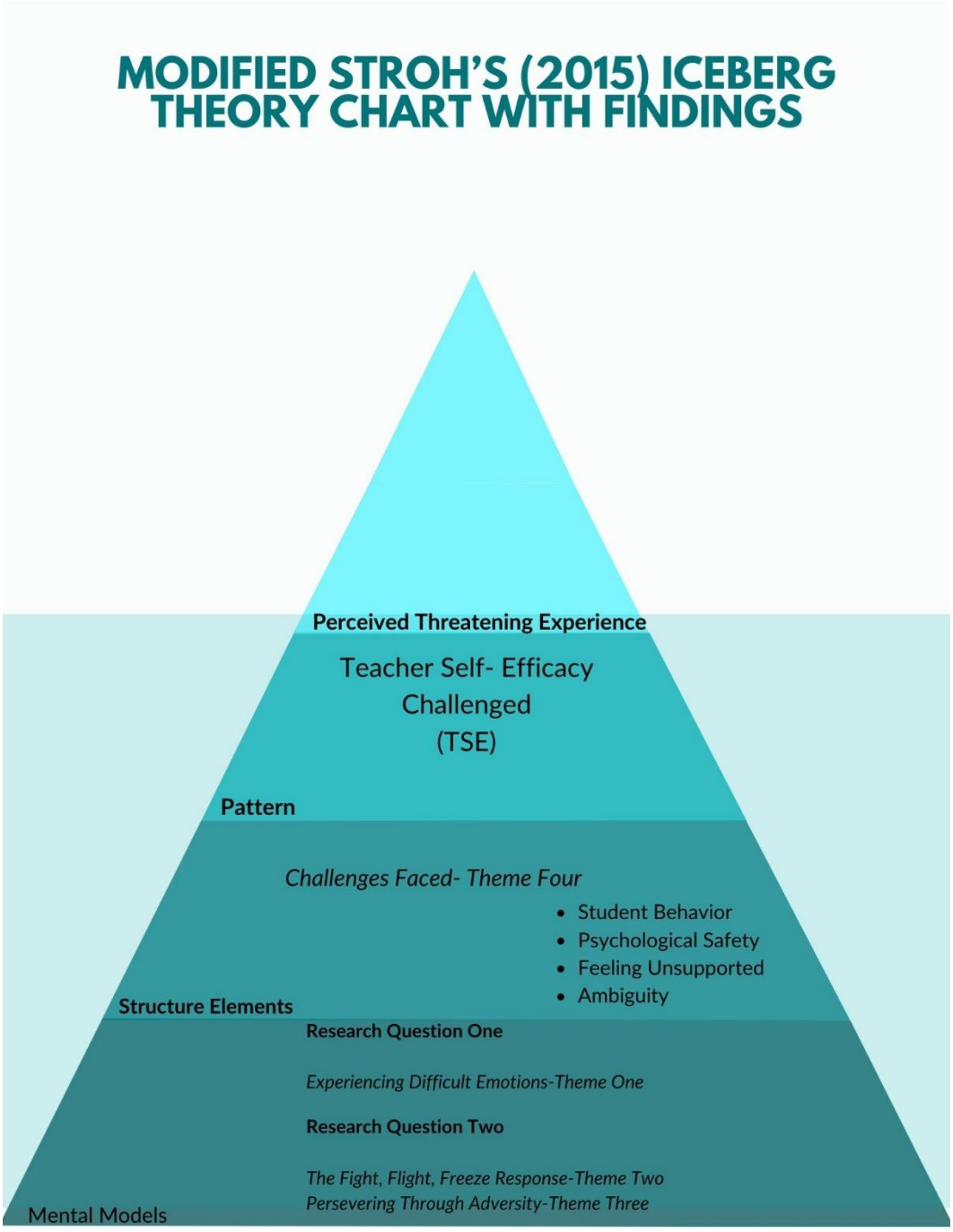
The researcher used Stroh's (2015) Systems-Thinking Iceberg Theory as a framework for making sense of the data. Stroh's (2015) Systems-Thinking Iceberg Theory provides a lens to

move beyond the surface of a triggering event to explore patterns of behavior and influential factors such as policies, environmental structures, relationships, and mental models. Although stacked in an iceberg, the model is not linear because each component is interconnected, mainly when teachers experience a perceived threat (Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). This systems-thinking approach provides compelling insight into what happens when a teacher experiences a perceived threatening experience and their subsequent capacity for emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance.

The study design enabled participants to go beneath the iceberg to expand their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies as educators while making connections between perceived stressors and proceeding thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The data reflected what was seen above the iceberg (the perceived threatening experience and subsequent response) and what was not seen beneath the iceberg (the teacher's belief and understanding about themselves in connection with the event). The findings are presented as themes found underneath the surface after the teachers recounted the activating perceived threatening experiences.

Figure 5

Concept Map of Findings



Stein and Book (2011) defined emotional self-awareness competency as the ability to identify and understand emotions and the impact of these emotions on oneself and others.

Emotional self-awareness is foundational for understanding one's stress tolerance. Stress tolerance competency is the ability to confidently manage stressful situations and make sound decisions during the experience (Stein & Book, 2011).

How each teacher described their emotional self-awareness was determined by the mental models active during the perceived threat (Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Mental models are based on beliefs, experiences, and influences that serve as a lens for understanding self, others, and events (Senge, 2014). If something said or done triggered a teacher, it was her mental model that framed the experience as a perceived threat or not, thereby determining how she would describe the experience, her beliefs about the experience, and subsequent actions. At the foundation of the iceberg model are the mental models each teacher brings to the classroom, which impact how she experiences an activating experience and determines the meaning to assign to it; and, most importantly, what the event says about her, if anything at all.

Findings

Upon reviewing and coding the data in relation to the research questions, the study unveiled four significant findings as teachers shared their perceived threatening experiences. The presentation of these findings is divided into two main parts: the first part arranges the data into thematic categories, and the second part illustrates these themes through the experiences of three educators, showcasing the relationship between perceived threats, mental models, structural elements, and a discernible pattern. These detailed profiles draw from the teachers' reflections on their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within the context of their professional experiences.

Research Question One: How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences?

This question aimed to discover how teachers understand and describe a perceived threat within their teaching experience, what meaning they assign to the threat, their subsequent beliefs and actions, and their post-event reflections. Teachers interpret their understanding of emotional self-awareness through the lens of their mental models or beliefs about themselves, life, and others (Immordino-Yang, 2015). One theme emerged for this research question: Experiencing Difficult Emotions.

Theme 1: Experiencing Difficult Emotions

Each participant in this study demonstrated the ability to recognize and distinguish their emotional self-awareness competency. As they described their feelings, the *theme of experiencing difficult emotions* emerged. This theme is presented as feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as fear, worry, and anxiety, being frustrated with students, others, or self, and feeling discouraged as a result of the perceived threatening experience. Ms. Scar, who was experiencing disruptive student behavior, shared, "Chaos, loud noises, and escalating behaviors (along with) yelling, and hostility are personal triggers and make me anxious and panicked." Jessica, who also experienced disruptive student behavior, shared that she was "stressed, anxious, worried about their future." Lizz shared, "I still feel very frustrated, but mostly I have pretended that the problem doesn't exist until it comes up again," as she shared about disruptive student behavior in the classroom. Hermione Granger, who discussed breaking up a fight, was discouraged by the potential impact of her feelings of overwhelm on the students, "I feel like my stress affected the kids."

In addition to experiencing difficult emotions related to stressful experiences triggered by student behavior, others described experiencing difficult emotions triggered by feeling unsupported and ambiguity. Nikki Blair felt unsupported during a staff meeting and shared: "I felt pissed—extraordinarily angry." Mia, who was frustrated with the workload, was unclear about what she should do regarding the decision to stay late or go home. She expressed, "I was confused on if I should stay late at work or if I should go home and just go in early the next day."

Research Question Two: How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their stress tolerance competency in the context of their teaching experiences?

This question aimed to discover how a teacher understands and describes their stress tolerance competency after experiencing a perceived threat within their teaching experience. Two themes emerged for this research question: The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response and Persevering Through Adversity.

Theme Two: The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

The fight, flight, freeze response theme is characterized by shutting down or reacting impulsively based on the assigned meaning to a stressful experience, reflecting their stress tolerance competency (Immordino-Yang, 2015; Stein & Book, 2011). Stress arises when there is a perceived threat to safety or energy resources (Kolb & Whishaw, 2021; Van Der Kolk, 2014). The brain seeks certainty, so anything contrary triggers an alert, indicating potential issues (Payne, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). One teacher went into a fight response as she engaged in a verbal battle with a student for over two hours during class. According to the teacher, the student "was not following any directions despite her threats of having him removed from the classroom." The impulsive reaction due to anger and frustration resulted in a fight response from the teacher and two hours of missed instruction with the rest of the class.

One teacher's description of a stressful experience and stress tolerance competency reflected a flight response. This flight response was not a typical "flight" but an emotional and mental fleeing resulting in compromised body integrity. Compromised body integrity due to a perceived threat can manifest as dissociation. Dissociation occurs when a person cannot handle the intensity of emotions brought on by a perceived threatening experience, leading to symptoms such as feeling disconnected from oneself, confusion, or amnesia (Victoria et al., Department of Health, 2021). Liz shared: "I responded by crying a lot (once students were out of the room) and disassociating."

Three teachers shared how they shut down with nothing left to give, reflecting a freeze response after dealing with a stressful experience in school. Hermione Granger reported: "I spent most of the day and night thinking about it and had to go to bed early because my entire being was exhausted." Kittyflower shared, "I didn't get much done with my other students who were behaving themselves" due to exhaustion and having nothing left to give. Ms. Kat described feeling so overwhelmed by stressful experiences that she "stopped the activity that some students had been waiting to do"—reflecting a freeze response.

Theme Three: Persevering Through Adversity

Persevering through adversity manifested as mental, emotional, or physical self-care and the ability to extract lessons despite challenges. According to Schwartz and Gladding (2012), adopting a mental model that enables an individual to reframe a challenging circumstance in a new light and find a lesson is essential for persevering through adversity. One teacher recounted how physical reactions to stressful events led her to adopt a comprehensive self-care regimen to recover after work, stating, "I respond to those by caring for myself. Doing what I need to do to prepare myself for the next day or class emotionally. That could be showering, investing in

hobbies, spending time with people I love.″ Kittyflower shared her ability to persevere through adversity with mental and emotional self-care by: "taking a breath, calling the office and resumed my class as normal." In a subsequent response to a different incident, she remarked, ″Next time, I know that I can remain calm, and even if his behaviors do not end, the school day will end.″

Ms. Kat, when interrupted by the principal during her planning time, took his feedback in stride despite the initial embarrassment and started making minor adjustments based on his suggestions. This incident showcased her stress tolerance competency through her ability to persevere through adversity and learn from the situation. Reflecting on this experience, she expressed: “I listened and responded favorably to the advice by making small changes to the arrangement of posters/instructions in my room.” Ms. Kat concluded that the principal "was doing his job and enjoyed making a positive change," indicating stress tolerance and capacity for extracting a lesson while persevering through adversity. Combining self-care for the mind while extracting a lesson, Marsha expressed, "I cannot be fully responsible for every student's actions. I can only try not to let those instances derail the whole class." These narratives underscore the importance of self-care and the ability to learn lessons while persevering through adversity.

New Finding

Theme Four: Challenges Faced

Theme four, *challenges faced*, centers on the systemic structural elements directly or indirectly impacting teachers' perceived threatening experiences. The data revealed challenges faced by participants centered around disruptive student behavior, threatened psychological safety, feeling unsupported, ambiguity, and compromised teacher self-efficacy as teachers described their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance

competencies. *Structural elements* are a system's pressures, policies, and power dynamics (Stroh, 2015). From physically intervening in a fight to shield another student to concern over reoccurring interruption of planning time to criticize the teacher, teachers were triggered by one of the three. Hermione Granger experienced a physical attack while shielding another. ″That student tried to shove me out of the way, attempted to punch the other student and hit me instead since I was standing in front of them.″ Idonthaveone described a horrific incident involving cars speeding on school property while she was outside with the students that could have cost someone their life. She shares:

> I panicked and tried to get my students back to the building before the cars went through again. Some students were stuck at a tree and had to wait for clearance. I was dumbstruck at the recklessness of the situation.

Eight of the 11 participants felt unsupported by administration, colleagues, or others (see Figure 6). Feeling unsupported looked like disrespect, being dismissed, unrealistic workload expectations, or perception of unavailable assistance. Some of the disrespect was direct at times and inferred at others. Even though the actual triggering event was more concrete and tangible, many of the experiences described by teachers as a result of these triggers left them feeling unsupported. A few teachers did not perceive support for student behavior or environmental factors that threatened their safety.

The teacher who talked over her colleague felt unsupported by her fellow teacher and unsupported by society. She stated:

> I felt that people of a certain race have an inherent belief that their thoughts, feelings, and words are valuable because they are valuable. People of a different race have an inherent

belief that their thoughts, feelings, and words must be pushed or fought to be seen as valuable because we have been taught that is the only way we will be heard.

The teacher's choice to talk over her colleague because she interrupted her reminded her of past microaggressions, causing her to lash out in frustration. Lizz's frustration with the administration's unrealistic workload demands showed up as feeling unsupported. She pondered: "Why are there always more things that we are responsible for, but then we are criticized for taking time to plan them? Our administrator is saying that he does not want this either. So why do we have to do it?" While trying to break up a fight, Hermione Granger stated: "I needed to get help but if I stepped away then the student would get past me to the other student and hurt them." This teacher was alone amid disruptive student behavior with no one to assist. Another teacher shared her feelings when caught off guard during her planning period: "I felt slightly disrespected but tried to give the person my attention while also getting my materials and classroom ready for my next class."

Ambiguity emerged as another prevalent structural element contributing to the *theme of challenges faced* by teachers as they described their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies. Ambiguity, for eight out of 11 participants (see Figure 6) manifested as needing more guidance from leadership or uncertainty regarding the teacher's future role in the classroom. Consequently, ambiguity hindered the teacher's ability to respond effectively during triggering situations. For instance, when faced with a disruptive student flipping their desk, one teacher experienced temporary paralysis due to uncertainty about the best course of action: "I was nervous that anything I did would escalate the situation." Another teacher expressed frustration and confusion regarding the guidance provided by the

administrator: "I felt annoyed because it was difficult to understand everything he was trying to tell me."

The dataset also revealed compromised teacher self-efficacy (TSE) as another structural element contributing to the *theme of challenges faced*. The data revealed that TSE was influenced by various structural factors within the educational system, including student behavior, threatened psychological safety, feeling unsupported, and ambiguity. and compromised psychological safety (Bandura & Wessels, 1994; Herman et al., 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016). All 11 participants faced the challenge of reduced TSE as they recounted their perceived threatening experiences (see Figure 6). Compromised TSE is characterized by feelings of failure or needing more time to address the situation effectively. For instance, a teacher said, "I thought I had failed in maintaining any sense of control over this situation and was failing," after a student left the classroom without permission and slammed the door. Another teacher voiced concerns about their challenged TSE regarding classroom management: "My thoughts were that I am doing a horrible job in controlling my class." Similarly, another teacher shared feelings of powerlessness in the classroom space. Shelby stated, "I felt powerless in my classroom space. The student was given a directive and did not follow it. What is the point of this if this student is going to do what they want to do anyway?*"* Although these examples primarily revolve around TSE and classroom management, they all highlight the struggle with TSE either immediately or upon reflection. Furthermore, feeling unsupported by colleagues within the system and society, including the community, government, and policy, were additional structural factors impacting TSE.

Figure 6

Chart of Participant Representation for Theme Four: Challenges Faced

As teachers articulated their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, the data emphasized various systemic structural factors influencing TSE. These included student behavior, workload, and psychological safety, which consistently surfaced as significant catalysts or perceived threats among participants. The following section contains three profiles illustrating the interrelationship of these themes and TSE as evidenced in the data.

Three Profiles

Nikki Blair

During a staff meeting, Nikki Blair encountered a notable absence of psychological safety when a colleague rudely interrupted her while she was sharing information. This breach of

psychological safety left Nikki feeling distressed and undermined in front of her peers, triggering a threat to her identity. In response, she expressed strong emotions by raising her voice to assert herself over the other teacher.

Nikki Blair demonstrated the ability to recognize and describe her emotions as she reflected on her emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance regarding the perceived threat. She acknowledged her decision to react impulsively instead of taking a moment to pause and reflect or seek clarification. Recognizing the influence of one's emotions on others is a key aspect of emotional self-awareness and emerged as the second theme in the data. However, Nikki Blair found herself overwhelmed by intense emotions, preventing her from considering the impact of her feelings on others. Consequently, she failed to select an appropriate course of action when triggered during the staff meeting.

Clark (2020) described the various facets of psychological safety within organizational contexts. Inclusive psychological safety encompasses a sense of belonging and feeling secure in expressing one's authentic self among peers (Clark, 2020). Nikki Blair experienced a deficiency in inclusion and psychological safety when her colleague interrupted her during a staff meeting. Reflecting on her experience, Nikki Blair shared her observation that individuals of diverse backgrounds often feel compelled to assert themselves forcefully to have their perspectives recognized, as they have been conditioned to believe that this is the only way to gain attention. She stated:

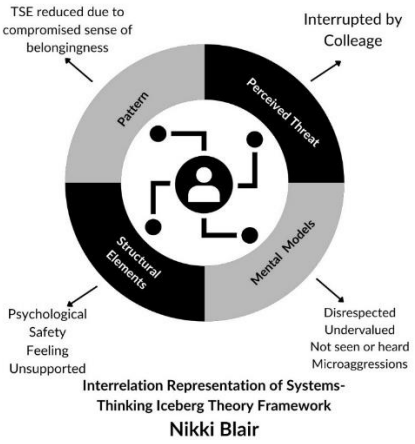
> I felt that people of a certain race have an inherent belief that their thoughts, feelings, and words are valuable because they are valuable. I also felt that people of a different race have an inherent belief that their thoughts, feelings, and words must be pushed or fought

to be seen as valuable, because we have been taught that is the only way we will be heard.

Brown (2021) defined micro-invalidations as subtle actions or remarks that inadvertently dismiss the voice or identity of another person. Nikki Blair perceived the interruption as both a threat and a microaggression, negatively impacting her sense of psychological safety and professional efficacy within the community. Nikki Blair's appraisal of the incident revealed a deeper systemic issue, wherein she felt unsupported by her colleagues, an underlying structural element (theme seven) affecting teacher self-efficacy (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Concept Map of Interrelation of Nikki Blair's Experience



Mental models encompass the beliefs, assumptions, and ideas that influence our understanding of ourselves, others, and the world (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Nikki Blair's mental models suggested that the other teacher viewed herself as superior, consistent with Nikki Blair's broader mental models concerning racism and the need to assert herself to be recognized and heard. According to Bandura and Wessels (1994), self-efficacy pertains to how individuals perceive themselves within their circumstances and choices,

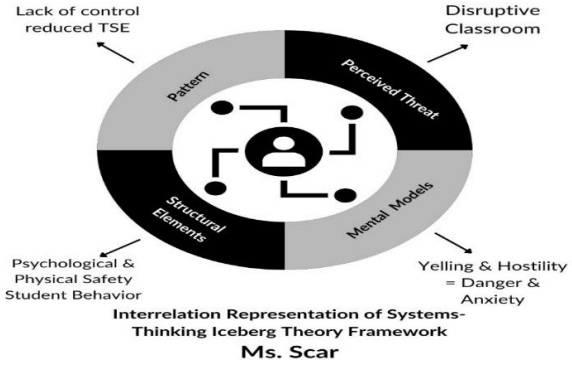
a construct influenced by their mental models regarding themselves and others. Collaborative interactions with colleagues can significantly impact one's self-efficacy, as evidenced by the link between positive feedback from peers and increased self-efficacy (Eliophotou-Menon & Lefteri, 2021; Räsänen et al., 2020). Nikki Blair experienced a sense of isolation and lack of support from her colleague and society, prompting her to question her efficacy within professional relationships.

Ms. Scar

Ms. Scar demonstrated remarkable emotional self-awareness and a deep understanding of her ability to handle stress when she described how she coped with a disruptive classroom situation by experiencing an out-of-body sensation. Overwhelmed by intense emotions, Ms. Scar perceived a threat due to the lack of control over student behavior, which immediately diminished her sense of teacher self-efficacy. This self-assessment, triggered by her loss of control in the classroom, led to a stress-induced response characterized by a compromised sense of bodily integrity and dissociation. Figure 8 depicts the interconnectedness between Ms. Scar's perceived threat, the mental models influencing her interpretation of the situation, structural elements, and her sense of efficacy.

Figure 8

Concept Map of Interrelation of Ms. Scar's Experience



As stated before, dissociation refers to the incapacity to manage intense emotions stemming from a perceived threat, resulting in a detachment from oneself, accompanied by confusion or memory loss (Victoria State Government Department of Health, 2021). The brain's primary function is to detect safety and conserve energy. Ms. Scar's reaction indicated a neurological overload, posing a threat to both functions (Van der Kolk, 2015). Ms. Scar noted that dissociation commonly occurs when she perceives something as a threat. This typical response in high-stress environments carries certain implications; student safety is jeopardized, and the learning process is compromised if the teacher experiences dissociation due to emotional overwhelm. Ms. Scar articulated the most elevated level of optimism toward potential challenges in the study, emphasizing the importance of not taking things personally in teaching. She reflected:

> In teaching, it is important to take nothing personally. If you take things personally, you cannot survive. You carry much weight on your shoulders, and you need to prioritize which things will weigh you down or not. You need to remember that you are not god; there are just some things that are out of your control, but to dwell on bad things and hold on to a stressful experience will not help you. You take the time to feel your feelings, evaluate and reflect on what happened, make a plan for next time, and let it go, move on and take it as a learning experience.

Despite Ms. Scar acknowledging a problematic coping mechanism in her reflection on stress tolerance, she also shared strategies for rejuvenation upon returning home. Demonstrating an optimistic outlook on conquering obstacles, Ms. Scar emphasized the importance of not taking things personally in teaching. She remarked that personalizing matters can be detrimental to one's well-being and sustainability in the profession. Recognizing the heavy burden teachers often carry, she highlighted the necessity of prioritizing concerns and accepting that certain

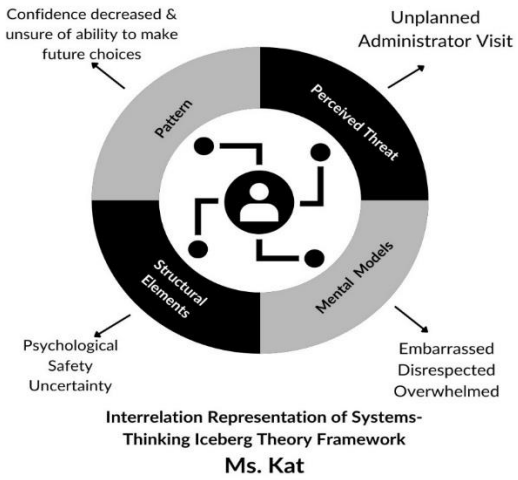
factors are beyond their control, reinforcing the notion that educators are not infallible and must navigate their responsibilities accordingly.

Ms. Kat

Learner psychological safety involves feeling comfortable with making mistakes and using them as learning opportunities with the presumed support of others (Clark, 2020). On the other hand, challenger psychological safety entails the courage to voice concerns to enhance circumstances (Clark, 2020). When individuals employ their voices to challenge existing norms and experiences while experiencing both learner and challenger psychological safety, they experience a sense of validation from their peers. Ms. Kat, owning her emotional self-awareness as highlighted by her ability to recognize and discern feelings, realized that a visit from her administrator left her feeling psychologically unsafe. Not only did she perceive herself as a failure based on his suggestions, but she also felt disempowered to question his advice and express her feelings about the situation. As previously mentioned, emotions and mental models play a pivotal role in assigning meaning to stressful experiences (Payne, 2020; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2023). This perceived threat to her efficacy left her doubting her capability to independently make future teaching decisions. Figure 9 illustrates the interconnectedness between Ms. Kat's perceived threat, her mental models, and the structural elements impacting her sense of self-efficacy.

Figure 9

Concept Map of Interrelation of Ms. Kat's Experience



The administrator's unanticipated visit coincided with Ms. Kat's planning period, which she relied upon to manage the demanding workload. Perceiving his visit as a threat, her appraisal of his suggestions as criticism left her feeling inadequate and doubtful about the effectiveness of her ideas going forward. His unexpected critique embarrassed her and left her puzzled about his intentions, expressing frustration: "I felt annoyed because it was difficult to understand everything he was trying to tell me." Despite feeling disheartened, Ms. Kat engaged in emotional labor by pretending to be okay with the visit and suggestions. Research by Ortan et al. (2021) and Eliophotou and Lefteri (2021) underscored the pivotal role of strong administrative support in bolstering teacher self-efficacy and retention. Although Ms. Kat did not entertain thoughts of leaving the profession following the encounter with the administrator, she felt unsupported and lacked confidence in her ability to make independent decisions in the future.

Emotional labor, also known as "grin and bear it," refers to the prolonged suppression of intense emotions, where individuals conceal their true feelings as a coping mechanism for

managing stress in social situations (Resnick, 2021). Despite feeling angry, sad, and embarrassed, Ms. Kat opted to maintain a composed facade in front of the principal while receiving constructive criticism. Over time, the practice of emotional labor and the repression of emotions can culminate in the outward display of intense emotions, diminishing teacher self-efficacy. As highlighted in the literature review, decreased teacher self-efficacy may lead to compensatory behaviors, ultimately depleting both physical and emotional resources (Brown, 2012; Gill et al., 2015; Merida-Lopez et al., 2020).

Despite Ms. Kat's initial reaction to the perceived threat from the administrator, she exhibited adaptability and the capacity to select an appropriate course of action, as indicated by theme three in the findings. She initiated incremental adjustments based on his suggestions and ultimately recognized his efforts to effect positive change. Ms. Kat's reassessment of the experience underscores her ability to adopt an optimistic stance in overcoming challenges, notwithstanding the triggering nature of the encounter.

Summary

Educators can significantly benefit personally and professionally by grasping the concepts of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within their teaching roles (CASEL, 2019; Vesely et al., 2013). Emotional self-awareness provides a pathway to comprehending stressful situations (Immordino-Yang, 2015). Stress typically arises from a perception of inadequacy in managing a threat to one's resources (Herman et al., 2018; Nerurkar, 2024). This perception, influenced by emotional states, occurs when there is a perceived risk to survival or energy reserves (Kolb & Whishaw, 2021; Van Der Kolk, 2014).

The study revealed key insights in response to the posed research questions:
Question One: How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their

emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences? Question Two: How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their stress tolerance competency in the context of their teaching experiences? As participants recounted a stressful experience in the ABCDE Logs, experiencing difficult emotions emerged as a theme for question one. The fight, flight, freeze response and persevering through adversity emerged as themes for question two. Furthermore, as these teachers delved into their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, the recurrent theme of challenges faced became evident, highlighting their insights into their emotional intelligence.

The data underscore the intricate relationship among emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, mental models, structural elements, and teacher self-efficacy, underscoring the importance of addressing the emotional well-being of early-career teachers within their professional context. In this study, participants delved deeper to enhance their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance as educators while connecting perceived stressors, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The data revealed the visible aspects (perceived threatening experiences and subsequent responses) and the hidden aspects (teachers' beliefs and understanding about themselves concerning the event), akin to an iceberg. Consequently, the data emphasized several underlying structural elements within the school system that impact compromised teacher self-efficacy: student behavior, psychological safety, feelings of being unsupported, and ambiguity stemming from recounted activating perceived threatening experiences. The following chapter discusses the significance and implications of these findings and suggests ways to support early-career teachers as they expand their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

For this study, a purposive, convenience sampling method was employed to enlist 11 early-career K-12 teachers from an urban school district in Ohio. Emotional self-awareness competency, as defined by Stein and Book (2011), involves recognizing and comprehending emotions and understanding their effects on oneself and others. Through metacognition, teachers enhance their grasp of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, establishing links between perceived threats, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Cabrera, 2019). This chapter presents the outcomes of a qualitative, descriptive investigation into how early-career teachers in an urban environment articulate and understand their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance emotional intelligence competencies within the context of their teaching roles. The chapter includes a summary of key findings, implications of these findings, discussion, significance, limitations, and suggestions for future research to delve into the critical insights derived from the research.

Summary of Study

The literature review defines emotional intelligence (EI) as the capacity to comprehend and regulate one's own emotions and understand and respond effectively to the emotions of others (Cabrera, 2019; Goleman et al., 2013). The literature also states teachers represent indispensable assets in education, with research demonstrating connections between elevated EI, particularly emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance, and enhanced self-efficacy (Abitabile, 2020; Hattie, 2009; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Additionally, emotions play a pivotal role in interpreting the significance of stressful encounters (Payne, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2023).

Consequently, as the attrition rate among early-career teachers continues to climb, partly due to elevated stress levels, educational leaders must ascertain how teachers perceive and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within the context of their teaching experiences. Thus, the following research questions guided the study to understand these phenomena better:

1. How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences?
2. How do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their stress tolerance competency in the context of their teaching experiences?

A qualitative, descriptive analysis approach was used in the research design to address these questions. The convenience sample was comprised of 11 female teachers (nine Caucasian and 2 African American) across grades K-12 from an urban school district in Ohio. Utilizing electronic ABCDE Guided Logs, participants identified and detailed a stressful encounter, articulated their concurrent beliefs and reactions, contemplated alternative perspectives on the experience, and envisioned how they would have preferred to perceive and react to the situation.

Summary of Findings

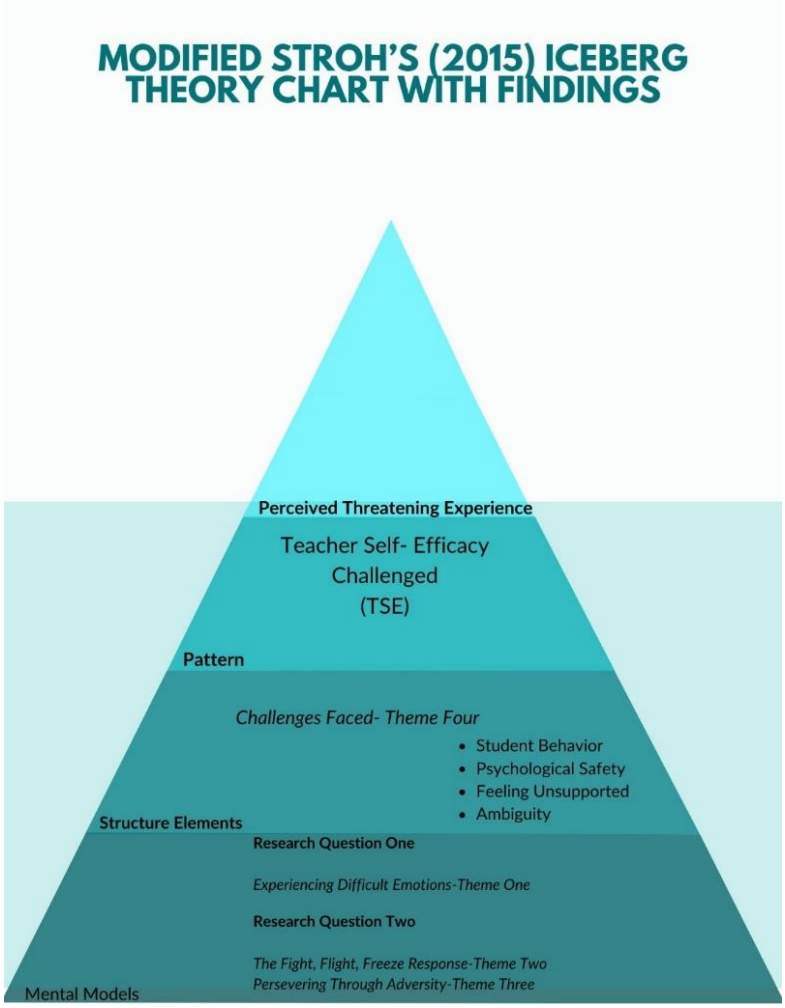
Four themes emerged from the research; three were answers to the research question and the fourth was from an emerging finding. For question one, how do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their emotional self-awareness competency in the context of their teaching experiences, the Experiencing Difficult Emotions theme reflected participants describing feeling frustrated, discouraged, or overwhelmed with emotions (mostly due to fear, worry, and anxiety). For question two, how do early-career teachers in an urban setting understand and describe their stress tolerance competency in the context of their teaching

experiences, the Fight, Flight, Freeze Response theme reflected participant shut down, exhaustion with nothing left to give or an impulsive reaction due to a stressful experience. Theme three, Persevering Through Adversity, reflected how participants chose to respond mentally, emotionally, or physically due to a stressful experience. Persevering through Adversity looked like intentionality with self-care or extracting lessons from challenging experiences. Theme Four, Challenges Faced, was a new finding that emerged as participants described their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies. Challenges faced came in the form of several structural elements such as student behavior, psychological safety, feeling unsupported, ambiguity, and teacher self-efficacy.

These findings support the literature review, as educators stand to gain both personally and professionally from comprehending emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within their teaching roles (CASEL, 2019; Vesely et al., 2013). Emotional self-awareness serves as a pathway to understanding stressful encounters (Immordino-Yang, 2015). Fundamentally, stress arises from a perceived inadequacy in dealing with a threat to resources (Herman et al., 2018; Nerurkar, 2024). This stress appraisal, influenced by emotional state, occurs when there is perceived jeopardy to survival or energy resources (Kolb & Whishaw, 2021; Van Der Kolk, 2014).

Figure 10

Concept Map for General Findings Within Systems-Thinking Iceberg Model



The research methodology allowed participants to delve deeper into their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies as educators, linking perceived stressors with subsequent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The data captured both what was observable above the surface (the perceived threatening experience and subsequent response) and what lay beneath (the teachers' beliefs and self-understanding in relation to the event). The findings unveil underlying themes discovered beneath the surface following teachers' recounting of the activating perceived threatening experiences.

Discussion

Teachers' narratives regarding their comprehension of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance revealed a complex interplay of events, mental models, structural elements, and distinctive patterns. The Mental Models component encompasses findings directly addressing research questions, derived from teachers' descriptions of their experiences, reflecting their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies. Structural Elements encompass triggering events explicitly mentioned or indirectly suggested by teachers. Finally, a Pattern emerged upon comprehensive examination of the data.

Mental models encompass beliefs, assumptions, and past experiences that shape our perception of the world (Amen, 2021; Cabrera, 2019; Senge, 2014; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). These mental models, coupled with emotions, determine the interpretation of an activating event and whether it is perceived as threatening (O'Connor & Lages, 2019; Senge, 2006). Within Stroh's (2015) Systems-thinking Iceberg framework, mental models not only influence other components of the system but are also influenced *by* them, rendering each component, including mental models, a variable in how teachers comprehend and articulate their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance in a given situation (see Figure 16) (Cabrera, 2019; O'Connor & Lages, 2019).

Participants engaged in a reflective practice regarding their mental models and actions concerning the perceived threatening experiences. Through this metacognitive reflective process, the following themes emerged from the data as they described their understanding of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies:

1. Experiencing Difficult Emotions
2. The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response
3. Persevering Through Adversity

Theme One: Experiencing Difficult Emotions

All participants described some measure of experiencing difficult emotions while discussing insight on their emotional self-awareness. Experiencing difficult emotions presented as frustration, discouragement and being overwhelmed with emotions due to fear, worry, and anxiety. While all participants demonstrated the ability to recognize and differentiate their feelings, only a few acknowledged the influence of their emotions on others. Both of these aspects signify emotional self-awareness (Stein & Book, 2011).

Theme Two: The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

Stress tolerance involves the ability to choose an appropriate course of action during a perceived threatening experience. As participants described how they responded during the event and upon reflection, the Fight, Flight, Freeze Response included teachers shutting down (flight or freeze) due to mental and emotional exhaustion, with nothing left to give to students or having an impulsive reaction (fight) due to becoming absorbed by strong emotions. One teacher shared her inability to get anything done with the class after the incident with a student. Absorbed with strong emotion, a teacher in a fight response while embroiled in a battle with a student. As a result, two hours of instructional time due was lost due to being trapped in a two-impulsive argument with a student.

Theme Three: Persevering Through Adversity

Stress tolerance also involves the ability to have an optimistic attitude towards overcoming challenges. As participants recounted their experiences, persevering through

adversity looked like choosing mental, emotional, or physical self-care and extracting a lesson from the situation. One teacher expressed the importance of allowing space for mental and emotional self-care when she shared, "(teachers) are allowed to feel however they want about it and their feelings are valid." Expressing a similar sentiment, another shared, "I cannot be responsible for every action a student makes. I can only do my best…"

Several teachers attained a more profound comprehension of their emotions by challenging their initial beliefs and responses after the event. For instance, one participant initially attributed stress and anxiety to the perceived threatening experience, expressing concerns about both her effectiveness as a teacher and her students' achievements. However, upon further introspection, she discerned that the stress stemmed from apprehension regarding her future success as an educator (teacher self-efficacy) as well as the academic progress of her students (a structural element).

Emerging Finding--Theme Four: Challenges Faced

Challenges faced emerged as teachers described stressful experiences directly or indirectly related to the following structural elements: student behavior, psychological safety, ambiguity, and teacher self-efficacy. Structural elements encompass the pressures, policies, and power dynamics within the school system, influencing how teachers interpret and experience triggering events (Cabrera, 2019; Stroh, 2015). While some of these elements are tangible, others may not be readily apparent (Cabrera, 2019; Senge, 2014).

The data uncovered student behavior, psychological safety, and ambiguity as prevalent structural elements either triggering or arising from perceived threatening experiences. These elements are not isolated but rather interrelated. For instance, one participant grappled with workload (a structural element) while anxiously deliberating whether or not to stay late and

finish the work (the perceived threat). The teacher's dilemma was intricately linked to the interrelationship between workload, the perceived threat of not staying late, and their own mental model regarding self-perception and the implications of choosing to leave and rest. Räsänen et al. (2020) highlighted in their research on early-career teacher attrition that workload was a significant factor leading to departures before completing five years. The pressures and power dynamics within the system contribute to demanding workload being perceived as a threat, consequently impacting teachers' self-efficacy (Bandura & Wessels, 1994; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Compromised teacher self-efficacy emerged as the recurring pattern in the data as a *challenged faced* by participants (Cabrera, 2019; Stroh, 2015). Additionally, the data revealed that teacher self-efficacy was consistently undermined by perceived threatening experiences. This pattern of compromised teacher self-efficacy manifested in the data when teachers described their understanding of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies.

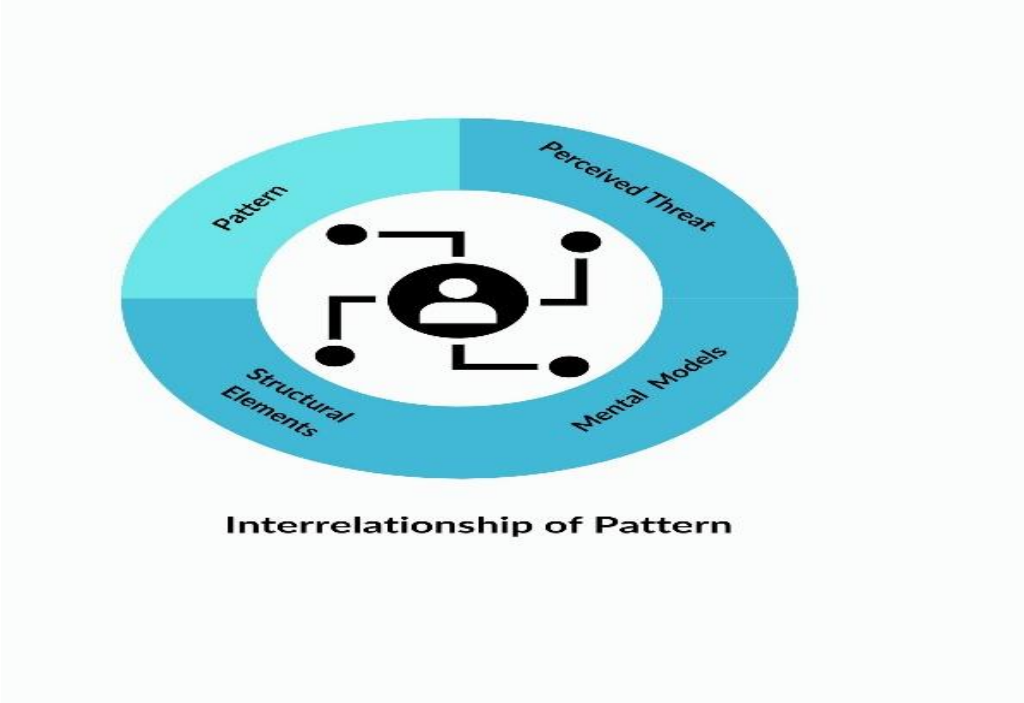
Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) refers to the belief in one's ability to proficiently fulfill professional responsibilities (Bandura & Wessels, 1994; Zee & Koomen, 2016). This encompasses the agency demonstrated in the classroom, interactions with peers, and other professional aspects of the teaching role. Mental models play a critical role in shaping teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy while contemplating emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance (O'Connor & Lages, 2019; Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Influenced by mental models, teachers inevitably questioned their self-efficacy amidst the triggering event or during reflection afterwards. Furthermore, student behavior, psychological safety, feeling unsupported, and ambiguity systemic structural elements influencing the pattern of compromised teacher self-efficacy following a perceived threatening experience.

Addressing teachers' self-efficacy can involve adopting a systems-thinking approach combined with mindfulness. Mindfulness entails the ability to stay present, open, and accepting of oneself and others without judgment (Chang et al., 2022; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). Practicing mindfulness aids in broadening emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance, thereby improving mental models and fostering metacognition and positive appraisal of potential triggering events (Bracket et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2022; Jennings et al., 2019).

The mental models, alongside structural elements and perceived threatening events, influence Teacher Self-efficacy (TSE). The results uncover TSE as a recurring pattern within the system, closely intertwined with mental models and structural elements. Figure 11 depicts the interplay of TSE with other variables.

Figure 11

Concept Map of Interrelationship of Teacher Self-Efficacy Patterns Within a System



Stress and Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions necessary to manage challenging situations effectively (Bandura & Wessels, 1994; Eliophotou & Lefteri, 2021; Herman et al., 2018). The literature review highlights the neurological connection between stress and teacher self-efficacy which lies at the intersection of brain function, emotions, and cognition (Breuning, 2016; Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015). Stress, particularly chronic or prolonged stress, can significantly affect the brain's structure and function, impacting areas involved in emotional regulation, decision making, and self-perception—all closely linked to teacher self-efficacy (Taylor & Marienau, 2023, Van der Kolk, 2015). Additionally, emotions and mental models determine the meaning of a stressful experience and the efficacy of preserving energy or safety (Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Senge, 2006; Taylor & Marienau, 2023; Van der Kolk, 2015).

As stated in the literature review, when individuals experience stress, the sympathetic nervous system is activated (Taylor & Marienau, 2023; Van der Kolk, 2015). This response releases stress hormones, which prepare the body for "fight or flight" responses (Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012). While acute stress responses can be adaptive in certain situations, chronic stress can dysregulate these systems, leading to persistent physiological and psychological symptoms (Taylor & Marienau, 2023; Van der Kolk, 2015).

Neurologically, chronic stress is associated with brain structure and function alterations, particularly in regions such as the prefrontal cortex (PFC), amygdala, and hippocampus (Payne, 2020; Van der Kolk, 2015). The PFC, involved in executive functions such as decision-making, attention, and self-regulation, is particularly sensitive to stress. Chronic stress can impair PFC function, leading to difficulties in cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, and emotional

regulation. Furthermore, chronic stress can lead to increased emotional reactivity and difficulty regulating emotions, which may contribute to feelings of anxiety, overwhelm, and self-doubt—factors that can undermine teacher self-efficacy (Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015).

The neurological connection between stress and teacher self-efficacy highlights the interplay between brain function, stress, and psychological well-being (Herman et al., 2018; Stark et al., 2022). Chronic stress can dysregulate key brain regions involved in emotional regulation, decision making, and cognition, leading to impairments in self-perception and confidence (Payne, 2020; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015). By understanding the neurology of stress, educational leaders and policymakers can implement strategies to mitigate stress, support teacher well-being, and promote resilience in the face of challenges, ultimately enhancing teacher self-efficacy and improving educational outcomes (Stark et al., 2022). Research supports mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) which assist in bolstering emotional resilience and adaptability, while also fostering metacognition and positive appraisal of potentially challenging experiences (Chang et al., 2022; Jennings et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). The Significance of Findings section describes several evidence-based MBIs that school districts can adopt to bolster teacher self-efficacy and well-being.

Structural Challenges Faced and Self-Efficacy

As teachers articulated their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, various structural elements became apparent as catalysts for activating the perception of a threatening experience. From the data, structural elements like student behavior, psychological safety, lack of support, and ambiguity were both direct and indirect stimuli for evoking feelings of perceived threat. Each triggering experience led to diminished teacher self-efficacy.

Student Behavior

The data revealed that the presence of disruptive student behavior can significantly impact teacher self-efficacy, especially when interpreted through a mental model where yelling and hostility are perceived as signals of danger, thereby inducing anxiety. Absorbed with solid emotion, one teacher's perception of a threat from the lack of control over student behavior immediately reduced her sense of teacher self-efficacy. This self-appraisal triggered by the teacher's loss of control of the class resulted in a stress response of compromised body integrity and dissociation. Dissociation is the inability to handle the intensity of emotions from a perceived threatening experience, causing disconnection from self, confusion, or amnesia (Victoria State Government Department of Health, 2021). The brain's primary responsibility is to detect safety and conserve energy; this teacher experienced a neurological overload because of a threat to both (Taylor & Marienau, 2016; Van der Kolk, 2015). The data support the notion that teachers who perceive their classroom environment as chaotic or unsafe experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, undermining confidence in their ability to manage classroom behavior and promote learning effectively (Brown, 2012; Gill et al., 2015; Merida-Lopez et al., 2020).

Applying aspects of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to ongoing professional development focused on classroom management can empower early-career teachers to confidently handle challenging situations (Shabani, 2016). Schools can boost teacher self-efficacy in classroom management through mentoring, training, and reflective action research, equipping educators with essential skills and resources to cultivate a secure and nurturing learning atmosphere (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Shabani, 2016; Shah, 2022). Mentors provide invaluable feedback and guidance on effective practices, aiding early-career teachers in

their professional growth (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Shabani, 2016). Targeted training, such as experiential sessions focused on conflict resolution, enables novice teachers to engage in mindful, collaborative problem-solving with peers (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Shabani, 2016). Reflective action research empowers early-career educators to assess situations, apply new techniques learned from training or mentorship, and evaluate their effectiveness (Shabani, 2016; Shah, 2022). Ultimately, by addressing the interrelationship between emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, mental models around classroom behavior, and teacher self-efficacy, schools can foster a culture of resilience and success within the school community (CASEL, 2019; Goleman et al., 2013; Payne, 2020; Stein & Book, 2011).

Psychological Safety and Feeling Unsupported

As multiple teachers conveyed their comprehension of emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, the structural element of psychological safety served as a trigger for the perceived threatening experience. Compromised psychological safety can profoundly impact teacher self-efficacy (Plouffe et al., 2023; Poulou et al., 2019; Räsänen et al., 2020). Psychological safety refers to an individual's perception of the workplace environment as safe for interpersonal risk-taking, where one feels accepted and respected without fear of negative consequences for expressing ideas, asking questions, or admitting mistakes (Bay et al., 2019; Clark, 2020). When psychological safety is compromised, teachers may feel inhibited from fully engaging in their roles, leading to a reduction in self-efficacy exhaustion and disillusionment with their profession (Polou et al., 2019; Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015; Thompson & Gomez, 2014). This, in turn, further undermines their sense of self-efficacy as they struggle to maintain motivation and confidence in their ability to make a positive impact on their students' lives (Eliophotou-Menon & Lefteri, 2021; Räsänen et al., 2020). In the study, the data reflect an

interrelationship between compromised psychological safety and feeling excluded instead of included, undervalued, and unsupported.

Clark (2020) outlined how psychological safety manifests within an organization: inclusion, learner, and challenger safety. Inclusion psychological safety presents as belongingness or feeling safe about one's authentic self around others (Clark, 2020). One teacher experienced a lack of inclusion and psychological safety when her colleague interrupted her in front of the staff during a meeting. She perceived the event as a microaggression, impacting her psychological safety and self-efficacy, resulting in feeling excluded as a valued member of the professional community. Brown (2021) defined micro-invalidations as a form of microaggression when someone unknowingly says or does something that rejects the voice or identity of another. This appraisal of feeling unsupported by colleagues is an underlying structural element impacting teacher self-efficacy**.**

The perceived threat of feeling unsupported by colleagues can significantly impact an individual's sense of self-worth and efficacy, particularly within the teaching context (Clandinin et al., 2015; Eliophotou-Menon & Lefteri, 2021; Räsänen et al., 2020). When teachers believe their colleagues do not support them, it can evoke feelings of isolation and undermine their confidence in their abilities (Thompson & Gomez, 2014). This perception often arises from a sense of not feeling seen or heard within the professional community, as was evident in the data. Teachers who feel unsupported or marginalized may question their contributions to the team and doubt their capacity to impact student outcomes.

The interrelationship between feeling excluded and unsupported and teacher self-efficacy underscores the importance of fostering a collaborative and supportive professional culture within educational settings. The data highlight that teachers who perceive themselves as

excluded or unsupported may internalize these beliefs and experience a decline in their self-efficacy—the belief in their ability to influence student learning and effectively manage classroom challenges. This manifested as decreased motivation, increased stress, and diminished teaching effectiveness. Conversely, the literature supports that when teachers feel valued, respected, and supported by their colleagues, they are more likely to experience higher levels of self-efficacy (Nurlu, 2015; Poulou et al., 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Collaboration and collective efficacy—the shared belief in a team's ability to achieve common goals—can bolster individual teacher self-efficacy by providing opportunities for mutual support, collaboration, and professional growth (Goddard et al., 2004; Goddard et al., 2017; Pierce, 2019). In such environments, teachers can leverage their strengths, overcome challenges, and innovate their teaching practices (Donohoo et al., 2018).

Learner psychological safety entails feeling comfortable with making mistakes and learning from them with the assumed support of others (Clark, 2020). Challenger psychological safety involves the courage to speak up to improve circumstances (Clark, 2020). When individuals utilize their voices to challenge the status quo while experiencing both learner and challenger psychological safety, they experience a sense of validation (Clark, 2020). Due to one teacher's understanding of her emotional self-awareness, which involves recognizing and differentiating feelings, she realized the administrator's unannounced visit left her feeling psychologically unsafe. Not only did she perceive herself as a failure based on his suggestions, but she also felt disempowered to challenge his advice and express her feelings about the situation. When teachers perceive their environment as hostile or judgmental, they may become hesitant to take risks or innovate in their teaching practices, as the data reflected in this scenario (Vesely et al., 2013; Zada et al., 2022). This reluctance can stem from fear of criticism or shame,

undermining their belief in their capacity to effectively fulfill their roles (Zada et al., 2022). As a result, teacher self-efficacy, which plays a crucial role in determining the quality of instruction and student outcomes, needs to be improved.

The prospect of an unannounced visit by a principal to a teacher's classroom can trigger a cascade of emotions and perceptions that have profound implications for teacher self-efficacy. For many teachers, the unexpected presence of a principal can be perceived as a threat to their professional competence and autonomy (Merida-Lopez et al., 2020). This perceived threat may stem from beliefs that such visits are synonymous with scrutiny, evaluation, and potential criticism. Teachers may fear being judged as inadequate or incompetent, leading to feelings of disrespect, embarrassment, and overwhelm (Plouffe et al., 2023). This belief in the potential for negative evaluation can compromise their psychological safety, creating a sense of vulnerability and apprehension in their professional environment.

The interrelationship between the perceived threat of an unannounced visit, beliefs of disrespect and embarrassment, compromised psychological safety, ambiguity, and diminished confidence underscores the importance of fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and collaboration within schools. Principals and school leaders can mitigate teachers' anxieties by providing clear expectations and communication about the purpose and process of classroom visits (Eliophotou & Lefteri, 2021; Ortan et al., 2021). By emphasizing a supportive and non-evaluative approach to observations, principals can create opportunities for dialogue, feedback, and professional growth that enhance teacher self-efficacy and promote a positive school climate (Eliophotou & Lefteri, 2021; Ortan et al., 2021).

Ambiguity

The interrelationship between ambiguity and teacher self-efficacy is particularly pronounced among early-career teachers who are navigating the complexities of the educational landscape for the first time (Moir, 2007). Ambiguity in the workplace refers to the need for clear guidelines or predictability in various aspects of the profession, such as classroom management, curriculum development, and student assessment (CahayaSanthi & Piartrini, 2020). For early-career teachers still developing their pedagogical skills and building their confidence in the classroom, ambiguity can significantly impact their self-efficacy.

The data suggest that the relationship between ambiguity and teacher self-efficacy is influenced by teachers' perceptions of their ability to cope and adapt to uncertain circumstances. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to view ambiguity as an opportunity for growth and learning rather than as a threat to their competence (Vesley et al., 2013). They may confidently approach uncertain situations, drawing on their past experiences and problem-solving skills to navigate challenges effectively. In contrast, teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy may struggle to cope with ambiguity, leading to feelings of stress, anxiety, and diminished confidence in their abilities (CahayaSanthi & Piartrini, 2020).

Ambiguity in classroom management can undermine early-career teachers' confidence in maintaining order and creating a conducive learning environment (Herman et al., 2018). Early-career teachers may encounter unforeseen challenges and disruptive behaviors that they are ill-prepared to address, leading to frustration and helplessness. In several instances, the data illustrated that this lack of confidence can erode their self-efficacy beliefs, as they question their ability to effectively manage the classroom and meet the needs of all students.

The interrelationship between ambiguity and teacher self-efficacy among early-career teachers highlights the importance of providing support, resources, and professional development opportunities to navigate uncertain educational environments effectively. By fostering a sense of confidence and competence in teachers, educators can enhance their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, meeting the diverse needs of their students, and ultimately improving student outcomes. By offering guidance, resources, and opportunities for reflection and growth, educational institutions can help early-career teachers develop the confidence and resilience needed to thrive in ambiguous environments (CahayaSanthi & Piartrini, 2020). Fostering a strong sense of self-efficacy among new teachers is essential for promoting their professional development and ensuring positive outcomes for educators and students alike.

The literature supports professional development such as mindful-based interventions (MBIs) that focus on building teachers' confidence and resilience; adaptive coping strategies can empower educators to navigate various challenges from structural elements with poise and professionalism (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Cheng et al., 2022; Herman et al., 2018). By implementing a MBI, schools can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and innovation by equipping teachers with the skills and resources they need to thrive in dynamic and unpredictable environments (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Patti et al., 2018). Ultimately, by addressing the interrelationship between emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance, as well as mental models around psychological safety, ambiguity, and teacher self-efficacy, schools can foster a climate of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect that benefits early-career teachers and the school community.

Practical Implications

In this qualitative, descriptive study the researcher investigated early-career teachers' perceptions and articulations of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies within the context of urban teaching. From the data, various themes emerged around *experiencing difficult emotions* for emotional self-awareness and *the fight, flight, freeze response,* and *persevering through adversity* for stress tolerance. Additionally, an emerging theme, *challenges faced,* reflected the various structural elements influencing teachers' stressful experiences. Using Stroh's Systems-Thinking Framework for an expanded understanding of these themes, as teachers described their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, a recurring pattern of compromised teacher self-efficacy became evident.

Teacher self-efficacy refers to an individual's self-appraisal of their effectiveness within their educational role (Nurlu, 2015; Poulou et al., 2019). The literature review examined the influence of mental models on teacher self-efficacy. Mental models encompass beliefs and assumptions that shape how individuals evaluate themselves and perceive the world (Amen, 2021; Senge, 2014; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Participants' mental models influenced their appraisal of system structural elements such as student behavior, psychological safety, feeling unsupported and ambiguity as perceived threats, thereby triggering stressful experiences (Amen, 2021; Brown, 2021; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). As participants recounted these experiences, their confidence in their efficacy as teachers diminished. This is significant because educators with high teacher self-efficacy are more likely to positively impact student achievement (Cahayasanthia et al., 2020). Believing in oneself as an educator contributes to effective planning, instruction, and classroom management. The literature consistently suggested that individuals with high self-efficacy are less likely to view common system structural elements as

perceived threats compared to the teachers in this study (Eliophotou & Lefteri, 2021; Ortan et al., 2021; Thompson & Gomez, 2014). Therefore, compromised teacher self-efficacy may lead to a decline in student achievement.

The findings of this study demonstrate that student behavior, psychological safety, feelings of being unsupported, and ambiguity significantly diminish teacher self-efficacy. To comprehend this process better, consider how the brain operates under stress. The brain's primary function is to ensure safety and conserve energy (Taylor & Marienau, 2016). The stress response activates when there is a perceived threat to either of these functions. Following a trigger, the mental model serves as a lens through which feelings are interpreted, leading to the conclusion that there is a problem; either safety or energy is compromised. Hebb's Law further reinforces that repeated exposure to perceived threats to teacher self-efficacy reinforces negative self-evaluation because neurons that are activated together form stronger connections (Schwartz & Gladding, 2012). Persistent messages of inadequacy arising from challenges in managing student behavior, consistent feelings of being unsupported, ongoing ambiguity in roles, or breaches in psychological safety without resolution can become ingrained in the teacher's psyche, affecting their professional performance. Thus, due to teachers' mental models influencing their appraisal of various structural elements within the system, the data consistently confirm compromised teacher self-efficacy resulting from perceived threatening experiences.

Why is this significant for educational leaders? If a district aims to retain early-career teachers, it is crucial to approach the following questions with a systems-thinking mindset:

- What is our vision for teacher self-efficacy?
- Which systems approach aligns with realizing this vision in our schools?

The data emphasized several underlying structural elements within the school system that impact compromised teacher self-efficacy: student behavior, psychological safety, feelings of being unsupported, and ambiguity. The literature indicated various systemic issues affecting teacher self-efficacy and contributing to teacher attrition (Räsänen et al., 2020). Therefore, adopting a systems-thinking approach can offer a sustainable method to foster positive change in supporting teacher self-efficacy (Jennings et al., 2019).

Employing a systems-thinking approach, school districts can systematically implement several mindfulness-based intervention programs (MBI) to bolster emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, and teacher self-efficacy (Bracket et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2022; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Jennings et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2013). These MBIs aid in enhancing emotional resilience and flexibility, as well as promoting metacognition and appraisal of potentially stressful situations (Chang et al., 2022; Jennings et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). Given that the implementation of these programs often requires a shift in climate and culture, shared vision and learning, and system-wide collaboration and ownership, a systems-thinking approach facilitates sustainability (Bracket et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2022; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Jennings et al., 2019).

CARE (Jenning et al., 2019), RULER (Bracket et al., 2019), and SMART (Chang et al., 2022) are system-based mindfulness-based intervention programs (MBIs) designed to address emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, and teacher self-efficacy. CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) is an adult learning model focused on enhancing emotional skills, mindfulness, and stress management, directly influencing student success (Chang et al., 2022; Jennings et al., 2019). RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating) is a comprehensive MBI that supports all stakeholders within a

school district (Bracket et al., 2019). This model provides a shared framework for developing emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, and teacher self-efficacy through practices like the meta moment, pausing and reappraisal during conflicts, and utilizing the mood meter to express emotional states. SMART (Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques) MBI is integrated into the curriculum for both teachers and students to enhance compassion, emotional regulation, empathy, and stress reduction (Chang et al., 2022). Additionally, although not explicitly stated, the components of these MBIs align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development as they incorporate peer learning and collaboration, reflective practices, scaffolding, and zone of proximity learning opportunities (Shabani, 2016; Shah, 2022). Regardless of the chosen method, adopting a system-wide mindfulness approach is crucial for implementing tools that support emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, and teacher self-efficacy.

In order, the participating school district strategically focuses on the following areas: whole child, engagement, learning communities, and equity. These strategic areas allow district graduates to exit with the following competencies: adaptability, communication, creativity, critical thinking, global empathy, and technology. To achieve these goals with transformational impact, teachers need to manage a variety of stressors, such as a diversity of communication styles, learning styles, social behaviors, and climate and culture expectations (Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019; Salami, 2010). Research has shown correlations between high teacher self-efficacy, emotional self-awareness, and stress tolerance (Abitabile, 2020; Hattie, 2009; Steiner & Woo, 2021). The findings from this research provide insight into how early-career teachers understand and describe their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance and how these descriptions put a spotlight on compromised teacher self-efficacy. Thus, the participating school district can use this information for consideration of including an MBI component within their

early-career teacher program as additional support for developing teacher self-efficacy among new teachers.

To have a transformational impact on students, the school district participating in this endeavor strategically prioritizes several key areas: the holistic development of each child, fostering engagement, cultivating strong learning communities, and promoting equity. These strategic focal points aim to equip district graduates with essential competencies including adaptability, communication, creativity, critical thinking, global empathy, and proficiency in technology. However, to realize these objectives with transformative impact, teachers must effectively navigate a multitude of stressors, encompassing diverse communication and learning styles, social behaviors, and expectations regarding climate and culture (Martinez-Monteagudo, 2019; Salami, 2010). Extensive research has demonstrated correlations between elevated levels of teacher self-efficacy, emotional self-awareness, and stress tolerance (Abitabile, 2020; Hattie, 2009; Steiner & Woo, 2021). The findings derived from this research not only shed light on early-career teachers' perceptions and descriptions of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance but also underscore the potential impact of compromised teacher self-efficacy. Consequently, the participating school district could utilize this valuable insight to consider integrating a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) component into their early-career teacher program, thereby providing additional support to nurture teacher self-efficacy among new educators.

In essence, this research could offer valuable insights to inform targeted assistance for the professional growth and coaching of early-career teachers in areas such as self-efficacy, emotional self-awareness, and stress tolerance. Given the significant departure of teachers from the profession due to stress-related issues, there is a potential detrimental impact on student

achievement (Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Consequently, it presents an opportunity to facilitate the holistic development of students, promote genuine engagement, and fortify the learning community, all while ensuring equitable opportunities for every learner.

Systems-thinking Approach for Policy Considerations

Kelly et al. (2018) completed a study with 2,477 early career teachers to explore the impact of teachers feeling unsupported and intention to leave the profession. The results highlight that many teachers are "slipping through the cracks" due to the absence of consistent, formal mentorship or sufficient administrative backing. This observation echoes the experiences of some participants in the current study, who also reported feeling unsupported. To address this problem, Kutsyuruba (2020) suggested formulating policies that offer comprehensive, ongoing induction programs for novice teachers, which should include structured mentoring sessions. The successful implementation of such policies would require a unified effort from educational leaders and policymakers, underpinned by a genuine commitment to enhancing teachers' well-being. Policies that foster supportive environments for early career teachers could significantly bolster their sense of efficacy and decrease the likelihood of them leaving the profession.

Limitations

While the study provided valuable insights into early-career teachers' perceptions of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size was small, comprising exclusively female teachers. A more comprehensive study would encompass a larger and more diverse participant pool, representing all genders. Such a broader sample might have resulted in different findings, considering that males may perceive structural elements as triggers or evaluate their self-efficacy differently. Research suggests that women often exhibit higher emotional self-awareness than men and may

assess potential triggering events differently (Bey et al., 2019). Therefore, an inclusive study involving both genders could help validate or challenge any gender-related disparities in early-career teachers' understanding and description of their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance.

Another area for improvement in the study design was the absence of a follow-up interview. The decision to omit an interview component was made to ensure participant anonymity, particularly because the researcher operates as an independent contractor within the district. Creating a psychologically safe environment where participants could openly share their thoughts was paramount. Thus, participants were given the opportunity to express themselves freely through electronic guided logs while using chosen pseudonyms. Preserving anonymity helped mitigate potential biases on the part of the researcher stemming from their professional relationship with the district.

Incorporating a semi-structured follow-up interview might have offered deeper insights into both current mental models and those present at the time of the perceived threatening event (Trochim et al., 2016). For instance, identifying whether a teacher harbors a predominant mental model concerning their role as an educator is crucial for understanding their identity and could provide further clarity on their perception of a perceived threat. Through such interviews, the researcher could have delved into the factors influencing participants' thoughts and actions, explored their intentions behind their chosen course of action, uncovered any underlying assumptions, and assessed their contributions to the outcome of the experience (Senge, 2014).

Lastly, the school district leadership was undergoing a transition, and a levy was up for ballot, leading to heightened mental and emotional stress among stakeholders. Consequently, several district restrictions on soliciting volunteers impacted recruitment efforts. Although the

study aimed for a timeline of two weeks from recruitment to data collection, it extended to eight weeks due to constraints imposed by the district. This limitation significantly influenced the breadth and diversity of responses, thereby narrowing the understanding of how early-career teachers perceive and articulate their emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance within their teaching environment.

Future Research

Several avenues for future research could expand upon this study. Further investigation is warranted to explore how emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies are understood and articulated by female early-career teachers in comparison to their male counterparts. A comparative analysis of responses across genders would offer valuable insights (Bey et al., 2019). Additionally, existing literature suggests gender-based disparities in stress coping mechanisms. Therefore, delving into these distinctions, as well as identifying system structural elements that serve as triggers for all genders, would furnish school districts with enhanced knowledge to optimize their support strategies (Graves et al., 2021).

Although the 40% attrition rate highlights the departure of early-career teachers, partly attributed to stress and self-efficacy challenges (Steiner & Woo, 2021), further investigation is warranted. Research focusing on a cross-section of teachers from urban, suburban, and rural districts could elucidate whether similar systemic structural elements trigger perceived threats, consequently challenging teacher self-efficacy. Räsänen et al. (2020) observed an increase in teacher attrition due to systemic structural factors inducing stress and affecting efficacy. The prevalent triggering structural elements identified in this study include student behavior, lack of support, uncertainty, and psychological safety. However, it remains to be explored whether these factors similarly impact suburban and rural early-career teachers.

Finally, Merriam and Tisdale (2016) advocated for a qualitative case study design as an avenue to thoroughly explore a multifaceted idea or system. It would be intriguing to employ a case study approach with an intervention to gain deeper insights into the impact of strategic mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) on the emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies of early-career teachers. This approach could involve selecting three early-career teachers from diverse school districts, including urban, suburban, or rural settings. The intervention would entail providing participants with opportunities for reflection and coaching support as they implement mindfulness practices over a specified period. Such a design would afford the researcher a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon while offering valuable insights into the mental models, systemic structural elements, and patterns inherent in exploring early-career teachers' emotional self-awareness and stress tolerance competencies.

Conclusion

In his 2006 Ted Talk "Do Schools Kill Creativity," Sir Ken Robinson emphasizes the need for educators to stop stigmatizing mistakes as hindrances to student growth. However, if teachers themselves do not feel comfortable being professionally vulnerable or psychologically secure within their roles, it becomes challenging to effectively destigmatize mistakes within the classroom. If teachers are expected to foster this environment for their students, it is equally essential to create it for them. Therefore, adopting a systems-thinking approach to cultivate a psychologically safe environment for all within the school and reframing mistakes as opportunities becomes imperative to support teacher self-efficacy. Ensuring teachers feel supported and providing clarity on how they can succeed while acknowledging their current efforts without shame fosters psychological safety within their classrooms. Without this support, the likelihood of teachers leaving the profession increases (Räsänen, 2020; Sutcher et al., 2016).

Addressing teacher self-efficacy can play a crucial role in improving retention rates within educational institutions. When teachers feel confident in their abilities to effectively manage their classrooms, engage their students, and positively impact learning outcomes, they are more likely to remain committed to their profession and stay in their teaching positions. By fostering a positive school culture and providing resources to enhance teachers' confidence and resilience, schools can create an environment where educators feel empowered, satisfied, and motivated to continue their careers in teaching. Ultimately, investing in teacher self-efficacy is not only beneficial for individual educators but also for the overall health and success of the school community.

Final Thoughts

"We are continuously influenced by and influencing our reality." Senge, 2006 (p. 78)

The interrelationship between emotional self-awareness, stress tolerance, mental models, structural elements, teacher self-efficacy, and mindfulness-based interventions is multifaceted and underscores the importance of addressing the emotional well-being of early-career teachers in the context of their professional roles. By taking a systems-thinking approach to include mindfulness-based interventions for teacher personal and professional development, schools can create supportive environments that promote well-being, resilience, and success for educators and students alike. By engaging stakeholders, assessing needs, integrating mindfulness into professional development, and creating a culture of mindfulness, educational leaders can cultivate a thriving community where everyone has the opportunity to flourish.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic questionnaire: https://piafitzgerald.typeform.com/to/ew1ITje1

1. Chosen pseudonym_____
2. Number of years as a teacher _____
3. Current type of school (circle one): Elementary, Middle, High School
4. Teaching area and grade level:_____
5. Is current school considered suburban, urban or rural?
6. Age _____
7. Race/Ethnicity _____
8. Gender (Optional)_____ Preferred Pronouns (Optional)_____
9. Stressful experiences are often characterized as unpleasant or unexpected, challenging events. How do you define stress? Share an example of a recent stressful experience at work.
10. There are a variety of ways to manage stress that some may classify as effective and others ineffective. How do you manage stress? Share 2-3 methods, even if you believe they are ineffective.
11. Stress can show up in the body internally and externally. Describe the physical manifestations of stress in your body.
12. Anything else you would like to share:_____

APPENDIX B

ABCDE GUIDED LOG

ABCDE Guided Log: https://piafitzgerald.typeform.com/to/fdbXxpMw

A-Activating Experience
What event triggered your feelings?
B-Beliefs
What thoughts went through your mind about the situation?
C-Consequences
How did you feel about the situation? How did you respond?
D-Debate
Share other ways to interpret the belief.
E-Effect
Based on your analysis, how would you prefer to think about the situation? How would you prefer to respond to the situation?

Adapted by Stein and Book 2011.

Guided Log Instructions

1. Think of a recent stressful situation at work. Record the incident in the A section and include any feelings or physical sensations that accompanied the event.
2. In section B, record your thoughts and beliefs around the situation.
3. In section C, share ways your work was impacted by how you managed the stress.
4. In section D, share
   - Evidence that supports each belief or lack of
   - Alternative, more logical explanations to explain the activating event
   - If someone asked you for advice about the situation, what might you say to help their perspective?
   - Have you ever experienced a similar situation and held a similar belief, only to find out it was incorrect?
   - If so, what did you learn from that experience and what can you apply the knowledge to this situation?
5. In section E, share your new insight on the experience.

Guided Log Category Explanations

- A: Activating Event (happens to or around someone)
- B: Belief (the event causes someone to have a belief, either rational or irrational)
- C: Consequence (the belief leads to a consequence, with rational beliefs leading to healthy consequences and irrational beliefs leading to unhealthy consequences)
- D: Debate

  - Evidence that supports each belief or lack of
  - Alternative, more logical explanations to explain the activating event
  - If someone asked you for advice about the situation, what might you say to help their perspective?
  - Have you ever experienced a similar situation and held a similar belief, only to find out it was incorrect?
  - If so, what did you learn from that experience and what can you apply the knowledge to this situation?

  (If one has held an irrational belief which has caused unhealthy consequences, they must dispute that belief and turn it into a rational belief)

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed consent form: https://piafitzgerald.typeform.com/to/V1WMpGPc

Dear Sir or Madame:

I, Pia Fitzgerald, am a doctoral student from Youngstown State University. I am conducting a study to investigate how early-careerteachers describe their Emotional Intelligence in relation to their attitudes towards their first-year teaching experience. In this study, you will be asked to:

1. Complete an initial interview to collect baseline data and demographics.
2. Participate in a semi-structured interview.
3. Complete a brief reflective journal over a one-week period.
4. Participate in a final semi-structured interview.

I will also need to collect information to describe you such as age, race, years in teaching, subject(s) and grade level(s) taught. You will meet with me for three sessions and your participation should take about 30 minutes each time.

You may be at risk of harm because of this research. The harm includes potential feelings of emotional and psychological distress as you reflect on previous teaching experiences. For example: 1) The interview questions will invite you talk about your first-year experience, and you may have negative emotions when sharing responses. The likelihood that you will be harmed is minimized because I will adhere to the agreed confidentiality clause, remove your real name from all documents, store data in a secured area, and refrain from sharing your responses with members of your work community and beyond. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you have the right to refuse to answer any question and may also end the interview upon request.

The benefits to you from being in this study are providing data to help decision makers the value of investing in staff emotional intelligence development and potentially develop solutions to help reduce the attrition rate of early-careerteachers.

Your privacy is important, and I will handle all information collected about you in a confidential manner. I will report the results of the project in a way that will not identify you. I do plan to present the results of the study to my dissertation committee and invited guests of our doctoral cohort.

You do not have to be in this study. If you don't want to, you can say no without losing any benefits that you are entitled to. If you do agree, you can stop participating at any time. If you wish to withdraw, just tell me or the contact person listed below.

If you have questions about this research project, please contact Dr. Jane Beese at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxx@ysu.edu. My contact information is Pia Fitzgerald at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxx@student.ysu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact the Office of Research Services at YSU (330-941-2377) or at YSUIRB@ysu.edu

I understand the study described above and have been given a copy of this consent document. I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to participate. _____

Signature of Participant _____Date _____

APPENDIX D

IRB PERMISSION LETTER

Mar 26, 2024 11:26:09 AM EDT

Jane Beese
Teacher Ed and Leadership St

Re: Exempt - Initial - 2023-310 Early-Career Teachers' Understanding of Self Awareness and Stress Management Emotional Intelligence Competencies in Relation to Their Teaching Experiences

Dear Dr. Jane Beese:

Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board has rendered the decision below for Early-Career Teachers' Understanding of Self Awareness and Stress Management Emotional Intelligence Competencies in Relation to Their Teaching Experiences

Decision: Exempt

Selected Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly
reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,
Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board