CANADIAN EARLY CAREER TEACHERS' COPING STRATEGIES AND MENTAL HEALTH: A MIXED-METHOD EXPLORATION

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DEDICATION

Much like the findings of this thesis on the importance of social support, this work would not have been possible without my people.

First, I sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. Thelma Gunn, for her trust, mentorship, and encouragement of my curiosity throughout this research process. I am equally grateful to my committee members, Dr. Charlotte Brenner and Dr. Kevin Wood, for their time, care, and constructive feedback in bringing this thesis to completion. Thank you also to my external examiner, Dr. Ayodeji Osiname, for sharing their insights and expertise, and to Dr. Darlene St. Georges for serving as my chair.

To my parents, you are the foundation of my community values and work ethic. Your unwavering support has enabled me to pursue my goals, both big and small. Thank you for all the love. Dad, this is my final answer to your Sunday check-ins. Sorry, it's 100+ pages long.

To Derrick, thanks for holding down the fort, keeping me fed, and for being the best cat dad around, all while undertaking your own learning journey. To my friends, old and new, from this program and beyond, thank you for the laughter.

Finally, to the teachers who spent their precious free time answering my call for participants, thank you. Just as this study could not exist without your generosity, neither could our society thrive without your dedication. I hope I have honoured your voices.

ABSTRACT

Teacher shortages, burnout, and attrition remain pervasive global challenges, with early career teachers (ECTs) at heightened risk of leaving the profession before reaching their full professional potential. This study, grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, examined how ECTs' coping strategies operate as personal resources within high-demand occupational contexts. Using a cross-sectional, convergent mixed-methods design, Canadian early career teachers (N=311) within the first five years of practice completed an online survey measuring coping, resilience, burnout, intention to leave, and included qualitative open-ended questions. Quantitative analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and multiple linear regressions, while qualitative responses were analysed through an inductive and deductive brief-text thematic approach. ECTs most frequently endorsed engagement-oriented, emotion-focused, and social strategies. Notably, active coping, emotional support, and positive reframing predicted higher resilience and lower burnout and turnover intentions in line with JD-R theory, whereas behavioural disengagement and self-blame predicted poorer outcomes. Qualitative findings paralleled the quantitative data, highlighting the centrality of social support as both an emotional buffer and a practical scaffold amid overwhelming demands and systemic constraints. Overall, the study underscores the necessity for multilevel interventions to strengthen collegial and organizational support, promoting sustainable well-being and retention.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECTs	Early Career Teachers
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources Model
BCI	Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Scale
MTRS	Multidimensional Teachers Resilience Scale
SPF-24	Scale of Protective Factors
CBI	Copenhagen Burnout Inventory
ITL	Intention to Leave

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teaching is frequently described as an inherently meaningful career; however, it has also become increasingly complex and demanding, exposing educators to heightened risk of occupational stress and mental health concerns (Sokal et al., 2025). Prolonged exposure to chronic stress has been found to heighten one's risk of burnout, anxiety, depression, and even suicidality, ultimately intensifying intentions to leave the profession (Bottiani et al., 2019). Yet teachers are not passive recipients of these conditions; individual coping strategies meaningfully influence how workplace stressors are appraised, regulated and managed (Folkman et al., 1986). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of coping strategies is highly context-dependent. Approaches that may be adaptive in principle can become constrained within systems characterized by escalating demands, limited resources, and competing expectations. Accordingly, coping must be understood not simply as an individual responsibility, but as a process embedded within broader structural conditions that shape its feasibility and effectiveness.

This broader context is critical, as most research on early career teachers' (ECTs') burnout and attrition has adopted a deficit-oriented perspective, emphasizing the factors contributing to teachers' departure from the profession (Gratacós et al., 2023). Considerably less attention has been paid to the strength-based factors that promote retention. Two key constructs central to this inquiry may be coping and resilience.

In this context, *coping* refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts employed to manage and overcome challenges and is traditionally categorized into three subtypes: problem-focused (actively addressing the stressor directly), emotion-focused (modifying one's internal or emotional response), and avoidance (disengaging internally or externally; Folkman et al., 1986). *Resilience*, meanwhile, is defined as the "personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face

of adversity" (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 76). For teachers, resilience reflects the capacity to mobilize personal resources, navigate challenges effectively, and achieve a sense of satisfaction that supports overall well-being (Barnová et al., 2023; Beltman et al., 2020). When considered together, coping and resilience represent both the processes and capacities that enable adaptation under adversity, contingent on flexibility, situational appropriateness, and self-regulatory capacity (Barnová et al., 2023).

Importantly, teacher mental health cannot be understood solely through an individual lens. Distress often arises from sustained engagement marked by escalating demands and insufficient resources rather than personal failing. Teaching is fundamentally relational, relying on sustained interactions between teachers, students, administration, families, and society (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2025; Hickey & Riddle, 2023; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Spilt et al., 2011). When expectations and resources are misaligned, both instructional quality and teacher well-being suffer. Teacher psychological well-being directly shapes classroom practices, retention decisions, and ultimately student learning outcomes (Collie & Martin, 2023; OECD, 2021). When teachers struggle with their mental health, executive functioning is impaired, limiting their capacity to respond to the evolving demands of contemporary classrooms (Fang & Qi, 2023). Thus, ensuring students' access to quality education requires sustained attention to teacher well-being at both individual and systemic levels (OECD, 2021; Sokal et al., 2025).

One of the primary indicators of a thriving society is the quality of its education system (OECD, 2021). A society's stability and growth are tied to the readiness of future generations to navigate an interconnected world (Kutsyuruba et al., 2022; Saks et al., 2022; Smith & Ulvik, 2017). Nevertheless, education systems worldwide are facing an intensifying crisis of teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition (Mills et al., 2025; Sokal et al., 2025). The United Nations

Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics (2024) estimates that 44 million teachers must be recruited and retained by 2030 to meet global education targets. Yet, empirical research consistently demonstrates that the core challenge is not recruitment but retention, particularly during the first five years of practice (Gunn et al., 2023; Jiang & Yip, 2024; Mills et al., 2025; Van den Borre et al., 2021). Moreover, concern is mounting as enrollment in teacher education programs has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic (Sokal et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, the present study aimed to address key gaps in the literature by examining the coping mechanisms of Canadian ECTs, with a particular interest in exploring how they relate to critical well-being factors of resilience, burnout, and intention to leave the profession (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Wang et al., 2022; Wang & Hall, 2021). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has explicitly examined the coping strategies and resilience of beginning teachers within a Canadian context. A mixed-methods design was employed to explore patterned relationships and lived experiences, allowing for greater breadth and depth of insight. Guided by this rationale, the research questions were as follows:

1. What coping strategies are early career teachers currently utilizing?
2. What are the relationships between identified early career teachers coping strategies and reported resilience, burnout, and intentions to leave?
3. How do early career teachers perceive the effectiveness of their coping strategies, and what barriers do they perceive in implementing them effectively?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the interrelated factors of coping situating stress, burnout, attrition (i.e., intention to leave), and resilience among ECTs, with particular emphasis on the Canadian context. Beyond synthesizing existing scholarship, it also offers a conceptualization of these issues together by placing them within both individual and systemic frameworks, thereby providing the foundation for the present study.

Coping

Although resilience and coping are often used interchangeably, current consensus is that they are conceptually distinct, albeit related constructs (Folkman et al., 1986, p. 14; Pogere et al., 2019; Van der Hallen et al., 2020). One of the foundational studies on resilience and coping found that women with higher resilience scores were less likely to appraise their upcoming abortions as stressful (Major et al., 1998). In contrast, those with lower resilience levels relied on their appraisals to guide the coping strategies they employed, presenting coping as a distinct construct from resilience. *Coping* is defined as the behavioural and cognitive management of external demands that are appraised as "taxing or exceeding the person's resources" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141; Pogere et al., 2019; Van der Hallen et al., 2020). Within this framework, resilience is only meaningful in the presence of adversity and is evidenced through adaptive processes (e.g., coping) that sustain well-being and functioning (Leipold et al., 2019). Coping is therefore viewed as one of the active mechanisms through which individuals respond to threat or loss, positioning resilience as the capacity to adapt and recover (Van der Hallen et al., 2020).

Coping is also often used as a broad term that encompasses a range of strategies that individuals use to manage emotions effectively (Wang & Hall, 2021). Coping is typically understood as a three-fold process defined by thoughts and actions tailored to specific stressful

encounters. It is contextual, shaped by the situation, the individual's appraisal of it, and their perceived ability to manage it. Coping is neither intrinsically good nor bad but reflects the actions taken to manage stress (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus, 1993). An individual's coping tendencies often stem from mental schemas formed in childhood and reinforced over time (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus 1993). Coping modes are characterized by repeated, often unconscious behaviours that can become rigid (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus, 1993). Coping strategies are often divided into adaptive and productive versus maladaptive and palliative categories (Pogere et al., 2019). Adaptive strategies lead to positive outcomes, like improved health, while palliative coping does not address the core issue, focusing instead on reducing the stressor's impact.

The Transactional Model

One of the most widely used frameworks for understanding coping is Lazarus and Folkman's (1986) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which defines coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources" (p. 141). This model differentiates between two types of appraisals: *primary*, where individuals interpret events influencing their emotional responses, and *secondary*, where they assess their resources and coping options. Coping is viewed as an ongoing process, with continuous reappraisals as individuals adjust to changing person-environment relationships. Additionally, as Aulén et al. (2021) noted, individuals vary fundamentally in what they find stressful, how they react, and their chosen coping strategies.

After appraisals, people can engage in two types of direct-action coping strategies: *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused* (Lazarus, 1991, 1993). By and large, coping serves two

functions: to alter the problem or regulate the emotional response to it. *Problem-focused coping,* used when individuals perceive the situation as controllable, aims to modify the problem or the causes of stress by reducing demands or enhancing resources. Examples include seeking advice, gathering information, or consulting others to better manage the problem (Wang & Hall, 2021). *Emotion-focused coping* refers to strategies aimed at reducing the intensity of unpleasant emotional experiences that arise in response to stress. Within the transactional model of stress and coping, emotion-focused coping is most likely to occur when individuals appraise a situation as uncontrollable or resistant to direct change, thereby shifting the goal of coping from altering the stressor itself to managing the emotional distress it evokes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These strategies are typically cognitive or behavioural in nature, and are oriented toward minimizing psychological harm by accepting, reframing, or expressing negative emotions (Wang & Hall, 2021). Common examples include seeking emotional support, venting, acceptance, humour, and positive reframing, all of which serve to alleviate emotional strain when problem-focused action is perceived as limited or ineffective.

Although emotion-focused coping is centrally concerned with emotional experience, it is conceptually distinct from emotion regulation (Troy et al., 2023). Building upon advances in coping research, emotion regulation is understood as a broader, process-oriented construct that refers to individuals' attempts to influence their emotional responses, including which emotions they experience, when those emotions occur, and how they are subjectively felt and expressed. Unlike emotion-focused coping, which is situationally anchored to identifiable stressors, emotion regulation operates across contexts and time, encompassing moment-to-moment processes that shape emotional responding both inside and outside of stressful situations. Whereas coping is typically mobilized in response to stressors, most often negative or demanding experiences,

emotion regulation extends beyond stress contexts to include the modulation of both positive and negative emotional states in everyday life (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2025).

Emotion regulation targets multiple components of the emotional response system, including attentional focus, cognitive appraisals, physiological arousal, and behavioural expression. These components may be regulated before an emotional response is fully generated, during its unfolding, or after it has occurred. Consistent with this process-level framing, emotion regulation is often temporally immediate and short-lived, shaping discrete emotional episodes as they arise, whereas coping may unfold over longer timeframes in response to ongoing or chronic stressors (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2024). Therefore, emotion-regulation strategies often have immediate downstream impacts on affective experience, social interaction, behavioural engagement, cognitive effort, and physiological functioning. Importantly, emotion regulation strategies are not inherently adaptive or maladaptive, their effectiveness relies on contextual demands, timing, and flexibility in deployment (Troy et al., 2023).

While emotion-focused coping frequently relies on emotion regulation processes, it describes what individuals do emotionally to manage stress, whereas emotion regulation explains how emotional responses are shaped at the process level (Troy et al., 2023). In this sense, emotion regulation can be understood as a foundational capacity that underlies the development of broader coping repertoires, emerging earlier in development and later expanding into more complex cognitive and behavioural strategies used to manage stressors (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2025). This distinction is particularly important regarding resilience outcomes. Some emotion regulation strategies may reduce distress in the short term but generate adverse longer-term consequences, such as disengagement or reduced effort, which may undermine psychological resilience. Thus, emotion regulation provides a mechanistic framework for explaining why

certain emotion-focused coping strategies promote adaptive functioning, whereas others, despite offering immediate relief, may contribute to cumulative strain over time (Troy et al., 2023). At the same time, both constructs share important commonalities: they are dynamic, goal-directed processes that evolve over time and can be deployed with varying degrees of conscious awareness, and both include strategies that may function adaptively or maladaptively depending on context and outcome (Troy et al., 2023; Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2025).

Finally, a third category, dubbed "mixed problem- and emotion-focused coping," was developed (Folkman et al., 1986), where individuals seek support from others and include aspects of both problem- and emotion-focused coping (Aulén et al., 2021). Mixed coping has been proposed as the most adaptive style, as it reflects greater cognitive flexibility, enabling individuals to respond appropriately to the demands of diverse situations and more accurately representing real-world coping processes (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). To illustrate, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping can both be adaptive, as they can provide opportunities to recover, process, and overcome the stressor in their own way (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). However, when a coping style is rigid rather than flexible and dynamic, it can become maladaptive over time, as each problem requires its own appropriate approach (Bakker & De Vries, 2021).

Teacher Coping

Teacher coping is a critical area of investigation, as research suggests it shapes how stress and burnout are experienced and buffers their impact (Aulén et al., 2021). To illustrate, in educational contexts, when students' behaviours conflict with instructional goals, teachers tend to experience negative affect (Wang et al., 2022). In contrast, behaviours appraised as being aligned with teaching goals elicit positive affect. The secondary appraisal process involves

teachers evaluating their capacity to cope effectively with stressful stimuli, a self-evaluation that influences both the intensity of emotional responses and overall well-being (Wang et al., 2022). Although negative emotions are often unavoidable, adaptive coping can reduce their intensity, thereby mitigating their harmful impact on well-being.

Building upon Lazarus and Folkman's (1986) foundational work, Endler and Parker (1980) expanded the coping framework by introducing a third category, avoidance-focused coping. Often considered a palliative means of coping, avoidance involves psychological or behavioural disengagement from stress-inducing stimuli. While this approach can momentarily regulate emotions and restore a sense of control and meaning, excessive reliance can become maladaptive, particularly in high-stress contexts where avoidance may exacerbate rather than resolve challenges (Aulén et al., 2021; Bakker & De Vries, 2021).

Tobin et al. (1989, 1995), building on previous coping theory and the belief that individuals can intentionally choose to engage or disengage when faced with a stressor, put forward a hierarchical framework. This model differentiates coping strategies along two primary dimensions: problem versus emotion, and engagement versus disengagement (Wang et al., 2021). Specifically, problem-focused engagement involves directly addressing or cognitively reframing the stressor, and problem-focused disengagement reflects avoidance or wishful thinking. Emotion-focused engagement encompasses strategies such as expressing emotions or seeking social support, whereas emotion-focused disengagement includes behaviours such as self-blame, emotion suppression, or social withdrawal (Wang et al., 2021). For example, Riley et al. (2012) found that Australian and Chinese teachers who relied on avoidance or disengagement strategies (e.g., wishful thinking, self-blame, denial, and self-distraction) were more likely to exhibit aggression and controlling behaviour in the classroom. Those who employed engagement

strategies (e.g., active problem-solving and seeking emotional support) were more likely to implement appropriate disciplinary actions. Notably, while avoidance strategies are less common among experienced teachers, they are more common among student teachers and novice teachers (Aulén et al., 2021).

Considerable research has been conducted on the impact of coping strategies on teaching and learning outcomes (Wang et al., 2022). Teachers continuously appraise and regulate their environments to strive for personal well-being and instructional effectiveness (Lazarus, 1991, 1993; Wang et al., 2022). Adaptive coping strategies, particularly those that are problem-focused, are associated with positive emotions, enhanced psychological well-being, improved teaching quality, increased job satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Gunn et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Problem-focused coping, which involves actively addressing the source of stress (e.g., accessing mentorship), may be particularly advantageous for teachers, as it enables them to anticipate and manage future demands, thereby reducing the risk of burnout (Beltman et al., 2020). However, to make matters more complicated, research remains mixed regarding the adaptiveness of other coping strategies. For instance, emotion-focused strategies, which tend to be the most common form of coping used by teachers, yield variable outcomes depending on situational controllability and have been positively correlated to burnout (Bakker & De Vries, 2021; Beltman et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2012). Educators who rely more on emotion-focused coping are more likely to seek emotional support and share their feelings with peers. However, this approach may not directly alter the stressor, as it is often used when a situation appears uncontrollable or unsolvable (Beltman et al., 2020).

Research findings on teachers' coping tendencies remain mixed: some studies suggest that educators more frequently employ emotion-focused strategies, whereas others report that

problem-focused strategies are also commonly used (Wang et al., 2022). Importantly, research finds that educators who engage in flexible and dynamic coping tend to be the most successful at managing workplace stressors (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Pogere et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022). To illustrate, while disengagement (e.g., avoidant) strategies alone may be maladaptive, they can yield positive outcomes when integrated with other forms of active engagement (e.g., problem and emotion-focused) strategies. A teacher might briefly disengage from a stressful classroom situation (problem-focused disengagement), then seek social support from a peer (emotion-focused engagement), and ultimately work toward a solution to the issue (problem-focused engagement).

Extending this understanding, Wang et al. (2022) identified three coping profiles among Canadian teachers through latent profile analysis: *adaptive copers, problem-avoidance copers*, and *social-withdrawal copers*. Adaptive copers, who engaged in problem-solving and sought social support while minimizing disengagement, demonstrated the highest well-being and lowest burnout. Conversely, problem-avoidance and social-withdrawal copers, characterized by low engagement and high avoidance, reported the poorest outcomes (Wang et al., 2022). These findings underscore that coping flexibility, rather than reliance on any single strategy, is central to teacher success and well-being.

Stress also influences coping selection. Individuals experiencing higher stress tend to rely more on avoidant or emotion-focused strategies, while those under lower stress conditions more often adopt problem-focused or flexible approaches (Aulén et al., 2021; Basińska et al., 2021). Similarly, as burnout intensifies, teachers' ability to cope effectively diminishes (Herman et al., 2020). For example, teachers experiencing high stress and low coping efficacy exhibited greater burnout than those with high or low stress levels who maintained effective coping (Herman et

al., 2020). In applying the job demands-resources (JD-R) model to teacher coping, persistently high demands combined with limited resources generate chronic stress, fostering rigid, maladaptive coping patterns (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). As stress and burnout intensify, teachers experience a decline in their capacity for flexible coping, for adjusting strategies to situational demands, and for evaluating their effectiveness. Psychological strain, including symptoms of depression and anxiety, further impairs adaptive self-regulation, reinforcing coping inflexibility (Bakker & De Vries, 2021; Stange et al., 2017). Over time, this rigidity perpetuates exhaustion, negative mood, and cognitive impairment, thereby decreasing personal resources, increasing job demands, and sustaining the cycle of stress (Bakker & De Vries, 2021).

Resilience

Early resilience research represented a paradigm shift from focusing on risk factors leading to psychosocial problems to exploring why some individuals thrive under stress while others struggle (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Herman et al., 2011a). Stress is both purposeful and inevitable; nearly everyone will encounter some form of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or other significant stressors within their lifetime (Horner, 2017; Southwick et al., 2014). Accordingly, contemporary resilience research largely seeks to understand why certain individuals thrive under adversity whereas others struggle (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013).

Resilience is broadly understood as *positive adaptation*, referring to the capacity to maintain or regain mental health in the face of adversity (Herrman et al., 2011b; Hill et al., 2025). Over time, our understanding of how humans overcome demanding circumstances has advanced considerably. Resilience has been studied across numerous professional contexts and is consistently found to be inversely related to burnout (Cheng et al., 2022; West et al., 2020). Nevertheless, despite extensive scholarly attention, there remains no consensus on a universal

definition (Herman et al., 2011a). The construct has been conceptualized as a trait, a process, and an outcome, prompting ongoing debate about its theoretical boundaries (Luthar et al., 2000, 2006). While resilience is often framed as a stable individual characteristic in popular discourse, contemporary research increasingly positions it as a dynamic and context-dependent process that unfolds over time (Herman et al., 2011; Hill et al., 2025; Southwick et al., 2014).This lack of historical agreement has contributed to inconsistencies and conceptual ambiguity, leading some to question the scientific validity and practical value of resilience as a construct (Herman et al., 2011b; Luthar et al., 2000; Vivolo et al., 2024).

Early interest in resilience stemmed from efforts to identify why some children succeeded despite adverse childhood experiences, while others did not (Hill et al., 2025). These foundational studies gave rise to the conceptualization of resilience as an inherent, trait-like quality. Within this view, resilience was considered a static attribute enabling individuals to resist or overcome stressors regardless of time or context. Those who scored high in trait resilience were believed to adapt more effectively to adversity, independent of prior exposure to stress or environmental influences. Resilience was therefore regarded as an enduring characteristic across the lifespan, shaped by biological and epigenetic factors (Hill et al., 2025).

From this perspective, resilience reflects the interaction of personal characteristics (e.g., resourcefulness, flexibility, competence) that enable individuals to effectively adapt to challenges (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Herman et al., 2011). High resilience is associated with optimism, religiosity, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, and personality dimensions such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Relatedly, *hardiness* (grit) captures an individual's ability to navigate negative experiences through dimensions of *control, commitment,* and

challenge (Bonanno, 2004; Duckworth et al., 2007). Grit has been found to predict teachers' long-term retention and professional effectiveness (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). *Control* reflects a belief in one's influence over outcomes (internal locus of control); *commitment* denotes active engagement in life roles. Finally, *challenge* involves perceiving adversity as an opportunity for personal growth (Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

Over time, however, the fundamental assumptions underlying trait resilience have been challenged. Evidence indicates that resilience is not constant but may fluctuate, strengthening or weakening in response to life experiences, circumstances, and environmental contexts (Hill et al., 2025). The degree to which an individual demonstrates resilience is also history-dependent, as adaptive responses to new stressors are influenced by prior psychological and environmental exposures (Caza & Milton, 2012; Hill et al., 2025). For instance, individuals who experience multiple stressors in a short time frame may require longer recovery periods to return to baseline functioning (Hill et al., 2025). This phenomenon, known as *critical slowing down*, represents a delay in recovery following successive stressors and serves as an early warning signal of reduced resilience, where even minor challenges can produce disproportionate effects on well-being (van de Leemput et al., 2014). Moreover, resilience appears to follow a curvilinear relationship with adversity exposure. Seery (2011) found that individuals with moderate lifetime adversity demonstrate greater adaptability than those with either minimal or extreme adversity, suggesting that manageable challenges can foster adaptive capacity (Hill et al., 2025). These findings suggest that the notion of resilience as a fixed trait is incomplete, underscoring its dynamic, context-dependent nature, and that it can be learned. Indeed, resilience does not manifest uniformly across contexts; an individual may demonstrate resilience in one situation yet struggle

in another, depending on the demands of the stressor and the coping strategies available (Bonanno, 2021).

Luthar et al. (2000, 2006) addressed these conceptual inconsistencies by proposing a dynamic process theory of resilience, emphasizing two core variables: *adversity* and *adaptation.* Defined in this way, resilience is not a fixed trait but rather a process that evolves and varies across contexts. Adversity encompasses negative circumstances statistically associated with unfavourable outcomes and serves as the necessary precursor to resilience. This approach adopts a threshold-dependent framework similar to that used in risk theory and self-regulation theory (Luthar et al., 2000; 2006; Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2025). Other scholars conceptualize adversity more broadly as any experience involving hardship, suffering, or trauma (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). While much adversity involves minor, everyday disruptions, chronic stress can have severe consequences, including burnout (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Given the inevitability of adversity, understanding the mechanisms that foster positive adaptation is essential. For instance, some individuals become overwhelmed by routine stressors, whereas others thrive and grow from them. Therefore, competence in handling adversity is context and person-dependent; following trauma, it may be reflected in the absence of psychiatric symptoms rather than in normative functioning. *Positive adaptation,* therefore, represents the behavioural expression of social competence and success in meeting developmental tasks, encompassing both external success and internal well-being. Due to most resilience research reflecting Western perspectives that emphasize individual accomplishments, it is vital to situate resilience within a person's cultural context to fully understand positive adaptation, as resilience varies across cultural frames of reference (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013).

Benight et al. (2018, 2020) demonstrated that interactions between psychological and environmental factors shape resilience and recovery processes. Specifically, coping self-efficacy (the individual) and injury severity (the environment) were found to jointly influence dynamic fluctuations in posttraumatic stress symptoms among survivors of vehicle accidents and wildfires. These interactions not only varied according to situational demands but also differed across individuals within the same context (Hill et al., 2025). The multi-systems model of resilience (MSMR) exemplifies this perspective, emphasizing the interaction between the individual and the environment in resilience development (Liu et al., 2017). MSMR delineates three interrelated components: *core resilience* (intra-individual factors like temperament and physiological systems), *internal resilience* (factors developed through environmental interactions), and *external resilience* (socio-ecological elements such as socioeconomic status and access to support). Together, these layers demonstrate that resilience does not solely develop in a vacuum. Recognizing resilience as a multifaceted, adaptive process underscores that it can be intentionally cultivated through preventive and therapeutic interventions (De La Fuente et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017). In the present study, resilience is thus conceptualized as a *dynamic process* rather than a fixed state of being or "the human capacity to face, overcome and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity" (Bonanno, 2021; Grotberg, 1997, p. 1; J. J. W. Liu et al., 2017).

Teacher Resilience

Over the past decade, there has been a growing emphasis on teacher resilience amid high burnout and attrition rates (Zhang & Luo, 2023). A positive psychology approach that strengthens individual capabilities, such as teacher resilience, may help address the current attrition crisis (García-Álvarez et al., 2021). In line with contemporary resilience research, it is

essential to adopt a holistic, multilevel perspective that avoids blaming teachers for failing to exhibit “trait resilience” amid systemic issues (Beltman et al., 2020). To persevere and thrive, teachers must adapt to adversity, manage stress, and meet professional goals (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Gratacós et al., 2023). Daniilidou and Platsidou (2018) add that teacher resilience involves "the ability to maintain positive attributes in the face of a range of challenges, pressures and demands associated with their work" (p. 17). Overall, teacher resilience is positively associated with teacher retention, effectiveness, well-being, student learning, and school success (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). In this study, teacher resilience is defined as the capacity to maintain effectiveness and well-being in the face of difficult and complex demands and strain **(Gratacós et al., 2023; C. Mansfield et al., 2016; Zhang & Luo, 2023)**.

Early career Teachers (ECTs) who remain in the profession long-term and find success and satisfaction in their work tend to demonstrate higher levels of resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012). Mansfield et al. (2012) examined how graduating education students and ECTs perceive and cultivate resilience, proposing a four-dimensional framework encompassing emotional, motivational, social, and professional dimensions. The *professional dimension* pertains to core teaching practices such as organization, preparation, reflexivity, commitment to student success, and the cultivation of effective teaching skills. The *emotional dimension* addresses personal responses to teaching, emphasizing emotional management, self-care, and coping strategies to handle stress. The *motivational dimension* focuses on the drive to learn, enthusiasm, confidence, persistence, and the importance of setting realistic goals and expectations. Lastly, the *social dimension* highlights the value of building a support network, developing strong interpersonal and communication skills, seeking assistance, and heeding advice to navigate challenges effectively (Mansfield et al., 2012).

Despite its growing prominence, the discourse surrounding resilience has been criticized for perpetuating a form of "deficit thinking," wherein responsibility for coping and adaptation is placed solely on the individual (Webster & Rivers, 2019). This framing risks placing the blame on the individual (ECTs) for their response to their environment. As aforementioned, the trait perspective can neglect to hold systems accountable and often fails to consider the socio-political and environmental factors contributing to the issue(s) (Johnson & Down, 2013). As Kohn (2014) argued, such perspectives risk producing a *fundamental attribution error*, in which we pay closer attention to character, personality, and individual responsibility while ignoring how profoundly the social environment shapes what we do, how we learn, and who we are (Johnson & Down, 2012). In response, this study hopes to adopt a balanced perspective that acknowledges both personal and structural dimensions of resilience. While cultivating individual resilience can be beneficial for teachers and their communities, it is equally important to avoid pathologizing normal emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to challenging work environments. Ultimately, the onus of sustainable change must rest not only on individuals but also on the systems in which they operate.

Stress

To better understand burnout, it is important to first grasp the nature of stress. By definition, *stress* arises when an individual perceives a threat to their homeostasis, whether physical, psychological or emotional, and is uniquely interpreted by each person. The potential impact of a stressor depends on several factors, including the perceived consequences and the coping strategies available to alter the situation or manage the emotional response (Maslach et al., 2001; Lazarus, 1993). For example, coping, can significantly influence well-being.

Importantly, *well-being* encompasses not only subjective experiences of happiness or life satisfaction, but also the conditions that support effective functioning, such as physical health, supportive relationships, self-actualization, and positive psychological functioning (Sokal & Trudel, 2023).

As explained by Hornor (2017), stress is typically categorized as acute, tolerable and chronic. *Acute stress* is a brief, temporary state from which the body can swiftly return to baseline. This type of stress can promote development by preparing individuals for future challenges and fostering emotional regulation. *Tolerable stress* is intense, yet still temporary, with recovery facilitated by supportive environmental and genetic factors, such as personal relationships. *Chronic stress*, however, is persistent and prolonged, leading to potentially severe psychological and physiological effects if adequate protective factors are lacking. Burnout often ensues when chronic stress persists without restoration of balance (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Vivolo et al., 2024).

Burnout

The concept of burnout was first introduced by Freudenberger (1974), who described it as a state of physical and emotional exhaustion, detachment, and self-doubt commonly observed among individuals in caregiving or supportive roles. He proposed that *burnout* arises from an individual's commitment to an ethic of care that cannot be met by their work environment, creating a dissonance that exhausts personal resources. This psychosocial syndrome, often referred to as the "cost of caring," impairs professionals' capacity for empathy and emotional engagement, ultimately compromising both their well-being and that of those they serve (Vivolo et al., 2024).

Despite decades of research, the field continues to struggle with inconsistent terminology and conceptual definitions, leading to ongoing ambiguity and miscommunication regarding burnout (Mańkowska, 2025). Burnout is not recognized as an official clinical diagnosis in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013).* Nevertheless, it remains one of the most frequently assessed conditions in psychological and occupational contexts (Nadon et al., 2022). The *International Classification of Diseases* (11th ed; ICD-11) recently classified burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" rather than a mental disorder (World Health Organization, 2019). Due to its exclusion from the DSM-5, there remains a lack of consensus regarding its diagnostic criteria, and its symptoms often overlap with depressive and anxiety-related disorders (Nadon et al., 2022). Within the DSM-5 framework, burnout is typically subsumed under these broad categories and is associated with significant impairments in emotional, social, and occupational functioning. Given these conceptual and diagnostic inconsistencies, burnout is most commonly understood through Maslach's multidimensional theory, which identifies three central symptoms: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced efficacy (Maslach et al., 1997; Nadon et al., 2022).

Emotional exhaustion, burnout's first and most widely discussed dimension, reflects the feeling of being emotionally overextended and depleted due to work-related demands, leading to a pervasive sense of fatigue, loss of energy, and weariness (Maslach et al., 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). It is frequently regarded as the most potent predictor of burnout, significantly undermining individuals' well-being and motivation, though emotional exhaustion alone does not fully encapsulate the burnout experience (Madigan & Kim, 2021). This component mirrors the prolonged stress inherent in burnout but offers limited insight into the intricacies of burnout's relationship to one's work. Studies by Lloyd and King (2004) revealed that emotional exhaustion

often precedes physical fatigue, initially presenting as low energy, sleep disturbances and difficulties within interpersonal relationships, which progressively compound.

Depersonalization constitutes the second dimension of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). As emotional exhaustion escalates, individuals may begin to emotionally and cognitively detach from their work as a protective response, striving to preserve their sense of self amidst an overwhelming inability to meet ongoing professional demands effectively. This detachment fosters a state of depersonalization, a defence mechanism that manifests as a cynical or impersonal attitude toward others and one's work, thereby reducing the emotional labour toward others and one's work, reducing the emotional labour required and making job demands appear more manageable. *Cynicism,* a negative outlook that typically arises from exhaustion, operates as a coping strategy to address emotional depletion. Consequently, cognitive distancing emerges as a rapid response to exhaustion and demonstrates a consistent relationship with burnout across various professions (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

The final dimension, *reduced efficacy*, captures the diminishing sense of competence and success within one's professional role (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This aspect of burnout impacts personal accomplishment and job satisfaction, representing the self-evaluative component of the syndrome. Reduced efficacy is inherently tied to emotional exhaustion and cynicism, as both factors generally diminish one's perceived and actual effectiveness of their role. The development of burnout reflects a multifaceted process, wherein exhaustion typically gives rise to depersonalization and cynicism, ultimately resulting in a weakened sense of self-efficacy and a cycle of further exhaustion (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Notably, burnout can extend beyond work, spilling into personal life by impacting individual’s physical and mental health and limiting the capacity to engage fully across different life domains, thereby compounding its detrimental

impact (Koenig et al., 2018; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). Thus, burnout constitutes a progressive erosion of functioning and well-being, with broad implications for occupational and public health.

Reflecting Freudenberger's (1974) original framing, contemporary research further supports that burnout arises from both individual vulnerabilities and systemic and organizational conditions (Aronsson et al., 2017; Mäkikangas et al., 2021; Sokal et al., 2025; Tei et al., 2014). In one meta-analysis, Aronsson et al. (2017) identified high demands, large workload, lack of professional control, limited reward, and job insecurity as key predictors of burnout across occupations. While effect sizes were moderate, their prevalence across the workforce signals population-level implications. These findings position burnout as a systemic issue requiring organizational and policy-level interventions (e.g., supportive structures, organizational safety, and collegial relationships) rather than a purely individual failing (Aronsson et al., 2017; Gaspar et al., 2025; Räsänen et al., 2020; Sokal et al., 2025).

Alongside this, work enthusiasm or engagement is often viewed as a protective factor and is often conceptualized as the opposite end of the burnout continuum (Luna et al., 2023). Work engagement is defined as a positive psychological state encompassing three dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption. *Vigour* refers to high levels of energy, mental resilience, persistence, and a willingness to invest effort in one's work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, p. 15). *Dedication* reflects a strong involvement in work, characterized by purposefulness, significance, and enthusiasm. *Absorption* describes being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's tasks, where time passes quickly and detachment from work becomes difficult (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, p. 15). Work engagement has consistently been linked to positive outcomes, including better health, higher job satisfaction, improved performance, lower stress, and greater overall life

satisfaction (Luna et al., 2023). Supporting this, research shows that greater distress among helping professionals is associated with lower engagement levels (Jenaro et al., 2011). Paradoxically, high motivation and emotional investment in work may also increase vulnerability to burnout when demands outweigh available resources (Tei et al., 2014; van Dierendonck et al., 2005). Taken together, burnout is best understood as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of the individual and broader contextual conditions. This framing provides a foundation for examining burnout in teaching, where systemic pressures are particularly acute, and will be further explored through the lens of the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Teacher Burnout

In the teaching profession, burnout often manifests as emotional exhaustion and cognitive distortions, leading to broadly negative attitudes toward students, parents, and administrators, as well as a diminished sense of accomplishment in one's professional role (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Research indicates that teacher burnout strongly predicts lower self-efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived health and a greater intention to leave the profession (Agyapong, Dias, et al., 2024). This erosion of well-being directly undermines educational quality, as teaching remains among the professions most vulnerable to burnout. For example, a national United States Gallup survey (2022) revealed that Kindergarten to grade 12 teachers experience burnout rates 14% higher than those in other sectors, with 44% of teachers reporting burnout compared to 31% in healthcare and 22% in community social services (Marken & Agrawal, 2022). Other comparative studies have similarly shown that teachers are more susceptible to burnout than other helping professions (Nwoko et al., 2023). These consistently elevated rates, which have persisted since the early 2000s, escalated further during the COVID-19 pandemic, as long-standing systemic issues and expanding professional

expectations intensified (Gunn et al., 2023; T. Pressley et al., 2021). As the education sector continues to navigate the post-pandemic landscape, recent research confirms that educator burnout and stress continue to rise (Devers et al., 2024).

Burnout is linked to declines in essential classroom practices, like lesson planning and fostering adaptive learning environments: leading to adverse student social, behavioural and academic outcomes (Herman et al., 2018). Teaching, inherently a relational endeavour, relies on meaningful social connections between educators and learners to facilitate effective learning (Hargreaves, 1998). Burnout disrupts this relational foundation by impairing educators' capacity to engage in the emotional labour inherent to teaching, largely due to the depersonalization and reduced self-efficacy that accompany it (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020; Richards et al., 2018). In a study of 380 teachers and 8,000 students, Arens & Morin (2016) found a direct, negative relationship between teachers' emotional exhaustion and students' academic achievement, satisfaction, and perceived teacher support.

The concept of emotional labour was introduced by Hochschild (2012) in *The Managed Heart,* describing the regulation of emotional expressions to conform to an organization's "feeling rules." These explicit and implicit norms dictate how a "good" employee should display emotions in professional interactions. Unlike other person-centred professions that involve short-term contact, teachers engage in long-term, emotional management with parents, students, staff, and stakeholders, requiring both frequency and duration in emotional regulation. Teachers who effectively manage their emotions and establish close relationships with students report higher levels of personal accomplishment and well-being (Corbin et al., 2019).

The onset of burnout has been linked to numerous individual factors, including demographic characteristics, personality traits, and work-related attitudes (Maslach et al., 2001).

Age is a significant predictor in most burnout research, including teaching, with younger employees reporting higher burnout levels than their older counterparts, suggesting that burnout risk is heightened earlier in one's career and likely associated with experiences (Agyapong, Dias, et al., 2024; Haley et al., 2013; Maslach et al., 2001). Relationship status also appears influential, as earlier research found that single individuals are more prone to burnout, while recent findings suggest that women in relationships may be at greater risk of depersonalization than single women (Agyapong, Dias, et al., 2024; Maslach et al., 2001). Personality characteristics further contribute to teachers' vulnerability to burnout. For instance, individuals with an external locus of control, meaning those who attribute outcomes to chance or external circumstances, are more susceptible to burnout than those with an internal locus, who attribute success to their own abilities and efforts (Maslach et al., 2001). In addition, research examining the Big Five personality domains demonstrates that, aside from agreeableness, all traits are positively associated with teacher effectiveness; while emotional stability, extraversion, and conscientiousness are negatively associated with burnout, underscoring the influence of personality on both performance and well-being (Z. Liu et al., 2022; McCrae & John, 1992).

While much of the burnout literature historically identified gender differences, often suggesting that women are more susceptible to burnout than men, findings within teaching reveal a more nuanced reality (Agyapong et al., 2024; Maslach et al., 2001). Evidence indicates that men and women teachers experience burnout differently, rather than disproportionately (Agyapong et al., 2024). Men are about two and a half times more likely to exhibit cynicism and depersonalization, whereas emotional exhaustion tends to be more pronounced among women. These findings suggest that although the overall prevalence of burnout may not differ significantly by gender, its manifestations do (Agyapong et al., 2024). Research on the

experiences and mental health of non-cisgender teachers remains limited, highlighting a critical gap in understanding how gender diversity shapes occupational stress and burnout within educational contexts (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017; Dow, 2020). Recognizing burnout's detrimental effects, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and governments advocate for both organizational and individual interventions aimed at enhancing job satisfaction, preventing and addressing burnout, and ultimately ensuring both educator well-being and student academic success (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020; Herman et al., 2018).

The Job Demands-Resources Model

The JD-R model is a leading framework for understanding how workplace stressors contribute to burnout through the interplay of stress and motivation (Demerouti et al., 2001). In this model, burnout aligns with Maslach et al.'s (1997) definition, integrating the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and reduced self-efficacy. These symptoms emerge when psychological, physical, social, or organizational demands exceed available resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Synthesizing over two decades of knowledge from various theories of occupational burnout and engagement, including job characteristics theory, job demands-control theory, effort-reward imbalance model, and conservation of resources theory, JD-R stands out for its comprehensiveness, flexibility, broad applicability, and strong empirical support (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hobfoll, 1989; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Unlike frameworks that emphasize specific stressors or relational imbalances, the JD-R accommodates any job characteristic, making it well suited to the complex and variable nature of teaching (Bakker et al., 2023). By integrating both health-impairment and motivational processes, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of teacher well-being than unidimensional stress models. Other frameworks, such as the job characteristics theory, Social Cognitive theory, and Self-

Determination theory (SDT), offer insights into mechanisms like resource loss, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation, yet tend to examine these in isolation (Bandura, 1997; Hobfoll, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The JD-R model's adaptability, flexibility, and validation across occupational contexts make it an appropriate foundation for examining coping, burnout, and resilience among ECTs (Agyapong, da Luz Dias, et al., 2024; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Dicke et al., 2018).

According to the JD-R theory, burnout and work engagement emerge from the dynamic interaction between job demands and available resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). When job demands are high and resources are low, burnout is likely to develop; conversely, abundant resources foster engagement and motivation (Camacho et al., 2021; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli, 2017). *Job demands* refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that require sustained effort and are therefore associated with physiological or psychological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). These demands may be *general*, experienced across teaching contexts (e.g., lesson planning, assessment, and relationship building), or *differential*, varying among teachers (e.g., workload, class size, interpersonal support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Saks et al., 2022). In contrast, *job resources* are characteristics of work that assist in achieving professional goals, reduce the impact of demands, and promote personal growth and learning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Such resources may include supportive relationships, a perception of fairness, and a belief in the meaningfulness of teaching (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). Together, job demands and resources are closely tied to the fulfillment of basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, core elements necessary for optimal human functioning (R. J. Collie, 2023a). A common issue in the JD-R literature is misunderstanding the concepts of job demands and resources (Bakker et al.,

2023). For example, a low score on a job demand is not a resource, nor is a low score on a resource a demand.

Educational Demands & Resources

Research indicates that for teachers, the most common job demands associated with burnout include excessive workload, time pressure, and emotional labour, coupled with insufficient resources (Agyapong et al., 2024; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Collie et al., 2023). Among these, workload is one of the most frequently cited demands in the literature on teacher burnout. Data-driven accountability systems, designed to enhance student outcomes, have simultaneously increased teachers' workloads and diminished professional autonomy through heightened standardization (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Another factor contributing to teachers' ongoing work demands is the lack of training and resources to properly support the inclusive education movement, which has been widely adopted across many countries including Canada (Friesen et al., 2023; Gray et al., 2017). The commitment to inclusion was formally established by UNESCO in 1994, affirming that all students, regardless of ability, have the right to access their local education system in a general classroom or a least restrictive environment, alongside age-appropriate peers (Demerouti et al., 2001; Kefallinou et al., 2020; Kurto & Asaro-Saddler, 2025). Historically, individuals with disabilities or unique learning needs have been excluded from equitable educational opportunities; thus, this global movement represents a pivotal shift toward more inclusive and just educational practices, emphasizing individualized support to promote every student's success (Friesen et al., 2023).

Within this model, increasing emphasis has been placed on teachers' personal responsibility for student performance (Gray et al., 2017; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). A challenge in learning and implementing inclusive practices effectively, such as universal

design for learning and differentiated instruction, is the increased classroom demands that may impact teacher stress and burnout (Friesen et al., 2023). Many teachers report feeling inadequately prepared and supported to meet the diverse mental health and learning needs now present in classrooms (*Alberta Teachers' Association*, 2025; Friesen et al., 2023; Gray et al., 2017; Kendrick et al., 2020; McCrimmon, 2015). Consequently, many teachers are managing increasing workloads with an ever-changing number of diverse students and an ever-decreasing amount of support and resources to assist them in the classroom, leading to an inability to uphold the educational rights of all students, and creating a prevailing sense of failure for many educators (Gray et al., 2017).

Empirical evidence further underscores the consequences of these increasing demands. In a national study of over 25,000 Canadians, teachers reported working 50 to 55 hours per week, with 70 percent experiencing high levels of chronic stress and 47 percent indicating significant depressive symptoms (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013). Similarly, research in Saskatchewan linked poor work-life balance to declining job satisfaction and elevated burnout levels (Froese-Germain, 2014). More recently, a qualitative study by the Alberta Teachers' Association (2023) involving 65 teachers who had left the profession revealed that 91% identified work-life balance as the primary factor influencing their decision to leave. Achieving balance and managing workload are further complicated by the personal and societal expectations placed on teachers. Teaching is frequently regarded as a calling, a perception that heightens pressure to meet high-performance expectations, and teaching is often viewed as a "take-home job" that demands an increasing amount of personal investment and unpaid labour (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020; Hulme & Wood, 2022). Although viewing one's profession as a calling has been found to have positive effects, such as increased motivation, job satisfaction, and occupational commitment; some

recent evidence indicates that chronic sacrifice of one's needs, particularly within the personal sphere, predicts greater psychological distress and undermines the resources required for sustainable functioning compared to professional self-sacrifice (Houlfort et al., 2022). When needs are chronically deferred to accommodate professional demands, teachers may gradually deplete the psychological foundations necessary to cope effectively (Houlfort et al., 2022).

In addition, since the COVID-19 pandemic, public sentiment toward teachers and the education system has become increasingly negative, further diminishing personal resources (Hargreaves, 2021; Kim et al., 2024). Personal resources refer to factors that influence one's self-evaluation of their ability to control and impact their environment and that directly contribute to how job demands and resources are perceived (Granziera et al., 2022). Common examples of personal resources include adaptability, humour, optimism, and self-efficacy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Granziera et al., 2021). Integrating concepts from the conservation of resources theory (COR), which proposes that individuals are motivated to protect existing resources and acquire new ones, further strengthens the explanatory power of the JD-R model (Dicke et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). According to Bandura (1997), individuals vary in their perceptions of and adjust to their environments based on differing levels of personal resources, which are developed through reciprocal interactions with their surroundings. These resources serve multiple functions: they buffer the effects of environmental stressors, connect positive contextual factors (e.g., autonomy, fairness, social support) to beneficial organizational outcomes, and shape how individuals interpret and respond to workplace demands (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). For example, a longitudinal study of beginning teachers by Dicke et al. (2018) found that personal resources, specifically self-efficacy, moderated the relationship between job demands and strain, such that teachers with higher

personal resources were better able to buffer the impact of challenging work conditions on their well-being.

A study by Fiorilli et al. (2019) examined the relationship between the JD-R model and teachers' emotional intelligence, finding that emotional intelligence moderated the effects of job demands and resources on burnout. Specifically, higher emotional intelligence reduced the negative impact of job demands and amplified the positive influence of job resources, supporting the idea that enhancing personal resources can improve teacher well-being. Collie et al. (2020) also explored how personal resources mitigate job demands and contextual factors such as time pressure and perceived autonomy support. Their study focused on two key personal capacities, *adaptability*, defined as the ability to adjust thoughts, actions, and emotions in novel, changing, or uncertain situations, and *buoyancy*, the capacity to manage everyday challenges and setbacks. Together, these capacities play a critical role in teachers' psychological functioning. Findings showed that perceived autonomy support was positively associated with both adaptability and buoyancy and negatively related to time pressure. Moreover, adaptability was positively correlated with organizational commitment and extra-role behaviour, whereas buoyancy was negatively associated with failure avoidance (Collie et al., 2020).

In addition to job resources, personal resources play a critical role in mediating the effects of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, these resources remain under-researched, and their mediating functions are not yet fully understood (Yao & Abdullah, 2025). Although personal resources can be developed and strengthened through education, interventions, and targeted training, they cannot, on their own, resolve broader systemic issues (Sokal et al., 2025). Meaningful systemic change, such as increasing job resources, is essential for promoting teacher resilience and supporting long-term retention in the profession. Some

previous literature has conflated coping behaviours with personal resources; however, personal resources are aspects of the self, such as belief in the self or cognitions, not behaviours (Bakker et al., 2023).

As demonstrated by the JD-R model, complex and escalating job demands substantially contribute to burnout. Yet, research indicates that when teachers have access to sufficient job resources, such as positive interpersonal relationships and classroom support, and maintain high levels of personal resources, they experience lower emotional exhaustion and greater resilience in the face of workplace stressors (Granziera et al., 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021).

Attrition

Unaddressed teacher stress and burnout not only diminish well-being but also create the conditions under which professionals begin to consider leaving their roles (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). In this sense, attrition can be viewed as a downstream consequence of prolonged strain, insufficient support, and unmet professional needs. Attrition is a significant issue across almost all occupations, and remains a central topic in understanding workforce quality (Clandinin et al., 2015). Clandinin et al. (2015) describe it as a complex negotiation between individual and contextual factors. Similarly, Karsenti & Collin (2013) emphasize that attrition, like burnout, arises from a dynamic interplay of interdependent influences rather than a single cause. Historically, research has focused primarily on increasing teacher retention and improving occupational fit (Kelly et al., 2019). However, contemporary perspectives emphasize "quality retention," in which professionals' well-being, commitment, and intrinsic motivation are maintained throughout their careers (Kelly et al., 2019).

Enhancing personal well-being through developing the self can serve as an antidote to stress, burnout, and attrition (Qin et al., 2024). Within education, teacher well-being is integral to

effectiveness, shaping attitudes, creativity, resilience, and the overall learning environment (Qin et al., 2024; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Conversely, diminished well-being can undermine classroom management, instructional quality, and relationships, leading to increased behavioural challenges and reduced academic achievement (Qin et al., 2024). Therefore, fostering well-being involves a reciprocal process in which individual development and systemic change reinforce one another.

The PERMA model developed by Seligman (2011) conceptualizes well-being as a multidimensional construct comprising five elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. Stemming from positive psychology, each element contributes to well-being independently, is pursued for its own sake, and can be empirically measured. In teaching, for example, positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, and enthusiasm, enhance both educator and student experiences, while engagement fosters high-quality instruction and pedagogical creativity (Qin et al., 2024). Strong relationships with students, colleagues, and the broader community reinforce communication and collaboration, creating a more collective educational environment. A sense of meaning, rooted in shaping future generations, sustains motivation, particularly in the face of adversity (Seligman, 2011). Achievement, reflected in professional goals and accomplishments, further reinforces teacher efficacy and growth.

Research underscores the effectiveness of PERMA-based interventions in enhancing teacher well-being and instructional practices, highlighting how individual flourishing can act as a catalyst for organizational and systemic change (Seligman, 2011; Qin et al., 2024). This bottom-up approach demonstrates that when the educational system intentionally integrates well-being principles, it cultivates a thriving learning environment that enhances teacher and student

outcomes but also lays the foundation for sustained systemic reform and long-term retention (Qin et al., 2024).

Teacher Attrition

Teacher retention is fundamental to addressing teacher shortages, as recruitment efforts are ultimately ineffective if many educators leave soon after entering the profession (Van den Borre et al., 2021). A holistic approach is required to address the issue, focusing on factors like motivation, well-being, training, working conditions, and social status (UNESCO, 2024). The ongoing trend of teacher attrition has been described as an international "silent crisis" that incurs tremendous emotional and financial costs on individuals and education systems (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019, 2022). To illustrate, continuous recruitment, hiring, and training to replace teachers who exit prematurely is financially unsustainable and demoralizing (Räsänen et al., 2020). Moreover, high turnover produces long-term consequences for instructional quality and student achievement, raising serious concerns for educational stability and equity (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Van den Borre et al., 2021).

Beyond actual turnover, teacher turnover intentions serve as a critical early indicator of attrition. As Räsänen et al. (2020) explain, turnover intentions are commonly used in place of actual turnover in education research because they reflect teachers' present perceptions and judgements on their work situations. These intentions are distinct from, but strongly related to, actual turnover, as they have been found to moderately predict eventual departure from the profession. Even when turnover intentions do not culminate in actual exit, they often manifest as diminished job satisfaction, effort, and instructional quality, which can undermine both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Persistent turnover intention further weakens teachers' capacity to build functional classroom interactions and engage in future-oriented collaboration

with colleagues, eroding professional recognition and the foundations of a constructive, supportive school climate. Hence, turnover intention itself has severe consequences for the quality of instruction, student engagement and achievement, and the cohesion of the professional community (Räsänen et al., 2020).

For many, teaching spans much of one's adult life, shaping both personal and professional growth (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020). Teaching is, therefore, a lifelong endeavour, in which educators inevitably experience changes that will influence their careers and selves over time. Historically, teacher attrition follows a U-shaped pattern, with the highest rates among ECTs (in the first five years) and those nearing retirement (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2023; Gunn et al., 2023; Hellebaut et al., 2023). More experienced teachers often report lower levels of emotional exhaustion, an antecedent to burnout, than ECTs, indicating experience as a protective factor (Hellebaut et al., 2023). Mid-career teacher attrition, by contrast, is commonly associated with a "flat" career structure that limits advancement opportunities (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). External factors such as salary or benefits (e.g., time off) show inconsistent relationships with intention to leave and attrition, suggesting that other factors may play a more decisive role (Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly et al., 2019).

Although retention policies often aim to retain as many teachers as possible at all stages of the career course, attrition among ECTs particularly strains the system (Van den Borre et al., 2021). ECT attrition is a well-documented issue, with estimates ranging from 10% to 50% depending on the country (Kelly et al., 2019; Van den Borre et al., 2021). In Canada, most estimates have cited a range of 30% to 46%, with variation across provinces and territories and within different segments of the teaching profession (Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022). When a mass exodus of ECTs occurs within an education system, there is a reduction in

the quality of education, a loss of invested public resources, a curtailing of innovation and an unsustainable destabilization of the current teacher population (Van den Borre et al., 2021).

Organizational Climate. The organizational climate in which ECTs begin their professional journey significantly influences the likelihood of attrition (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Over time, the teaching role has become increasingly complex (Gunn et al., 2023). Alongside mastering the subject matter they teach and pedagogy, they must also be performers, classroom managers, and administrative workers in an increasingly diverse student body (Gratacós et al., 2023; Gunn et al., 2023; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022). Although the development of these competencies is supposed to be gradual throughout the career lifespan, considerable pressure is placed on ECTs to perform at the same level as their more experienced counterparts (Gratacós et al., 2023; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022). This challenge is compounded by an expanding range of time-limited responsibilities, including frequent evaluations, data-driven assessments, individualized learning plans, and professional development expectations imposed by multiple stakeholders (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). As a result, ECTs must devote additional time and energy to meeting these demands, often extending work beyond formal hours and into personal time, despite limited evidence that such pressure enhance instructional quality or long-term retention (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Darling-Hammon et al., 2012; Gratacós et al., 2023). Moreover, these organizational expectations of professional commitment can foster cultures of self-sacrifice in which prioritizing occupational demands at the expense of personal boundaries becomes normalized, leaving little space for recovery (Hong et al., 2025; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Another major contributor to ECT attrition is job insecurity at career entry, particularly when combined with high work pressure (De Neve & Devos, 2017). This insecurity

encompasses concerns regarding contract renewals, school placements, and the persistent threat of job loss. When starting, ECTs are commonly employed on temporary or probationary contracts as part of an extended selection process that may take years to result in a permanent appointment (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). Such short-term contracts, with fixed end dates, compel teachers to accumulate seniority before attaining occupational security. Unsurprisingly, those working part-time or in temporary roles are more likely to leave the profession altogether. ECTs are also affected by "last-in, first-out" employment practices, which place non-tenured teachers at greater risk of dismissal during budget cuts. As job insecurity intensifies, so too do the emotional and psychological costs of teaching, with ECTs particularly vulnerable to these stressors (De Neve & Devos, 2017). Finally, contextual factors such as school location further shape teachers' experiences of stability and support (Hulme & Wood, 2022). Variations in school composition, size, resources, and geographic setting (urban versus rural) have all been found to influence ECT turnover and attrition (Hulme & Wood, 2022; Ingersoll & Tran, 2023).

Social Justice. There are key social considerations when examining the high rates of burnout and attrition among ECTs, particularly the increasing complexity and diversity of learners within today's classrooms (Gray et al., 2017; Hulme & Wood, 2022). For instance, Sokal et al. (2025) used the JD-R model and an ecological systems framework to explore educators' and students' post-pandemic recovery. Educators report a 20% deficit in internal and external resources to meet job demands. In comparison, 60% to 62% of educators reported that students are demonstrating greater needs (i.e., academic, social, and behavioural) than before the pandemic. Furthermore, 44% of teachers, 68% of principals, 16% of education assistants, and 38% of clinicians report rarely or never meeting their students' needs (Sokal et al., 2025).

Schools in low-income areas experience the highest rates of teacher turnover and attrition. Students in these communities often face trauma, poverty, and violence, contributing to behavioural and emotional challenges that hinder engagement in the classroom (Mills et al., 2025). Consequently, schools must not only support academic development but also provide mental health services, prosocial learning, and emotional growth. These added responsibilities intensify the job's demands and require heightened resilience to manage environmental adversity. On average, experienced educators are better equipped to navigate these complexities and foster student learning as they gain more flexibility and knowledge (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). ECTs frequently report feeling unprepared to manage complex classroom behaviour, which heightens stress and burnout (Hirsch et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). When classroom management difficulties intersect with overcrowded or under-resourced environments, attrition increases as teachers struggle to maintain order and engagement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Unfortunately, these underprivileged schools cannot reap the benefits of retaining long-term teachers because of high turnover and attrition. This, in turn, creates an environment with inexperienced staff who need greater knowledge and experience to effectively meet the complex needs of their students (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022).

This constant turnover disrupts the formation of trusting relationships between staff and students, undermining academic outcomes. Studies show a significant relationship between teacher attrition, challenging student behaviour, disengagement, and conflictive relationships with parents (Kelly et al., 2019). Teachers engage in continual social interactions, making it essential to build positive relationships that facilitate mentalization, the ability to understand students' mental states (Atmaca et al., 2020). To develop this skill, ECTs must balance reliance on mentors with growing self-reliance, fostering reflective thinking, deeper problem-solving, and

a wider repertoire of strategies (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). The challenges faced by ECTs often lead to a "praxis shock," a disorienting gap between pre-service expectations and the realities of teaching (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). The daily life of a teacher often represents a fundamental divergence from the expectations and ideals held prior by students entering the profession, creating disappointment and disillusionment that worsen over time and leading individuals to leave the profession (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020; Koenig et al., 2018).

A key limitation in teacher attrition research is its frequent framing as a "beginning teacher problem," implying that those who leave lack resilience, resourcefulness, or commitment (Schaefer et al., 2012). This narrative oversimplifies the issue by attributing attrition to individual deficits rather than systemic conditions. In contrast, research indicates that many high-quality teachers exit the profession due to dissatisfaction with alterable aspects of the profession (Kelly et al., 2019). For example, Smith and Ulvik (2017) found that those with higher ability and better qualifications, as measured by entrance scores to teacher education and advanced degrees, were more likely to leave the profession, as they are the ones who have the personal resources to find new opportunities that better align with their needs and values. Thus, improving educators' personal resources and well-being alone is insufficient for retention without simultaneous structural and systemic reforms.

Social Support. A lack of social support is closely linked to increased burnout and attrition among ECTs (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). However, beyond support alone, what appears central to ECTs' professional sustainability is a sense of belonging within their school community. Belonging is not merely a desirable feature of workplace culture; it is a fundamental human need and a deeply rooted motivation that permeates thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Allen et al., 2021; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2017). Particularly during periods

of transition, such as entry into the teaching profession, belonging serves as a form of social "vaccine," buffering individuals against self-doubt and uncertainty while facilitating adjustment to new roles and environments (Bjorklund Jr., 2023).

Within school contexts, belonging is cultivated through supportive cultures where ECTs' feel accepted, valued, and recognized both for their professional contributions and as individuals (Bjorklund Jr., 2023). When teachers perceive genuine support from supervisors and colleagues, they are more likely to remain in the profession (Collie et al., 2023; Gunn et al., 2023; Hulme & Wood, 2022). Interpersonal support fosters feelings of recognition and value, reinforcing both personal worth and professional competence, which share a reciprocal relationship with belonging (R. Li & Yao, 2022; Saks et al., 2022). Teachers who feel they belong also report greater self-efficacy, psychological safety, and confidence in their roles, enabling more active and collaborative participation in the school community (Bjorklund Jr., 2023; De Neve & Devos, 2017; Devos et al., 2012).

Belonging in schools is grounded in regular, positive social interactions characterized by trust, shared responsibility, and mutual concern (Bjorklund Jr., 2023). Mentorship, formal collaboration, and opportunities to plan and problem-solve collectively are among the strongest predictors of teacher retention because they provide structured avenues through which belonging is enacted (Li & Yao, 2022; Maslach et al., 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The absence of collegial and administrative support erodes this sense of connection and is strongly associated with burnout and intention to leave (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; 2019). Ineffective social and administrative support can further lead to an "emotional contagion," where the negative attitudes and stress spread among staff, amplifying burnout (Saks et al., 2022).

A longitudinal study of 50 ECTs who either remained in their original schools, transferred to new schools, or left the profession within the first three years revealed that a lack of collegial support was a significant factor for those who exited teaching (De Neve & Devos, 2017). Schools with high ECT retention created a collaborative environment where teachers collectively took responsibility for school improvement, building a sense of unity (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). These schools provide opportunities for staff to share ideas, actively problem-solve, and critically reflect on teaching practices and challenges in an ongoing, reflective, and inclusive way. An impediment to receiving this type of support is the "egg-crate" model, where teachers are isolated within their classrooms with limited interaction with colleagues and supervisors, exacerbating feelings of isolation and restricting opportunities for professional collaboration (Kutsyuruba et al., 2022).

Teacher education programs often underestimate the importance of relationship-building and community participation for new teachers' well-being and retention (Bardach et al., 2022; Mayer et al., 2017). Close, positive relationships are protective against emotional exhaustion, fostering feelings of fulfilment and commitment to teaching (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Induction and mentoring programs that are built into teachers' schedules so as not to increase occupational demands can address the support gaps for ECTs by guiding them through their initial years in the profession and helping them confidently navigate the transition (Kelly et al., 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022). One meta-analysis found that nearly all studies on induction programs reported increased satisfaction, commitment and retention among ECTs who participated (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Strengthening early career support through structured mentorship and collaborative school cultures is therefore vital for reducing attrition and sustaining teacher well-being (Kelly et al., 2019).

Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to achieve desired outcomes and is grounded in social cognitive theory (SCT; Bandura, 1997; De Neve & Devos, 2017). SCT emphasizes the dynamic interaction between personal factors (e.g., cognitive, affective, and biological), alongside environmental influences and behaviours, to explain and predict how individuals' self-perceptions shape their actions. Self-efficacy influence's goal selection, effort, perseverance, and resilience and is not a fixed trait but rather situation and task-specific, adapting according to context (De Neve & Devos, 2017). In teaching, educators who see themselves as more efficacious (competent) are more likely to remain in their teaching roles than those who do not (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Teachers who have a stronger sense of efficacy perceive difficulties as challenges rather than threats and self-regulate, investing their efforts in the face of adversity and directing them toward problem resolution (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012).

Self-efficacy develops across the lifespan as they integrate information from and are influenced by four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal (social) persuasion, and physiological and emotional states (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012). Among these, *mastery experiences* gained through direct performance and practice are the most influential, as they build confidence through personal success. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2014) found that among 2,569 teachers, those who were confident in their abilities reported higher job satisfaction and lower emotional exhaustion. SCT views learning as occurring in a social context, with dynamic and reciprocal interactions among a person's characteristics, behaviour, and environment (Bandura, 1997). When a change occurs in one of these areas it will influence the others, thus highlighting the complex and influential interactions among the factors. Attributing successes and failures to practiced experiences strongly shapes self-efficacy expectations.

Self-efficacy also influences cognitive processes, including goal setting, visualization of positive and negative scenarios, and the quality of analytical thinking (Bandura, 1995). Research indicates a positive correlation between high self-efficacy and openness to innovative teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and attentiveness to students' diverse needs (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Additionally, self-efficacy influences responses to challenging situations, reducing stress and fostering proactive problem-solving (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). Teachers with high self-efficacy are less likely to perceive stressors as insurmountable and more likely to seek external support, such as assistance from colleagues, which can help prevent burnout (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

Consistent with the connection between self-efficacy and retention, a study interviewing beginning teachers who stayed or left the profession found that efficacy beliefs in classroom management were pivotal in their decision-making (De Neve & Devos, 2017). Those who left often cited a lack of confidence in managing classroom behaviour as a contributing factor. Similarly, Fernet et al. (2012) found that Canadian teachers experienced psychological strain when school system demands infringed on their classroom autonomy and self-efficacy. Individuals with greater self-efficacy are also less likely to experience burnout, possibly because they are more likely to view stress and fatigue as energizing challenges rather than obstacles (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012). Professional identity also affects teachers' ability to navigate complexities within the field, as self-perceptions of agency, self-efficacy, and effectiveness shape their sense of who they are as teachers (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020).

For ECTs entering the profession, transitioning from education to practice is often challenging (Kutsyuruba et al., 2022). One of the earliest ways to support ECTs sense of self-efficacy during this transition is through teacher education and training (Van den Borre et al.,

2021). Previous research has found that ECTs who feel prepared also intend to stay in the profession for longer (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; DeAngelis et al., 2013). Preservice preparation programs and professional development should emphasize cultivating knowledge, skills, and beliefs that increase an educator's understanding of the current school climate and their ability to support diverse learning and development (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Specifically, educators must be equipped to address, or at least recognize, signs of childhood stress, adversity, and trauma (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020).

One promising avenue for supporting ECTs is expanding training in trauma-informed approaches, which shifts the focus from identifying what is going wrong to recognizing what is needed in the moment (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Such training equips ECTs with the necessary tools to learn from their students' experiences, foster healthy relationships, and actively disrupt the negative effects of trauma (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). In addition, professional development should include instruction on identifying conscious and unconscious biases, which can manifest in various aspects of school life, from tracking systems and disciplinary measures to decisions regarding accessing appropriate supports and resources (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Increasing awareness of personal and professional biases can be beneficial for addressing systemic issues and enhance one's professional self-efficacy in managing students' mental health needs (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020).

Equally important is the emphasis on educators' well-being, particularly in the areas of stress management and mental health awareness (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Providing ECTs with opportunities to cultivate these skills enhances their confidence and performance, reinforcing self-efficacy. Mindfulness training, which fosters present-focused awareness, has been found to reduce distress, improve adaptability, and may be especially

valuable in the fast-paced, high-demand classroom environment (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). By enabling educators to respond to challenges with composure and intentionality, mindfulness strengthens self-efficacy and, consequently, resilience and retention.

Finally, prior research shows that ECTs who feel prepared tend to stay in the profession longer, potentially due to enhanced resilience in the face of challenges (Gunn et al., 2023; Kelly et al., 2019). To highlight, DeAngelis et al. (2013) tracked ECTs in the first two years of teaching. They found that teachers who were more satisfied with their preparation programs were significantly less likely to leave the profession after their first year. Likewise, Ingersoll et al. (2014) found that applied teaching programs emphasizing practical experience, feedback, and classroom observation significantly reduced first-year attrition rates. Preparing ECTs for the high likelihood of burnout requires proactive prevention training (Dubois & Mistretta, 2018). This involves informing student teachers about the realities of the cost of caring and educating them on the risk factors within themselves and their colleagues. As a result, empowering ECTs with the necessary knowledge and training can help them recognize when they need help coping and seek it before becoming unable to work.

Purpose

Teacher shortages, burnout, and attrition remain pervasive global challenges, with many educators leaving the profession before reaching their full professional potential (Mombaers et al., 2023). Society relies on teachers to perform at their intellectual and emotional best to ensure the delivery of high-quality education. For ECTs, a key aspect of professional development involves learning to balance these high expectations with the stressors inherent to their new roles and environments (Gratacós et al., 2023; Nwoko et al., 2023; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021).

Within the Canadian context, a growing body of research has examined teacher well-being, resilience, stress, and burnout; however, these studies have largely focused on broader teacher populations or specific contextual periods rather than the early career stage. For instance, national and provincial studies conducted during and following the COVID-19 pandemic highlight elevated burnout, declining mental health, and the critical role of perceived systemic support in shaping teacher well-being (Gadermann et al., 2023; Sokal et al., 2020; 2025). Similarly, research examining stress and coping across teachers and school administrators points to persistent occupational demands, including increasing administrative responsibilities, classroom complexity, and limited access to resources, while other Canadian studies have demonstrated clear associations between burnout, resilience, and stress across general teacher samples (Agyapong et al., 2024; Woloshyn et al., 2023). Although these findings provide important insight into the structural and psychological conditions influencing teacher well-being in Canada, they do not fully capture how coping operates within the early career period, nor how these strategies relate to key outcomes such as resilience, burnout, and intention to leave among ECTs specifically.

A significant gap in the literature concerns the coping strategies currently employed by Canadian ECTs. To date, no study has explicitly examined the coping strategies of this group, and few have explored how coping relates to critical well-being factors, specifically when it comes to teacher resilience (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Wang et al., 2022; Wang & Hall, 2021). Understanding these relationships is crucial, as effective coping not only shapes how stress is experienced but can also buffer its negative effects. Conversely, ECTs who lack adaptive coping strategies may be more vulnerable to feeling overwhelmed by professional demands.

Wang et al.'s (2022) aforementioned study identified coping profiles among Canadian teachers with an average of 15 years of experience, thus leaving the coping strategies of ECTs underexplored. Research indicates that teachers' coping capacities evolve alongside their professional identities and career stages, which are closely intertwined with personal circumstances, values, and external expectations placed upon them (Gu & Day, 2013). Therefore, developing resilience and effective coping may present greater challenges for ECTs, who are at elevated risk of burnout and attrition before they have had the opportunity to develop into highly capable veteran teachers (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020).

The present study addresses these gaps through a mixed-methods design aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of ECT coping strategies and their relationships with resilience, stress, burnout, and intention to leave. Few studies have used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to coping research, despite the potential for such methods to yield richer, person-centred, and exploratory insights (Wang et al., 2022). A mixed-methods approach enables both the identification of statistical relationships and the exploration of contextual nuances,

offering a more holistic understanding of this sample of Canadian ECTs' coping experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The research questions guiding the current study are as follows:

1. What coping strategies are early career teachers currently utilizing?
2. What are the relationships between identified early career teachers coping strategies and reported resilience, burnout, and intentions to leave?
3. How do early career teachers perceive the effectiveness of their coping strategies, and what barriers do they perceive in implementing them effectively?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This chapter outlines the study's methodology, including the participants, materials, procedures, and methods of analysis. A cross-sectional, single-phase, convergent mixed-methods design was employed, in which quantitative data and qualitative responses were collected and analysed simultaneously, then compared and integrated to provide a deeper understanding of the research questions (Creswell & Plano, 2018). The integration of both types of information was guided by pragmatism, a philosophical stance that prioritizes the research question as the central element of mixed-methods inquiry. Pragmatism supports a broader perspective by acknowledging both singular and multiple realities and emphasizing practical approaches to answering the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Researcher Reflexive Statement. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my positionality as I recognize how personal experience and bias can impact the meaning-making process (Darwin, 2020). As a white, cisgender female, young adult, I am aware that my intersecting identities influence how I perceive and interpret the world, and thus, the research process. Over the past decade, I have worked in various mental health roles and am currently completing graduate studies in counselling psychology within the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge. Although, I have experienced the school system as a student and as a youth worker, I do not have a formal professional background in education. Therefore, I approach this research as an external observer, highlighting the importance of centring teachers' voices in this study.

Participants

A total of 407 teachers were initially recruited through purposive and snowball sampling via social media between June and September 2025. The quantitative dataset was subsequently

cleaned using Qualtrics (2021) fraud-detection metrics, removal of cases not meeting inclusion criteria based on demographic questions, failure of attention-check items, completion of fewer than 96% of the survey (excluding optional open-ended questions), and missing responses on more than three scale items. Qualitative responses were screened through visual inspection, and incomplete or skipped answers were excluded. Following this process, the final sample consisted of 311 teachers, reflecting the removal of 23.6% of the original sample.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Although there are multiple definitions of a teacher, the current study defined a teacher as being employed in a Kindergarten to 12 school district and meeting the provincial qualifications for a teaching certificate. There was no cap on the number of participants, resulting in an initial sample of 407 respondents prior to the survey closing. Eligible participants were Canadian ECTs within their first five years of practice. This range was selected because research indicates that the first five years of teaching are often critical for burnout and attrition, with most teachers who leave the profession doing so during this stage of their careers (Gunn et al., 2023). Due to the study's qualitative component (open-ended questions), only participants proficient in English were included.

Social Media Recruitment

A recruitment poster (Appendix A) and the online Qualtrics (2021) survey link were distributed across several social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Threads. Participants were encouraged to share the study with peers who might be interested (Heckathorn, 2011). On Facebook and Reddit, access to post study materials was obtained through moderators of private teacher groups. The use of social media as a recruitment tool has become increasingly common, particularly when targeting specific

populations (Gearhart, 2015). Social media provides a broad reach due to its accessibility and visibility, is cost-effective, and facilitates access to and recruitment of diverse participants (Darko et al., 2022; Gelinas et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018). Moreover, it can provide greater equality of opportunity for potential respondents, and some research has found few differences between data collected online and that obtained through traditional self-report methods (King et al., 2014).

While purposive sampling is useful and commonly used, it does have certain limitations. Namely, its potential impact on generalizability due to potential self-selection bias (Benedict et al., 2019). To illustrate, the salience of, and level of interest, in the survey topic may influence participation and, consequently, responses (Bethlehem, 2010). To mitigate this potential bias, neutral language was used in the recruitment materials, which were posted to both general and teacher-specific platforms. Sharing the recruitment poster on broader channels (e.g., the researcher's personal LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook pages) was intended to enhance the representativeness of the underlying population (Benedict et al., 2019). A further limitation of online recruitment is the reduced control over participant eligibility (Oudat & Bakas, 2023). To address this concern, the recruitment poster and consent form were designed to ensure that potential participants were aware of the inclusion criteria. Nonetheless, caution should always be exercised when interpreting and applying findings to a wider population (Benedict et al., 2019; Oudat & Bakas, 2023).

Measures

The survey consisted of four scales and a questionnaire totalling 85 items. Dispersed within the survey were two reliability checks ("choose the ☺ face" and "choose option C") to control for participant fatigue and related response effects. Counterbalancing was programmed in

Qualtrics (2021) to minimize order effects and strengthen the internal validity of the measurement sequence. Open-ended questions were included at the end of the survey to elicit person-centred, and holistic insights into participants lived experiences. Most instruments selected for the study were free and open access, except for the Multidimensional Teachers' Resilience Scale (MTRS; Mansfield et al., 2016). The researcher contacted the authors and received written permission from Dr. Mansfield to use the MTRS. The following measures were included in the survey.

Demographics

As previously mentioned, although the term *teacher* encompasses multiple professional contexts, the present study defined a teacher as an individual employed within a Kindergarten to grade 12 school district who meets the provincial qualifications of a teaching certificate. Participants were asked a series of demographic questions identified in the literature as relevant to understanding variation in coping, resilience, burnout, and intention to leave (Aulén et al., 2021; Folkman et al., 1986; R. Li & Yao, 2022; Shaukat et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022). These demographics included age, gender, relationship status, and the highest level of education attained. In addition, participants responded to questions about their current employment circumstances, including formal employment status, years of teaching experience, teaching assignment (e.g., grade levels, contract type), and geographic location (urban versus rural).

The Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (BCI; Carver, 1997).

The Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (BCI; Appendix C) was used to measure ECT coping strategies. It is a 28-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess both effective and ineffective responses to stressful life events. Within the questionnaire, *coping* is defined broadly as the effort to minimize distress associated with negative life experiences

(Carver, 1997). The scale has been widely used across research and professional settings to examine both dispositional and situational coping and remains one of the most frequently employed coping measures in educational and psychological contexts (Carver et al., 1989; DeDios-Stern et al., 2017; Hanfstingl et al., 2023; Solberg et al., 2022). Therefore, it has contributed significantly to the advancement of coping theory and measurement (Hanfstingl et al., 2023). When previously applied to teacher populations, the scale has demonstrated reliable and valid performance across cultural contexts (García et al., 2018).

The instrument consists of 14 subscales, each composed of two items, rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("I have not been doing this at all") to 4 ("I have been doing this a lot"; Carver, 1997). Consistent with best practice recommendations, the situational version of the BCI was administered, instructing participants to report how they had been coping with current work-related stressors rather than their general coping tendencies (Solberg & Shukla, 2024). This distinction is methodologically important given the evidence that a substantial proportion of studies fail to specify which version of the measure is used, contributing to interpretive ambiguity (Solberg & Shukla, 2024).

Construction Methodology

The BCI was developed as a shorter, more recent version of the original 60-item COPE scale (Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989). Grounded in the transactional model of stress and coping, the original COPE distinguished between two broad functional domains: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989; Folkman et al., 1986; Schlesier & Westphal, 2024). The scale was shortened due to item redundancy and participant/client frustration in completing the longer form. Furthermore, a new *Self-Blame* subscale was added

based on evidence that self-directed negative appraisal is a critical predictor of poor adjustment under stress (Carver et al., 1989).

To assess the psychometric properties of the shortened instrument, the authors conducted an exploratory factor analysis and identified nine factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, accounting for 72.4% of the variance. Reliability analyses showed that, despite the two-item structure, most subscales demonstrated internal consistency coefficients of .60 or above .90, with all meeting or exceeding .50 except for *Venting, Denial,* and *Acceptance.* These findings support the internal structure of the shortened instrument, while also identifying subscales that may exhibit comparatively lower reliability (Carver, 1997).

Many studies employ the concrete subscales of the BCI, while others attempt to extract higher-order coping dimensions. Although Carver et al. (1997; 1989) acknowledged that such secondary dimensions are conceptually possible, they did not provide a specific method of deriving them. Consequently, there is little consensus regarding the higher-order factor structure of the BCI, with substantial variation in analytic approaches (Hanfstingl et al., 2023). Many have classified coping in terms of functionality, adaptive and maladaptive, based on the original theoretical foundations of the BCI (Carver et al., 1989). Bose et al. (2015) proposed a four-factor structure that resembling Carver's concepts, including problem-focused (active coping, planning), avoidant (substance use, behavioural disengagement, denial), socially supported coping (emotional support, instrumental support, venting), and socially supported coping (emotional support, instrumental support, venting), and emotion-focused coping (acceptance, humour, positive reframing, religion). However, Hanfstingl et al. (2023) and Neufeld and Malin (2021) found no empirical evidence for hierarchical structure after analysing four common

theoretical and factor analysis approaches, concluding that the original 14 subscales provide the most accurate representation. Recent psychometric evidence further supports this position.

Psychometric Evidence

Across studies evidence for the reliability and validity of the BCI demonstrates a generally robust, though somewhat variable, psychometric profile (Rodrigues et al. 2022). Kato (2015) reported a median alpha of .75 across 765 studies, with coefficients ranging from .54 to .91. For example, one study exploring the coping strategies of various caregivers found internal consistency ranging from .72 to .84 among dementia caregivers, and .55 to .75 among caregivers of individuals with advanced cancer, reflecting expected variability across adaptive and avoidant subscales (DeDios-Stern et al., 2017). Test-retest reliability among dementia caregivers was adequate, with intraclass correlations ranging from .44 to .72 over one-and two-year periods, and criterion validity was supported through associations with changes in caregiver burden (r= .32 to .33) and depressive symptoms (r= .59).

Despite this, validation findings remain inconsistent, largely due to the context-dependent nature of coping and the diverse analytic approaches used across studies (Rodrigues et al., 2022). A systematic review of 85 studies documented substantial variation in extracted factor structures, ranging from two to 15 factors, and noted that nearly 30% of studies did not specify whether the situational or dispositional version of the measure was used (Solberg & Shukla, 2024). These reviews highlight concerns regarding inconsistent factor-analytic techniques, item omissions or modifications, and the scarcity of empirically supported second-order models. Evidence for convergent and discriminant validity is also limited with certain subscales such as substance use and religion, often demonstrating weak correlations with other coping domains (Bose et al., 2015). Nevertheless, theoretically coherent patterns emerge, with maladaptive strategies (e.g.,

avoidance) tending to correlate positively with psychopathology, and adaptive strategies (e.g., planning) tending to align with indicators of well-being (Bose et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2018). Together, these findings support the BCI as a reliable and valid measure of coping, while highlighting psychometric complexities that warrant careful consideration in research application.

Reasoning for Use

The BCI was chosen for the study because it offers a theoretically grounded, psychometrically supported, and pragmatic method of assessing the diverse coping strategies that are being used by ECTs. The scale aligns with current understandings of coping as a dynamic, situation-specific process, an approach that works well for the rapidly shifting, emotionally demanding educational context. Its 14 subscales capture a broad spectrum of coping responses, including adaptive strategies (e.g., problem-solving), as well as maladaptive strategies (e.g., behavioural disengagement), allowing for a nuanced exploration of functional and perhaps dysfunctional patterns relevant to burnout, resilience, and intention to leave. This approach aligns with recommendations to preserve the theoretical integrity of the instrument (Hanfstingl et al., 2023).

The brevity of the BCI decreases participant burden, which is essential when surveying teachers who are already experiencing high workload demands. Moreover, the measure has demonstrated widespread use across educational and occupational research, including studies involving teachers, providing a foundation for comparability and interpretive coherence within the broader literature (Stapleton et al., 2020). Despite known psychometric issues, the BCI remains one of the most frequently used and empirically validated instruments assessing coping, making it an appropriate choice.

The Multidimensional Teachers' Resilience Scale (MTRS; Mansfield et al., 2012).

The Multidimensional Teachers' Resilience Scale (MTRS; Appendix D) consists of 26 items that measure four distinct and essential dimensions of teacher resilience. The scale operationalizes teacher resilience as a dynamic, multidimensional construct encompassing emotional (e.g., "When I feel upset or angry at school I can manage to stay calm"), social (e.g., "I am good at building relationships in new school environments), motivational (e.g., "I like challenges in my work"), and professional (e.g., "I can quickly adapt to new situations at school"). Items are assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). These dimensions reflect both personal resources and professional capacities that support teachers' adaptive responses to occupational stressors (Daniilidou & Pezirkianidis, 2025).

Construction Methodology

The MTRS was developed through a multi-stage process grounded in qualitative and quantitative evidence. Mansfield et al. (2012) first conducted a qualitative study with 200 preservice and beginning Australian teachers, asking participants to describe "What makes a resilient teacher?". Thematic analysis identified three initial domains: motivation/emotion (α= .76), professional (α= .75), and social (α= .71), which informed the development of the first version of the MTRS (C. Mansfield et al., 2016).

Subsequent studies expanded the structure to four dimensions: emotional competence (α= .68), social competence (α= .67), motivation (α= .78), and professional resilience (α= .78), validated with Portuguese preservice teachers (Peixoto et al., 2018). These four domains align with contemporary understandings of resilience as a dynamic, contextually situated construct encompassing emotional regulation, relational capacity, professional adaptability, and

motivational perseverance (Daniilidou et al., 2025). The current version of the MTRS was further examined in a multinational sample of 764 preservice teachers from Germany, Ireland, Malta, and Portugal as part of the Enhancing Teacher Resilience in Europe (ENTRÉE) project (Peixoto et al., 2018). Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) values exceeding .90 were considered indicative of adequate model fit (Kline, 2011). Across countries, the four-factor model demonstrated good fit (CFI= .935-.999; TLI= .911), supporting the multidimensional structure of the scale (Peixoto et al., 2018).

Psychometric Evidence

Psychometric research on the MTRS across international contexts generally supports its reliability and construct validity (Peixoto et al., 2018; Trang & Thang, 2023). For example, Peixoto et al. (2019) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation after verifying acceptable skewness (< 2) and kurtosis (< 7). The initial model demonstrated poor fit, prompting a theoretically informed re-specification process in which items with factor loadings below .50 or evidence of cross-loadings were removed. The refined 13-item model showed strong fit to the data (CFI = .935, TLI = .910, RMSEA = .065 [.51, .078]), with all factor loadings exceeding .58.

Internal consistency estimates were acceptable to good, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .72 to .85, and composite reliabilities between .71 and .85 (Peixoto et al., 2019). Convergent validity was supported for the motivation (AVE = .54) and professional (AVE = .52) dimensions. Discriminant validity was generally adequate, although some overlap emerged between emotional-social and motivational-social domains. Alternative three-factor models produced poorer fit indices, supporting the original four-factor configuration. A hierarchical CFA also demonstrated acceptable fit, consistent with conceptualizations of resilience as a

higher-order construct (Peixoto et al., 2019). Additional validity evidence includes positive associations between the MTRS global score and broader measures of resilience ($r = .67$, $p. < .001$), as well as moderate correlations between the four dimensions and global resilience indicators ($r = .41$-$.52$; Morgan, 2011; Peixoto et al., 2019). Comparisons with the Teachers' Resilience Scale further showed small to medium positive correlations, supporting convergent validity (Trang & Thang, 2023).

Findings regarding the MTRS's factorial stability have been somewhat mixed, suggesting that cultural variation may influence how resilience is conceptualized and expressed among teachers (Daniliidou et al., 2025). Some studies have identified items with weaker loadings or alternative factor solutions, while others have recommended refined item sets to improve structural validity (Danillidou et al., 2025; Peixoto et al., 2019). Moreover, the scale primarily focused on internal protective factors, such as emotional competence, motivation, and professional efficacy, while giving comparatively less attention to contextual or systemic factors (e.g., social support; Danillidou et al., 2025). As a result, although the MTRS offers a valuable framework for assessing intrapersonal resilience resources, its applicability may be strengthened by incorporating broader ecological dimensions relevant to teacher resilience.

Reasoning for Use

The MTRS was selected because it offers a theoretically coherent and empirically grounded assessment of the internal resources teachers draws upon to navigate occupational stress. Aligned with the study's research questions, which examine ECTs coping strategies and the relationships among coping, resilience, burnout, and intention to leave, the MTRS captures the emotional, social, motivational, and professional competencies that underpin teachers' capacity to function effectively in demanding work conditions. Designed specifically for

educational settings, the scale reflects the dimensions of resilience identified by teachers themselves as essential for sustaining engagement and adaptability in the face of workplace challenges. As such, the MTRS provides a valid, context-sensitive measure that supports the study's objective of understanding how ECTs' personal resources interact with their coping strategies to shape well-being and retention.

The Scale of Protective Factors (SPF-24; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2019).

In response to a need for a scale that measure social protective factors that contribute to resilience, Ponce-Garcia et al. (2015) developed the Scale of Protective Factors (SPF-24) that measured two social and two cognitive protective factors that contribute to resilience (social support, social skills, planning, prioritizing behaviour, and goal-efficacy). The instrument assesses four domains: two social-interpersonal factors, social support and social skills, and two cognitive-individual factors, prioritizing and planning behaviour, and goal efficacy. Participants respond to each item using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Disagree completely") to 7 ("Completely agree). Across multiple samples, the SPF-24 has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from ($\alpha = 0.86 – 0.92$) for the full scale and robust reliability estimates for each subscale (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). Collectively, the SPF-24 offers a multidimensional and empirically grounded approach to assessing the protective factors that support resilience.

Construction Methodology

The development of the SPF-24 followed a rigorous, theory-driven process that integrated empirical findings on social, interpersonal, and cognitive contributors to resilience (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). To construct the social-interpersonal domain, Ponce-Garcia et al. (2015) created 11 items reflecting social support, drawing upon research demonstrating that

family and peer support are significant predictors of resilient adaptation. A second subscale within this domain, social skills, was developed through eight items designed to capture interpersonal competence, also shown in the literature to be a key determinant of resilience. The cognitive-individual domain was similarly informed by evidence linking self-regulatory processes to positive adaptation. Eight items were constructed to assess prioritizing and planning behaviours, reflecting research demonstrating that goal setting, organization, and planning facilitate resilient functioning. A second cognitive-individual subscale, goal efficacy, consisted of eight items measuring confidence in one's ability to set and accomplish goals, an ability consistently associated with mastery, persistence, and positive outcomes (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015).

Initial reliability testing was conducted using Samples A and B (combined N= 604), producing strong internal consistency for the 35-item version (α = .91) and for each subscale: Social Support (α = .93), Social Skills (α = .86), Prioritizing/Planning Behaviour (α = .85), and Goal Efficacy (α = .78). Subsequent exploratory factor analyses guided refinement and item reduction. Validation was then conducted using Sample C (N = 338), and across all three samples (N = 942), resulting in the final 24-item SPF (SPF-24). This version retained all four protective-factor domains and demonstrated a clear and replicable factor structure (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015).

Psychometric Evidence

Evidence across multiple studies support the SPF-24 as a reliable and valid measure of protective factors contributing to resilience. Ponce-Garcia et al. (2015) demonstrated strong structural validity using three independent samples, with CFA in Sample C showing good fit for the four-factor model (CFI/IFI/TLI ≥ .93; RMSEA = .059, 90% CI [.052, .066]) and all factor

loadings significant and in the expected direction. Concurrent validity was supported through strong correlations with established resilience measures, including the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; $r = .63$, $p < .001$) and the Resilience Scale (RS; $r = .61 < .001$), and all subscales were similarly associated with these instruments. Measurement invariance analyses indicated that the SPF-24 performs equivalently across gender, with unrestricted and restricted multigroup CFA models both demonstrating good fit and nonsignificant χ^2 difference ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.17$, $df = 2$). Predictive validity was further supported through regressions showing that the four protective factors accounted for 71% of CD-RISC variance and 38% of RS variance. Diagnostic validity was also established, as individuals in a trauma-exposed subsample with clinically low resilience scored significantly lower on all SPF-24 subscales than those in moderate or high resilience groups (Wilks's $\Lambda = .49$, $F(8, 452) = 23.89$, $p < .001$; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015).

Additional support for the scale's psychometric strength is provided by Madewell and Ponce-Garcia (2016), who reported high internal consistency for the SPF-24 ($\alpha = .93$) and each subscale ($\alpha = .86$–$.91$). The SPF-24 and its subscales were significantly positively correlated ($p < .001$) with the RS-25, RS-14, CD-RISC-25, and CD-RISC-10, demonstrating robust convergent validity. CFA comparisons across five resilience measures indicated that, unlike the RS and CD-RISC, which primarily assesses cognitive aspects of resilience, the SPF-24 uniquely captures both cognitive/individual and social/interpersonal protective factors. The social-interpersonal subscales showed significant associations with all comparison measures, highlighting their meaningful contribution to resilience rather than representing redundant variance. Moderate intercorrelations among subscales are consistent with theoretical models suggesting that protective factors function together to support positive adaptation (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016). These findings confirm that the SPF-24 is a multidimensional, theoretically coherent, and

diagnostically useful measure capable of identifying both strengths and specific areas of resilience development.

Reasons for Use

Similarly to the BCI and MTRS, the SPF-24 was chosen for this study because it offers a theoretically grounded and empirically validated assessment of the social and cognitive protective factors that contribute to resilience. Whereas the BCI captures how teachers respond to stress, and the MTRS assesses the resilience within professional contexts, the SPF-24 measures a broader set of foundational protective factors that operate across contexts. These include the quality of social support, confidence in social skills, planning and prioritizing behaviour, and goal efficacy, resources that likely underpin and interact with teachers' professional resilience as measured by the MTRS. By employing both measures, the study is able to distinguish between context-specific resilience capacities (MTRS), and the more generalizable social-cognitive protective factors (SPF-24) that teachers may rely on both inside and outside the classroom. The SPF-24 therefore complements the MTRS by situating teachers' resilience within a larger ecological framework and supports the study's objective of identifying how multiple layers of personal resources influence coping, burnout, and intention to leave.

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI; Kristensen et al., 2005).

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI; Appendix F) is a 19-item self-report measure designed to assess the degree of burnout experienced by individuals across personal, work-related, and client-related domains (Kristensen et al., 2005). Items are rated using a 5-unit Likert scale, with response formats varying according to whether items measure frequency (e.g., "How often…") or intensity (e.g., "To what degree…"). Subscale scores range from 0 to 100, with higher values reflecting greater burnout, and the personal burnout subscale may be used as an

overall indicator of burnout. In Denmark, the average score for personal burnout is approximately 36 points for employees who work with people (e.g., hospitals, prisons, home care; Kristensen et al., 2005). This study, based on previous research has utilized a cut-point of 50 to identify groups with "high burnout" to make results more easily understandable (Kristensen et al., 2005).

Construction Methodology

Developed in Denmark as part of the Project on Burnout, Motivation, and Job Satisfaction (PUMA) study, a five-year prospective intervention study examining burnout and psychological working conditions among human service employees. The CBI was created as an open-access alternative to the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), addressing limitations in the MBI's applicability beyond human service professions and its restricted accessibility. Since its development, the CBI has been translated into multiple languages and used internationally across healthcare, university, and occupational settings (Aiello et al., 2022; Montgomery et al., 2021; Thrush et al., 2021). The CBI aligns with contemporary conceptualizations of burnout as exhaustion-driven and offers a theoretically grounded, practical, and context-adaptable measure suitable for the present study (Kristensen et al., 2005).

The baseline sample of the original study included participants (N = 1,914) across seven occupational settings, hospital wards, social welfare offices, institutions for individuals with severe disabilities, and homecare services, representing a diverse range of "people work" professions (Kristensen et al., 2005). Of these participants, (N = 1,024) completed the CBI at both time points. The PUMA questionnaire included extensive measures of psychosocial work environment (e.g., job demands, organizational factors, social support), health, and well-being (e.g., SF-36), and demographic variables, thus allowing for the development and validation of

the burnout scales within a rich contextual dataset. The CBI was developed to measure three theoretically distinct albeit related dimensions of burnout: *personal burnout, work-related burnout*, and *client-related burnout.* Each dimension reflects a different source of fatigue and exhaustion (Kristensen et al., 2005). Personal burnout assesses general psychological and physical exhaustion, regardless of source, and can be used to measure overall burnout if a study calls for it. Work-related burnout identifies exhaustion specifically attributed to one's job or working conditions, allowing researchers to compare whether fatigue is work-specific or reflects broader strain. Finally, client-related burnout measures exhaustion associated with work involving direct interactions with people, originally termed "clients," but adaptable to other populations (Kristensen et al., 2005). In this study, consistent with recommendations from the original authors, the term was modified to "students."

Psychometric Evidence

The CBI was found to have strong psychometric properties across seven occupational samples, with internal consistency estimates ranging from (α = .85-87; Kristensen et al., 2005). Convergent validity was demonstrated through theoretically consistent correlations with the SF-36 vitality, mental health, and general health subscales. As expected, personal burnout, the most general of the CBI scales, would exhibit the strongest correlations with the SF-36 scales. In contrast, client-related burnout, being more specific, would show the weakest. Particularly, the authors expected the strongest correlation between personal burnout and vitality, as the vitality scale reflects fatigue which is closely aligned with burnout. Conversely, the weakest correlation was anticipated between client-related burnout and general health, as the latter includes a broader range of somatic and psychological health issues. These results were confirmed, with the correlation between personal burnout and vitality (-.75) being the highest, and the correlation

between client-related burnout and general health (-0.34) the lowest. The correlations between the three CBI scales (personal, work, client) ranged from 0.46-.72 at baseline, indicating that while the scales are related, distinct burnout dimensions are captured. Moreover, the distinction between work-related and client-related burnout varied significantly across workplace types, ranging from 0.36 in social welfare offices to 0.55 among prison officers, supporting the discriminant validity of the CBI in various work contexts. Analyses were performed at an a priori significance level of $p < 0.001$ (Kristensen et al., 2005).

Other research has also found good psychometric properties (Aiello et al., 2022; Barton et al., 2022; Fadare et al., 2021). For example, Barton et al. (2022) conducted a psychometric study of the CBI with a sample of emergency physicians in the United States. They found Cronbach's alpha for the original 19 items ($\alpha = .94$), indicating high internal consistency for both samples. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure for sampling adequacy 0.96 far exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.60, and Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significant result ($\chi^2 = 54{,}649$, $df = 171$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) identified two factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0. This was then confirmed by Horn's parallel analysis, which showed that only two factors had eigenvalues exceeding those generated from random data. A scree plot and Velicer's Minimum Average Partial (MAP) test further confirmed a two-factor structure, supporting the construct validity of the CBI. These results and strong interitem correlations suggest that the CBI is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring burnout, with distinct yet related dimensions.

Reasons for Use

Selection of the CBI was guided by its theoretically coherent, open-access, and context-flexible assessment of burnout. Unlike measures that conceptualize burnout narrowly, the CBI

captures three distinct yet interrelated dimensions, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how exhaustion manifests across different domains of teachers' lives. This structure is particularly well-suited to ECTs, whose stress often arises from both general psychological fatigue and school-specific demands, including stressful student interactions. Using the CBI alongside the BCI, MTRS, and SPF-24 enables a comprehensive analysis of how coping strategies and personal resources relate to the specific forms of burnout teachers experience. Its strong psychometric support, adaptability to educational contexts, and grounding in contemporary burnout theory makes the CBI an appropriate and analytically valuable measure for investigating burnout, resilience, and intention to leave within Canadian ECTs.

Intention to Leave Questions (ITL; Hackett et al., 2001).

Measuring actual teacher attrition requires long-term follow-up and administrative tracking (Madigan & Kim, 2021). For this reason, intention to leave, is widely used as a validated proxy for attrition, consistent with the theory of planned behaviour, which posits that behavioural intentions are the strongest proximal indicator of behaviour (Hackett et al., 2001). Presently, intention to leave refers to both teachers' intentions to exit the teaching profession entirely. Intention to leave was assessed using three items from Wang et al. (2022), adapted from Hackett et al.'s (2001) original intention to leave scale: a) "I'm thinking about quitting teaching, b) I intend to quit the teaching profession, and c) I intend to move into another profession/occupation. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 5 (Certain; Appendix G)

Constructive Methodology

Hackett et al. (2001) originally developed the intention to leave scale to assess occupational withdrawal intentions, operating on the premise that individuals with strong

commitment to their profession are less likely to intend to leave it. Drawing on Mobley's (1977) foundational work on turnover cognitions, the authors adapted items referencing "job" to instead reference "career," following Blau and Boal's (1989) recommendation to broaden the scope from job-specific to profession-level withdrawal. This approach allowed the scale to capture intentions to leave an entire occupational field rather than a single position or workplace. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, Hackett et al. (2001) demonstrated that intention to leave is conceptually distinct from organizational commitment, occupational commitment, job involvement, and withdrawal intentions at the organizational or occupational level. The resulting three-item scale reflected a coherent measurement of career withdrawal cognitions and was found to be internally consistent (α= .86). For the present study, the scale was adapted by replacing the generic term "career" with "teaching," consistent with prior educational research, to specifically capture intentions to leave the teaching profession (Wang et al., 2022).

Psychometric Evidence

Hackett et al.'s (2001) intention to leave scale has consistently demonstrated strong psychometric properties across occupational contexts. The original validation reported high internal consistency (α = .86), a finding comparable to results from a meta-analysis by Mathieu and Zajac (1990), who reported a similar coefficient (α= .84) in studies measuring withdrawal intentions. Empirical work supports this assumption: teachers' intentions to quit strongly predict short and long-term attrition (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Wang et al., 2022), and ECTs intention to leave within the first five years reliably forecasts decisions to remain or exit the profession (Kutsyuruba et al., 2022).

Reasons for Use

The intention to leave scale was selected because it offers a method of assessing ECTs propensity to exit the profession, an outcome that is central to the study's second research question. Given that the tracking of actual attrition over time is beyond the scope of the present study, the intention to leave scale is an evidence-based proxy. The scale's focus on cognitive withdrawal processes, thinking about quitting, forming intentions to quit, and considering alternative careers, aligns directly with the study's goal of examining how coping strategies and resilience relate to burnout and teachers' retention-related decisions. Its brevity, clarity, and established predictive utility make it an appropriate measure for capturing attrition-related intentions in this population.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions (Appendix H) were included in the survey to capture the nuanced, lived experiences underlying ECTs coping, resilience, and perceptions of the profession, and to contribute interpretive clarity regarding the quantitative findings. These prompts were designed to allow participants to describe specific strategies, barriers, and reflections in their own words, offering person-centred insight into the quantitative results. They also illuminated how stressful events can shape teachers' professional identities and perceptions of the teaching profession, including intentions to leave.

Procedures

A pilot study was conducted upon receiving ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (see Appendix I). First, the researcher completed the survey on Qualtrics (2021) and then recruited a small group of volunteers from the Master of Education Counselling Psychology program at the University of Lethbridge. These volunteers completed the pilot survey to assess its efficacy, length, clarity, and accuracy. After the pilot survey was

completed and minor grammatical revisions were made, the finalized Qualtrics survey was disseminated online through multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, Threads, and LinkedIn. Data collection began in June 2025 and concluded in September 2025. The recruitment poster (see Appendix A) described the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study, the purpose of the research, the inclusion criteria (Canadian, within the first five years of teaching, and English-speaking), and the researcher's contact information. A link to the survey was also provided. Upon accessing the link, participants were presented with a cover letter (see Appendix J) reiterating the inclusion criteria, participant rights, confidentiality and anonymity, and relevant contact information. Selecting "next" indicated informed consent. Individuals who did not consent were redirected and prompted to exit the survey.

Participants who provided informed consent first responded to several inclusion criteria questions (current certification and employment as a K-12 teacher, years of experience, Canadian status, and English proficiency. Those who answered "no" to any criterion were redirected to the debriefing form and excluded from the study. Eligible participants proceeded to complete the demographic section, followed by the four scales (SPF-24, CBI, MTRS, ITL, and BCI). The open-ended questions were placed at the end of the survey, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences if they so wished. Two attention-check items were embedded randomly to verify for fatigue effects and ensure response reliability. Participants were reminded throughout that they can skip any question or exit the survey at any time. Upon completion, they were directed to a debriefing form (Appendix K) thanking them for their participation and providing an overview of the literature, the study purpose, mental health resources, and the researcher's contact information to allow for follow-up questions or concerns.

After data collection was completed, responses were exported from Qualtrics (2021) into Microsoft Excel and then imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28. The initial Excel step was required due to import errors and helped facilitate the data-cleaning process. Data was cleaned based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, verified through demographic responses, and by ensuring that participants completed at least 98% of the survey (excluding open-ended questions). All quantitative data was analysed in SPSS and stored in a password-encrypted database.

Thematic analysis was used to examine responses to the open-ended questions. Anonymous responses were exported to Excel, reviewed to ensure anonymity, coded, and iteratively revised into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Robinson, 2022). To maintain methodological rigour, the researcher engaged in peer debriefing with their supervisor by sharing coded data and quantitative and qualitative results. All participant data will be stored on a password-encrypted database for at least five years to allow for publication or presentation. After this retention period all data will be permanently deleted.

Method of Analysis

Given that the data were not normally distributed, the results of the current study were analysed using non-parametric procedures. Missing data were handled using listwise deletion. All data were extracted from Qualtrics and analysed through IBM Statistics (Version 28). The analyses included descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, multiple linear regression, and thematic analysis.

Reliability of Measures

Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients were estimated for each measure and subscale represented in the online survey to determine the internal consistency of the instruments.

Cronbach's alpha is widely used in research to indicate reliability of a scale within a given sample, and its assessment was particularly important for the BCI, given that prior studies have documented inconsistent reliability across its subscales (Serrano et al., 2021; Taber, 2018). In general, α values of .70 or higher are considered acceptable, with values above .80 preferred (Cortina, 1993).

Test of Normality

In psychological and educational research, statistical tests are often chosen based on the assumption that the data are normally distributed (Bishara & Hittner, 2015). This "assumption of normality" is grounded in the Central Limit Theorem, which states that the distribution of sample means approaches normality as sample size increases (typically $n > 20$; Kwak & Kim, 2017). However, psychological data are frequently skewed, and relying on normality assumptions in such cases can mislead researchers (Bishara & Hittner, 2015). To assess normality for each variable in the present study, a combination of Q-Q plots, histograms, and the Shapiro-Wilk test was used (Ernst & Albers, 2017).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, relationship status, educational level) to provide an overall profile of the sample. For each of the fourteen BCI subscales, means and standard deviations were computed to address the first research question "*What coping strategies are early career teachers currently utilizing?*" with higher values reflecting greater use of the corresponding coping strategy. Descriptive statistics were also generated for the measures of resilience, burnout, and intention to leave to provide an overview of how participants scored on the primary outcome variables.

Spearman Correlation

Due to the fact that primary study variables were non-normally distributed, Spearman's rho correlations were conducted to address the research question "*What are the relationships between coping strategies and resilience, burnout, and intention to leave?"* (OECD, 2021). Spearman's correlation is a non-parametric alternative to the Pearson correlation and assesses the strength and direction of a monotonic association between two variables (Schober et al., 2018). This approach was appropriate given that the BCI, SPF-24, MTRS, CBI, and ITL were ordinal Likert-type measures, where response options can be ranked but the intervals between categories are not assumed to be equal. Correlation coefficients range from -1 (perfect negative) to +1 (perfect positive), with values closer to the absolute limits indicating stronger associations and values near zero indicating little to no relationship between variables (Schober et al., 2018).

Multiple Linear Regression

Based on the bivariate analyses, several significant correlations emerged between coping strategies (BCI subscales) and the outcome variables: resilience (SPF-24 and MTRS), burnout (CBI), and intention to leave items. Therefore, multiple linear regression analyses (enter method) were conducted. Multiple regression examines how one or more independent variables predict variation in a dependent variable, with the standard multiple linear regression method including all predictors simultaneously in the model (Moran, 2013; Wampold & Freund, 1987). Prior to running the regression models, standard assumptions were evaluated. Linearity was assessed through visual inspection of scatterplots, confirming that the relationship between the predictors and dependent variables were sufficiently linear. Homoscedasticity, the assumption that residuals exhibit constant variance across levels of the predictors, was also evaluated using scatterplots of standardized residuals (Laerd, 2018). Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), with values greater than (> 5) indicating problematic overlap among predictors.

Variables showing a substantial multicollinearity would be removed to preserve model stability (Wampold & Freund, 1987). Finally, the normality of residuals was evaluated through histograms with superimposed normal curves and Normal P-P plots, confirming whether the error terms met the assumption of approximate normality.

Thematic Analysis

Given its flexibility and suitability for exploratory research, thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret patterns within participants' responses to the open-ended questions. This analytic approach emphasizes interpreting meaning by identifying themes in participant responses (Crowe et al., 2015). The researcher played an active role in this process, engaging deeply with the responses to generate themes through immersion and iterative reflection (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were understood as central patterns of meaning that related directly to the study's overarching research question: *"How do ECTs perceive the effectiveness of their coping strategies, and what barriers do they perceive in implementing them effectively?"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2018). Codes were first generated from meaningful units of text (e.g., “I skip lunch most days to keep up”), typically words or phrases that captured a single idea relevant to the research question (e.g., “time scarcity”). These codes served as the foundational analytic layer and were grouped into subthemes based on conceptual similarity (e.g., “unsustainable workload”). Subthemes then organized within broader themes (e.g., “professional unsustainability”). Participants’ verbatim quotations are presented in Chapters Four and Five to illustrate how these themes were grounded in participant responses.

As there are multiple ways to conduct thematic analysis, it is necessary to clarify the specific approach adopted for this study. A mix of both a deductive and inductive, semantic approach was chosen to allow themes to emerge directly from the responses, enabling

interpretation based on salient participant responses, and pre-existing theoretical assumptions, such as the JD-R theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The analysis followed an organic, iterative process in which theme development was informed by sustained engagement with the responses, and existing theory was used as one of the lenses to align findings. The inductive nature of this approach enabled the identification of codes and patterns derived directly from participants' written responses, making it particularly appropriate for this exploratory design (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the semantic level, the analysis focused on the explicit meanings, events, and wording stated by the participants rather than underlying assumptions or latent interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analytic choice was well-suited to the brevity of the text, which consisted of concise written responses rather than extended interview transcripts. As analysis progressed, themes were interpreted and refined using a more deductive engagement with established theoretical frameworks (e.g., the Transactional Model of Stress; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Folkman et al., 1986; Robinson, 2022). This iterative process predicted the analysis to remain grounded in participant experiences while situating findings within broader conceptual understandings of teacher coping, resilience and burnout. A peer reviewer independently examined the relationship between participant responses, codes, and emerging themes to ensure coherence and trustworthiness (Robinson, 2022).

Finally, it is up to the researcher to describe the subjective qualitative responses and the third-person data to provide an in-depth answer to the overarching research questions. To accomplish this, the participants were viewed as experts in their own lives who can educate the researcher. Through reflective practices by the researcher throughout the research process, key themes were discovered and refined, creating a description of the responses (Frechette et al.,

2020). Based on the researcher's lack of lived experience as a teacher, it was critical to be open to learning from the participants with a spirit of curiosity, acceptance, and non-judgement.

The Six Stages of Thematic Analysis. The six stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Robinson (2022) approach to thematic analysis for brief-text were used as a guiding framework. The analysis followed a recursive process, involving continual movement back and forth between phases as themes were reviewed, refined, and defined.

In the first stage of thematic analysis, the researcher developed an in-depth familiarity with the qualitative transcripts through active and repeated readings of the printed participant transcripts and manually highlighting and writing preliminary notes (Nowell et al., 2017). This process facilitated the identification of initial ideas and patterns of meaning, allowing the researcher to take initial notes of potential codes and emerging points of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although this phase was time-intensive, it provided a crucial foundation for the subsequent stages of the analysis.

For the second stage, the researcher uploaded the written responses into Excel to facilitate systematic categorization (Bree & Clarke, 2016; Robinson, 2022). Categorizing involved organizing responses into smaller, meaningful units, reviewing all participant responses twice, and identifying as many recurring patterns as possible (Clarke & Braun, 2018). During this process, the researcher also noted contradictions and inconsistencies in responses, as thematic analysis acknowledges that tensions across responses are meaningful and should not be disregarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Terms and words that the researcher believed described the content of the participant responses were inputted into the "initial codes" column of the spreadsheet (Robinson, 2022). Facilitating the first step in finding common patterns, words, or ideas. The third stage commenced once a comprehensive list of initial codes had been generated.

The full column of code words were copied and posted into a new worksheet in the same Excel file (Robinson, 2022). Adopting an iterative and reflective approach, the researcher began exploring relationships among codes and between broader themes and subthemes. Through copy and pasting the codes into clusters, this process led to the identification of a preliminary thematic structure, encompassing main themes and corresponding subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robinson, 2022). Journalling code amalgamation and changes was essential for maintaining an audit trail, supporting reflexivity, and ensuring that the transition from initial codes to final themes remained transparent and analytically coherent (Robinson, 2022).

The fourth stage involved reviewing and refining the preliminary themes generated in the previous stage. For internal homogeneity, responses within each theme were examined to ensure coherence and meaningful connection, while external heterogeneity required clear distinctions between themes. After generating the first set of themes and subthemes, a structured spreadsheet was created in Excel in which theme labels were placed in the two top rows, with main themes emerged across their corresponding subtheme columns (Robinson, 2022). These rows were then frozen to ensure theme labels remained visible during coding. Each qualitative excerpt was reviewed line by line, and a binary coding approach was applied, whereby a "1" was entered into the relevant column whenever a subtheme was represented in the data. This process allowed excerpts to be linked to multiple themes when appropriate and supported an organized, transparent analytic structure for categorizing patterns across participants responses (Robinson, 2022). A dated journal was completed providing transparency regarding the analytic process.

In stage five, the researcher engaged in peer debriefing and refinement to enhance clarity, coherence, and comprehensiveness of the themes (Nowell et al., 2017). The second analyst was provided a blank version of Phase D and were familiarized with the theme names and codes

developed (Robinson, 2022). They then began allocating texts to themes independently, allowing for a less biased approach to analysing the data. After completion, the two spreadsheets were combined, and colour coded into one for checking. For each row, agreements and disagreements were calculated, where a percentage level of agreements was calculated with the goal of ensuring that the scheme and process was transparent, rigorous, coherent, and trustworthy. If there was any disagreement, a discussion occurred where theme development between the two researchers continued until a consensus was achieved (Robinson, 2022). By the end of this stage, the content and scope of each theme and subtheme were clearly defined and well distinguished (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

To enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of the qualitative process, theme prevalence was calculated using a structured spreadsheet-based approach consistent with thematic analysis (Robinson, 2022). After coding was completed, frequency formulas were used to determine how many responses contributed to each subtheme, allowing for precise and defensible statements of prevalence within the sample. Although frequency counts supported clarity in reporting, they were not treated as indicators of thematic importance, as relevance is not determined solely by numerical occurrence (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Robinson, 2022). A thematic map was also developed to visually organize and integrate the relationships among themes, consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendation about mapping enhances analytic depth and coherence. Following the initial development of themes and subthemes, relational thinking was used to examine how themes connected, overlapped, or informed one another. This involved iteratively arranging themes (i.e., sticky notes) and considering various forms of inter-theme relationships, such as descriptive, comparative, causal or part-whole relations, to refine both the thematic structure and the conceptual meaning of each theme

(Robinson, 2022). The resulting map served not only as an analytic tool for clarifying patterns within the data, but also as a concise representation of the integrated framework underpinning the study's qualitative findings.

The sixth and final stage involved producing the research report, an inherently analytic stage in which the thematic findings were synthesized, refined, and presented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The write-up aimed to construct a coherent narrative that accurately reflected participants' perspectives, integrating concise illustrative quotations selected for their clarity and representativeness (Lingard, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). Consistent with structured tabular thematic analysis (ST-TA) conventions, the structured tabular findings were presented alongside the broader qualitative themes and integrated with the quantitative results to provide a comprehensive mixed-methods interpretation. This approach allowed for the brevity and breadth insights captured through the ST-TA matrix to be compared with the depth-oriented thematic patterns, supporting a nuanced understanding of ECTs experiences (Robinson, 2022). Each theme's meaning, assumptions, and implications were articulated in relation to the overarching research questions, and the full analysis underwent supervisory review to ensure alignment with participants' accounts and coherence with the quantitative findings (Nowell et al., 2017).

Maintaining Qualitative Rigour. Instead of validity and reliability, qualitative research emphasizes trustworthiness to maintain academic rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which readers find the study's results credible and believable (Cypress, 2017). It comprises of four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in ongoing reflexivity, practicing active self-evaluation to recognize and mitigate personal bias. A reflexive journal was maintained to document the researcher's thought

processes, including daily logistics, personal reflections, and methodological decisions (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). This journalling practice enhanced the verifiability of the research process by providing a transparent account of analytical and procedural decisions (Nowell et al., 2017). As a result, other researchers or readers can clearly trace the rationale behind each step, thereby increasing the dependability of the findings.

The study's credibility was established through several strategies. Prolonged engagement with the responses (through repeated readings of participant responses), peer debriefing with the researcher's supervisor and triangulation through the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives were used to try to represent participants reflections as accurately as possible (Nowell et al., 2017; Stahl & King, 2020).

Transferability was addressed by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context and participants' experiences, allowing readers to determine the extent to which the findings may apply to other contexts or populations (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010; Nowell et al., 2017). While qualitative research does not claim broad generalizability, providing sufficient contextual detail allows readers to assess resonance and applicability in their own settings.

Finally, confirmability was achieved by ensuring that interpretations were grounded in participants' actual responses rather than researcher's assumptions. This was supported by maintaining a transparent trail of theoretical, methodological, and analytic decisions throughout the study (Nowell et al., 2017). Together, the consistent application of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability enhanced the overall trustworthiness and rigour of the qualitative findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The following chapter presents the findings of the current study, which examined how ECTs' coping strategies relate to their levels of personal and professional resilience, burnout, and intention to leave the profession. It begins with descriptive statistics outlining the demographic characteristics of the sample and the current coping strategies being employed, followed by the results of the non-parametric quantitative analyses, including Spearman's bivariate correlations, and multiple linear regression. The final section summarizes the key themes generated from the qualitative responses through thematic analysis. Together, these results address the study's overarching research questions:

1. What coping strategies are early career teachers currently utilizing?
2. What are the relationships between identified early career teachers coping strategies and reported resilience, burnout, and intentions to leave?
3. How do early career teachers perceive the effectiveness of their coping strategies, and what barriers do they perceive in implementing them effectively?

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, were calculated for variables related to the purpose of the current study.

Age, Gender, Level of Education, Province, Relationship Status.

A total of 311 ECTs participated in the study. The sample was predominantly women (81.4%), followed by men (16.1%), with a small proportion identifying as non-binary or transgender (2.6%). Participants represented several Canadian provinces, with the largest proportion residing in Alberta (48.6%), followed by Ontario (19.3%), British Columbia (13.5%), and Saskatchewan (12.9%). In terms of relationship status (32.8%) were married, (25.1%) were

unmarried with no partner, and (22.8%) were unmarried with a partner, with smaller proportions reporting common-law (15.4%). Most participants held a bachelor's degree (85.5%), while (14.1%) had completed a master's degree. The sample was largely composed of individuals aged 26-34 (54.0%), with additional representation from those aged 21-25 (22.5%) and 35-44 (15.8%). See Table 1 for participants' demographic descriptive variables.

Table 1

Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	N	%
Age		
21 – 25	70	22.5
26 – 34	168	54.0
35 – 44	49	15.8
45 – 54	23	7.4
55 – 64	1	0.3
Education Level		
Post-secondary (bachelor's) degree	266	85.5
Master's degree	44	14.1
Doctorate degree	1	0.3
Gender		
Woman	253	81.4
Man	50	16.1
Non-binary	7	2.3
Transgender	1	0.3
Province		
Alberta	151	48.6
British Columbia	42	13.5
Manitoba	3	1.0
New Brunswick	1	0.3
Newfoundland & Labrador	1	0.3
Northwest Territories	1	0.3

Nova Scotia	10	3.2
Ontario	60	19.3
Quebec	2	0.6
Saskatchewan	40	12.9
Relationship Status		
Common-law	48	15.4
Divorced	3	1.0
Married	102	32.8
Unmarried, no partner	78	25.1
Unmarried, partner	71	22.8
Separated	6	1.9
Prefer not to say	3	1.0

Full Sample (n = 311)

Contract Type, System, Grade Level, Location, Years of Practice.

Employment arrangements were primarily full-time (66.9%), followed by probationary (16.4%), substitute (10.3%), and part-time contracts (3.9%). Nearly all participants taught within the public school system (93.2%), with (6.1%) working in private settings. Teachers worked across elementary (K-8, 47.9%), high school (9-12, 35%), and mixed-grade placements (K-12, 17%), and were located mainly in urban areas (66.6%), with (31.2%) teaching in a rural placement. Years of practice ranged from less than one year (8.7%) to five years (16.7%), with the most common being three years of experience (24.1%). Please refer to Table 2 for demographics.

Table 2

Professional Variables

Professional Variable	N	%
Contract Type		
Full-time	208	66.9
Part-time	12	3.9
Probationary	51	16.4

Substitute	32	10.3
Other	5	1.6
Do not know	3	1.0
Grade Level		
Elementary (K – 8)	149	47.9
High school (9 – 12)	109	35.0
Mixed (K – 12)	53	17.0
Location		
Urban (over 10,000)	207	66.6
Rural (under 10,000)	97	31.2
Both	7	2.3
School System		
Public	290	93.2
Private	19	6.1
Not sure	2	0.6
Years of Practice		
Less than 1 year	27	8.7
1 year	45	14.5
2 years	50	16.1
3 years	75	24.1
4 years	62	19.9
5 years	52	16.7

Full Sample (n = 311)

Level of Burnout, Personal Resilience, Teacher Resilience, and Intention to Leave

Over half of participants reported high (n= 146, 46.9%) or very high (n = 108, 34.7%) levels of burnout, indicating that more than four out of five participants were experiencing substantial burnout symptoms at the time of the survey. Overall resilience was examined using both protective factors (SPF-24) and teacher-specific resilience (MTRS), which showed different distribution patterns. Just over half of participants scored in the high range on the SPF-24 (n = 177, 56.9%), indicating strong personal protective factors. In contrast, the MTRS reflected lower teacher-specific resilience, with roughly one-quarter of participants falling into the low range (n = 89, 28.6%). In contrast, intention to leave was substantially elevated, with nearly two thirds of

participants (n = 191, 61.4%) classified in the high intention to leave category. Please refer to Table 3 for frequency of levels.

Table 3

Well-Being Factors

Well-Being Factors	N	%
SPF-24		
Low	4	13
Moderate	89	28.6
High	177	56.9
Very high	41	13.2
MTRS		
Low	89	28.6
Moderate	75	24.1
High	71	22.8
Very high	76	24.4
CBI		
Low	7	2.3
Moderate	50	16.1
High	146	46.9
Very high	108	34.7
ITL		
Low	93	29.9
Moderate	27	8.7
High	191	61.4

Full Sample (N = 311) *SPF-24: Scale of Protective Factors; MTRS: Multidimensional Teacher Resilience Scale; CBI: Copenhagen Burnout Inventory; ITL: Intention to Leave Items*

Reliability of Measures

The fourteen BCI subscales showed considerable variability, with Cronbach's α values ranging from .424 (self-distraction) to .962 (substance use). This variation was not unexpected, given the two-item structure of each subscale in the shortened version, as well as similar patterns reported in previous research (Cortina, 1993; Doron et al., 2014; García et al., 2018; Neufeld &

Malin, 2021; Serrano et al., 2021). All subscales were retained based on their theoretical relevance; however, they were interpreted cautiously, as low alpha values may reflect several things, such as heterogeneous item content, limited item counts, or meaningful variability in the situational coping responses within the sample (Cortina, 1993; Streiner, 2003). Reliability estimates for the other scales demonstrated strong internal consistency $\alpha = .916$ for the SPF-24, $\alpha = .917$ for the intention-to-leave items, $\alpha = .877$ for the MTRS, and $\alpha = .858$ for the CBI.

Test of Normality

The results indicated that the data were not normally distributed ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, non-parametric tests were conducted for subsequent analyses.

Research Question One

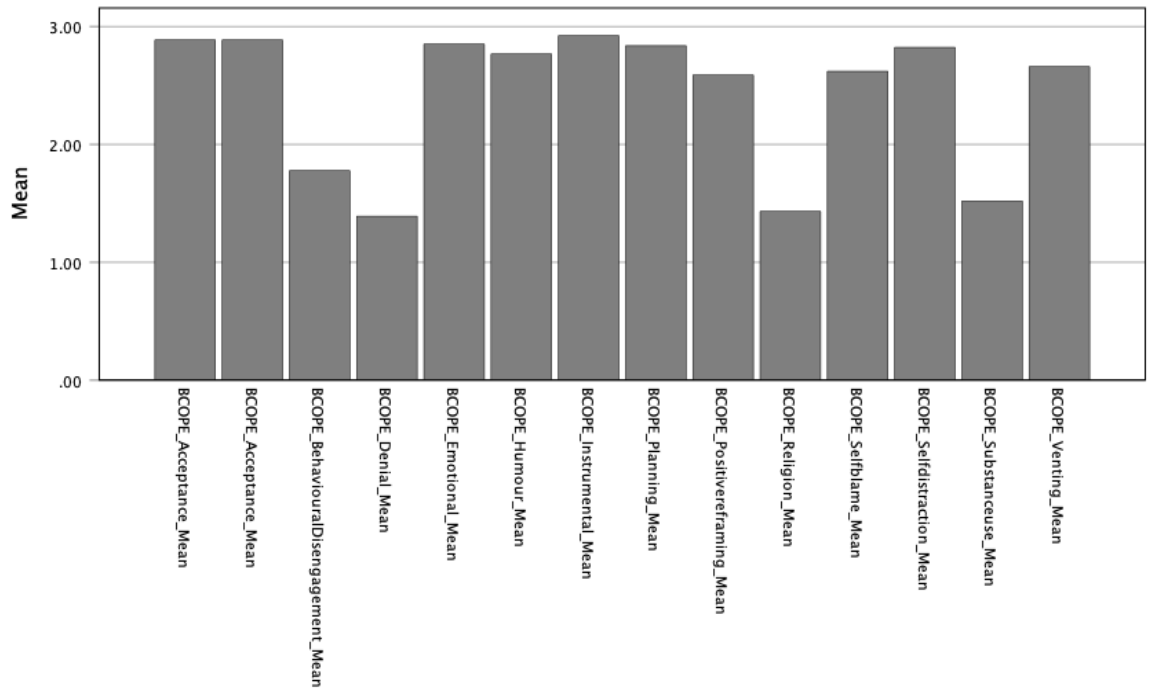
To answer the first research question: *What coping strategies are early career teachers currently utilizing?* descriptive statistics were calculated for each BCI subscale. Each subscale score represented the mean of its two items, rated on a one (*not used at all*) to four (*used a lot*) Likert scale. For interpretive clarity, higher mean scores reflect greater relative frequency of use, with values approaching 3 indicating moderate-to-higher usage relative to other strategies, rather than absolute thresholds of "high" or "low" use.

ECTs reported relying most heavily on instrumental support ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 0.80$), acceptance ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.67$), emotional support ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.78$), planning ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.78$), self-distraction, ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.71$), and active problem-solving ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.69$). Moderate levels of endorsement were observed for venting ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 0.80$), self-blame ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.98$), and positive reframing ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.75$). In contrast, strategies such as denial ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 0.61$), religion ($M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.72$), behavioural

disengagement (M = 1.78, SD = 0.76), and substance use (M = 1.52, SD = 0.84) were among the least frequently endorsed. Participants BCI scores are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Brief Coping Subscale Scores



Research Question Two

To answer the second research question: *What are the relationships between identified early career teachers coping strategies and reported resilience, burnout, and intentions to leave?* and given the non-normal distribution of the variables, Spearman's rho provided an appropriate non-parametric measure of association. These analyses identified distinct patterns of coping strategies in relation to the critical well-being factors of teachers' resilience, burnout, and turnover intentions.

Spearman Rho Correlations.

To investigate the relationship between participants' coping strategies and the four well-being outcomes, personal protective factors (SPF-24), teacher resilience (MTRS), burnout (CBI), and intention to leave (ITL), a series of Spearman's rho correlations were conducted. As demonstrated in Table 4, several coping strategies were found to have a significant positive association with both personal and teacher-specific resilience. Specifically, active coping, planning, positive reframing, emotional support, instrumental support, and acceptance were positively correlated with SPF-24 and MTRS, indicating that teachers who were engaging in these forms of coping tended to report greater resilience and protective factors. In contrast, a second set of correlations revealed that coping strategies such as behavioural disengagement, denial, instrumental support, planning, venting, and self-blame most consistently linked to higher distress and greater desire to leave the profession. Notably, positive reframing was the only coping strategy that demonstrated a significant negative association with both burnout and intention to leave.

Table 4

Spearman Correlation for Coping Strategies and Well-being Factors

Coping Subscales	Burnout	Protective factors	Teacher resilience	Intention to leave
Acceptance	-.033	.101	.197**	-.093
Active coping	.033	.333**	.316**	-.023
Behavioural disengagement	.388**	-.264**	-.408**	.347**
Denial	.241**	-.008	-.150**	.249**
Emotional support	.089	.272**	.236**	-.001
Humour	.091	-.006	.065	-.049
Instrumental support	.146*	.177**	.141*	.018
Planning	.202**	.316**	.203**	.199**
Positive reframing	-.151**	.327**	.460**	-.226**
Religion	.059	.102	-.013	.116*
Self-blame	.367**	-.299**	-.469**	.177**
Self-distraction	.053	-.034	-.047	-.017
Substance use	.045	-.166**	-.161**	.026

Venting	.306**	.005	-.121*	.199**

*p <.05. **p <.001.

Multiple Linear Regression

To further examine research question two, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictive value of coping strategies that demonstrated significant correlations with protective factors, resilience, and intention to leave. All models met the assumptions of multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals based on visual inspection of the P-P plots, histograms, scatterplots, and all VIF values below two.

The model predicting protective factors (SPF-24) was significant, $F(8, 302) = 19.01$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 33.5% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .317$). Higher personal resilience was predicted by greater use of active coping ($\beta = .151$, $p = .012$), emotional support ($\beta = .183$, $p = .002$), planning ($\beta = .206$, $p < .001$), and positive reframing ($\beta = .166$, $p = .001$), whereas behavioural disengagement ($\beta = -.147$, $p = .005$) and self-blame ($\beta = -.206$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted lower personal resilience. A similar pattern emerged for teacher-specific resilience (MTRS). This model was the strongest of the four $F(11, 299) = 25.06$, $p < .001$, explaining 48% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .461$). Positive reframing ($\beta = .281$, $p < .001$) emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by active coping ($\beta = .137$, $p = .011$) and emotional support ($\beta = .127$, $p = .021$). In contrast, behavioural disengagement ($\beta = -.195$, $p < .001$) and self-blame ($\beta = -.320$, $p < .001$) predicted significantly lower teacher-specific resilience. An overview of the regression coefficients can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients of SPF-24 and MTRS and Coping Subscales

Variable	B	SE	β	t

SPF-24				
Active coping	.671	.264	.151	2.536
Behavioural disengagement	-.595	.211	-.147	-2.814
Emotional support	.719	.227	.183	3.167
Instrumental support	-.322	.235	-.083	-1.368
Planning	.813	.235	.206	3.456
Positive reframing	.685	.213	.166	3.216
Self-blame	-.650	.163	-.206	-3.982
Substance use	-.250	.177	-.068	-1.418
MTRS				
Acceptance	.971	.761	.058	1.277
Active coping	2.196	.861	.137	2.552
Behavioural disengagement	-2.840	.729	-.195	-3.899
Denial	-.450	.845	-.025	-.533
Emotional support	1.797	.774	.127	2.322
Planning	1.245	.762	.087	1.633
Positive reframing	4.173	.706	.281	5.911

Self-blame	-3.633	.534	-.320	-6.800
Substance use	-.260	.571	-.020	-.455
Instrumental support	-.511	.757	-.037	-.674
Venting	-.808	.688	-.058	-1.174

*p <.05. **p <.001.

The regression examining burnout (CBI) was also significant $F(7, 303) = 17.26$, $p < .001$, accounting for 28.5% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .269$). Burnout was strongly predicted by behavioural disengagement ($\beta = .201$, $p < .001$) and self-blame ($\beta = .229$, $p < .001$), with venting ($\beta = .154$, $p = .004$) also contributing positively to burnout levels. Interestingly, planning ($\beta = .139$, $p = .011$) showed a modest positive association with burnout. Finally, the model predicting intention to leave was significant $F(6, 304) = 11.94$, $p < .001$, explaining 19.1% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .175$). Intention to leave was elevated among teachers who relied more on behavioural disengagement ($\beta = .217$, $p < .001$), followed closely by planning ($\beta = .213$, $p < .001$), and to a lesser extent, religion ($\beta = .119$, $p = .024$). Conversely, positive reframing significantly predicted lower turnover intentions ($\beta = -.224$, $p < .001$). Refer to Table 6 for an overview of the regression coefficients for each variable.

Table 6

Regression Coefficients of CBI and ITL and Coping Subscales

Variable	B	SE	β	t
CBI				
Behavioural disengagement	4.839	1.39	.201	3.473
Denial	3.139	1.606	.104	1.955
Planning	3.271	1.283	.139	2.551
Positive reframing	-2.445	1.268	-.100	-1.928

Self-blame	4.283	1.014	.229	4.225
Instrumental support	.296	1.283	.013	.230
Venting	3.530	1.227	.154	2.878
ITL				
Behavioural disengagement	.930	.248	.217	3.751
Planning	.894	.229	.213	3.899
Positive reframing	-.977	.237	-.224	-4.129
Religion	.535	.235	.119	2.271
Self-blame	.060	.192	.018	.310
Venting	.384	.226	.094	1.696

*p <.05. **p <.001.

Research Question Three

An inductive and deductive approach to brief-text thematic analysis was conducted to explore how ECTs perceive the effectiveness of their coping strategies and the barriers that impede their use. Four short open-ended questions elicited detailed reflections on: a) the coping strategies that teachers employed during a recent stressful work incident, b) how said stressors impact their level of resilience, c) the barriers that prevented them from using strategies they believed would be most helpful, and d) how these encounters shaped their resilience and perceptions of the teaching profession. After familiarization with responses and iterative coding, themes and subthemes were identified, followed by frequency counts, and a thematic map (Figure 2). Refer to Table 7 for an overview of the main themes and subthemes.

Table 7

An Overview of Themes, Subthemes, and Frequencies

Theme	Subtheme	n
Coping	Emotion-focused coping Self-care Flexible coping Problem-focused coping Avoidant coping	241
Impact on Resilience	Teacher Resilience Weakened	234

	Teacher Resilience Strengthened The Dialectic of Teacher Resilience	
Barriers Identified	Insufficient Job Resources Overwhelming job demands Loss of Personal Resources	205
Impact on Perception	Systemic Issues Psychological Strain Professional Unsustainability No Impact/Positive Outlook	188

Note. The categories are not mutually exclusive. The frequencies represent the number of participants that answered the open-ended question.

Coping Amid Psychological and Professional Strain

When asked: *What strategies did you use to cope with the stressful situation? (i.e., personal and/or professional*, 241 teachers (77% of respondents) described a broad repertoire of coping responses used to navigate the emotional intensity, cognitive demands, and professional uncertainty inherent to early career teaching. Five interconnected subthemes emerged: emotion-focused coping, self-care, problem-focused coping, avoidant coping, and flexible coping. Refer to Table 8 for frequency counts of subthemes and participant verbatim quotes.

Table 8

Frequencies and Quotes for Themes Related to Personal and Professional Coping Strategies

Subtheme	n	Example Quote(s)
Emotion-focused coping	181	"I tried to situate my experience within my understanding of systemic issues related to schooling to help myself understand that the problem isn't my actions and that it's bigger than me."

		"Trying to help myself think of the "big picture" scenario and that at the end of the day, it is really not going to matter. Focus on what I have done well, rather than the areas where I feel like something is lacking."
Social Support	104	"Involved admin to get further support and follow proper procedures. Booked therapy appointment. Debriefed with colleagues. Emotional support from partner." "With the situation, I would ask colleagues in my department for advice and strategies. The mental load of the situation was not extremely strenuous, but it was only my mind for a good amount of time. It was more about getting assistance with something that I felt very unsure about, and how to address it such that my students would benefit while also learning from the situation."
Self-care	95	"Any strategies to regulate my nervous system (breathing, drinking water, getting fresh air). Using humour to diffuse my feelings of stress. In my personal life, I smoke weed to allow myself to feel more regulated and de stressed once home." "On my personal time, listening to music and journaling. Professionally, l try to look at the bigger

		picture to meet a common ground. When things are out of my control, I'm learning to not be so hard on myself. I'm seeking therapy to work through things."
Flexible and Dynamic Coping	42	"Avoidance. Coming up with some strategies for what to do next. Realizing that it is not necessarily all my job to solve and acceptance that it can't all be fixed and that's ok." "Rely on the support of my colleagues or loved ones, focus on what is within my locus of control, turn my attention to my classroom/students (especially when the stress is from admin, policy, external events, etc.), physical activity like running or going to the gym, reflecting on previous experiences."
Problem-focused Coping	39	"When I'm supplying, I cope with stressful situations by staying flexible and prepared. I keep a set of go-to lesson ideas and management strategies that work across grade levels, which helps me feel confident walking into any classroom. I focus on building quick rapport with students, setting clear expectations early, and adapting to the class's energy and needs. Personally, I try to maintain a positive mindset, reminding myself that each day is an opportunity to learn and grow. I also use small mindfulness techniques, like deep breathing, to stay calm in

		the moment, and I reflect after each day to identify what worked well and what I can adjust next time." "Talked to the person in question (a staff member) and to the admin about the them. We made a plan moving forward, but it wasn't an ideal solution for me, but it minimized the problems in the classroom."
Avoidant Coping	37	"I went out into the hallway to take deep breaths and at recess I laid on my carpet and cried." "I avoided thinking about, and tried to move on. I pushed it to the back of brain so I didn't have to deal with it and moved on. I got drinks with a coworker. I went home and distracted myself."

Note. The categories are not mutually exclusive. The frequencies represent the number of participants that mentioned the category. Most participants were counted towards the frequencies of several categories.

Emotion-focused coping: Social Support. Emotion-focused coping was the most frequently described approach. Many participants relied on relational and internal strategies to regulate their emotional responses when situations felt overwhelming or beyond their control. A large proportion of respondents emphasized the grounding effect of emotional support, turning to trusted colleagues, administrators, partners, friends, or family to process difficult events. For example, one ECT shared, "I spoke with my colleagues about it, I debriefed with my principal, and I took some time to debrief when I got home." These interpersonal exchanges often provided

validation, catharsis, and perspective-taking. Alongside emotional support, teachers relied on cognitive reframing strategies, such as acceptance and positive reframing, “professionally, I try to look at the bigger picture to meet a common ground.” Others described the relief that came with acceptance, acknowledging the limits of their responsibility: “Realizing that it is not necessarily all my job to solve and acceptance that it can’t all be fixed and that’s ok.”

Self-care. Self-care reflected deliberate attempts to restore depleted emotional, physical, and cognitive resources outside the immediacy of the stressful event. Teachers frequently employed self-soothing or restorative practices to recalibrate well-being such as, “Friends, rest, leisure, reading.” Some ECTs emphasized regulating the nervous system through gentle physiological interventions: “went to the gym” or simply “exercise.” Others relied on sensory comfort or grounding routines such as meditation or warm baths. Boundary setting also emerged as a meaningful form of self-care. Turning off work notifications or intentionally disconnecting after hours helped teachers increase necessary psychological distancing: “Turning notifications off so that when I’m not at school, I do not get all of the emails and messages.” Seeking professional support, namely for mental health, played a significant role as well. Participants shared attending counselling, “I’ve been going to therapy 1-2 times a month to help deal with work related issues” or restarting medication, “Went back on anti-anxiety medications.” For these teachers, self-care involved proactively managing emotional strain through structured self-care routines.

Problem-focused Coping. Although less common that emotion-focused approaches, many ECTs turned to problem-focused coping strategies aimed at addressing the stressor directly. These responses reflected deliberate attempts to regain control, reduce uncertainty, or change aspects of the situation when possible. Some teachers attempted to buffer future stress by

preparing in advance, “begin working on the task months in advance.” While others described methodical planning, “Plan. Reflect. Speak with mentors. Check admin procedures.” Several participants intervened by consulting relevant individuals or clarifying expectations, “Consult other professionals, make list of priorities.” For substitute teachers, problem-focused coping involved rapid situational assessment and structures routines: “When I’m supplying, I cope with stressful situations by staying and prepared… I focus on building quick rapport with students, setting clear expectations early.” These strategies demonstrate how practical action and proactive planning served as a buffer against uncertainty.

Avoidant Coping. Avoidant coping appeared when teachers felt emotionally overwhelmed, resource depleted, or unable to engage meaningfully with the stressor. Avoidance often functioned as a short-term protective response under chronic strain. Participants noted withdrawing physically or emotionally from tasks, “Withdraw, put on a video for kids to watch,” or “I often shut down and do not want to do any work.” Others limited interactions that triggered stress: “Limiting interactions with people at work who caused this stress, admin.” Temporary physical removal was also used: “Took a break from the classroom.” In more severe cases, avoidance intersected with burnout and career instability, “I finally left my position when it became too much.”

Flexible and Dynamic Coping. Critically, many participants demonstrated fluidity in how they responded to stress, shifting among emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and avoidant strategies depending on context. This adaptability reflected a dynamic and responsive coping repertoire. Most displayed in the coping strategy of accessing social support, where instrumental and emotional support were often used simultaneously, “Professionally I reached out for help as I didn’t know how to manage a tough student and felt like I was failing my class/students as

there was risk involved. Admin and other staff supported me and helped me through the tough time by helping with parent contact and reaching out to superintendents for help as well."

The Complex Impact on Teacher Resilience

Participants were also asked the impact of the stressor on their resilience as a teacher, with 235 respondents (75%) offering reflections that revealed a nuanced pattern of strengthened, conflicted, and diminished resilience. Rather than reflecting a singular direction of change, participants' accounts revealed three interrelated patterns: a) decreased resilience; b) increased resilience, and c) ambivalent or dialectical resilience, where growth and strain coexisted.

Table 9

Frequencies and Quotes for Themes Regarding Perceived Impacts on Teacher Resilience

Subthemes	n	Example Quotes
Teacher Resilience: Weakened	100	"It made me think about my exit plan from the profession It always makes me consider leaving the private school I am at. It's clear to me it's causing too many issues that make me not enjoy teaching. It makes me wonder if I'll last long term as a teacher." "I know I love teaching. It's not a question of the profession itself. I am drained being a teacher though with the things we deal with on a day-to-day basis and yearly. Admin and parents are the hardest part but throw in inadequate pay, working additional hours, and the emotional toll from the stuff students brings in makes me wonder how long I will last."

		"Definitely made me frustrated with the system of teaching. The model of inclusion, and how parents view teachers and how admin expects teachers to act. It made me really question if this career was sustainable how it is now. Or if I would need to just become complacent and stop caring so much in order to stay in this job long term. It's sad being so new and yet seeing how difficult this job really is."
Teacher Resilience: Strengthened	67	"Honestly it has shaped a new path for me in my career development. This was specifically in a SP.ED. classroom, and I did not have full training to be the teacher in this classroom (temp position that turned into a full year contract). I saw it as a way to grow, and figure out what kind of teacher I wanted to be. I now see myself becoming a resource/ special education teacher, when that was never even a thought at the beginning of this school year." "Supplying has strengthened my resilience as a teacher by pushing me to adapt quickly, think on my feet, and remain calm in unpredictable situations. Navigating unfamiliar classrooms and diverse student needs has built my confidence and problem-solving skills, showing me that I can handle challenges with

		professionalism and composure. Rather than discouraging me, the experience has reinforced my passion for teaching and my commitment to the profession, as I've learned that flexibility, patience, and a positive mindset are key to thriving in this career."
		"It made me stronger as I realized I am able to get through stressful situations even when I feel like I will fail. I have learned to trust the process and that each step is a new opportunity for me to strengthen my skills. I also realized that sometimes I actually really like working "under pressure" as it forces me not to overthink things and roll with things as they happen."
The Dialectic of Teacher Resilience	65	"It made me consider leaving the profession at first, but then I believe it made me stronger."
		"Both, it's made me more resilient but I often question how long I can put up with it before it seriously affects my health. I also don't know what I'd do next."
		"It made me consider quitting, but it also made me more firm and confident in my boundaries and process for building expectations with high school students."

Note. The categories are not mutually exclusive. The frequencies represent the number of participants that mentioned the category. Most participants were counted towards the frequencies of several categories.

Teacher Resilience: Weakened. For the majority of respondents, the stressful incident weakened their sense of resilience. Many described an immediate and lingering emotional toll marked by fatigue and lowered motivation, articulating that they were "tired and dreading going to work," "overwhelmed and considering leaving," or feeling "numb… learning to just move on." These sentiments frequently co-occurred with diminished confidence in their professional capabilities and a heightened sense of unsustainability. Recounting that the experience left them "not sure I have enough in me to do this long term." ECTs attributed this decline not merely to the stressful incident itself, but to the cumulative pressures surrounding it due to lack of resources. One participant reflected on this mismatch, explaining, "I'm expected to be perfect and give and give and give… rather than the school change by properly resourcing us." Another questioned the long-term feasibility of remaining in the profession: "I don't know if my love for teaching is enough to withstand the working conditions and the pay."

Teacher Resilience: Strengthened. In contrast, a subset of participants reported the stressful event as a catalyst for increased resilience. Their reflections often drew attention to new competencies or reinforced self-belief: some expressed that "it made me a stronger teacher," or that "it taught me how to diffuse escalated situations quickly." Coping effectively during crises deepened their sense of vocation. One participant shared that the incident "reaffirmed that I want to be a teacher because I leapt into action when my kids were potentially in danger," while another reflected that "it reinforced my decision to become a teacher." For some, they described how the experience clarified professional identity and boundaries: "I learned what kind of

teacher I don't want to be," demonstrating a reflective, values-oriented interpretation of the stressor. Teachers who reported the strengthening of resilience also described improved emotional regulation and a greater capacity to face future challenges. As one participant put it, "I have learned to trust the process… each step is a new opportunity for me to strengthen my skills."

The Dialectic of Teacher Resilience. A substantial subset of teachers articulated experiences that did not fit neatly into either increased or decreased resilience. Instead, they described a dual response, in which growth and depletion occurred simultaneously and, at times, appeared to shape one another. These teachers acknowledged feeling more capable or confident while also recognizing the toll the experience, and the broader system, exacted on their well-being. Participants often captured this tension explicitly, sharing that the incident "made me stronger but also made me think about leaving the profession." Several participants described feeling "stronger but more guarded," reflecting how their expanded competence brought with it a heightened awareness of systemic constraints and deteriorating working conditions. For some, this tension fostered a cynicism that coexisted with growth. As one ECT explained, "I'm wiser about how the system works now, but I also see why people are leaving in droves." In this way, increased understanding did not alleviate strain, but seemed to sharpen participants' recognition of the profession's challenges. Therefore, contributing to feelings of hopelessness and a growing psychological distance from the profession.

Systemic Barriers That Stretch Beyond Capacity

In response to the question: *What barriers, if any, prevent you from using the coping strategies you believe would be most effective in managing teaching challenges and your well-*

being? a total of 205 teachers (66%) described complex and interwoven constraints that shaped, narrowed, and often overwhelmed their capacity to cope. See Table 10 for further details.

Table 10

Frequencies and Quotes for Themes of Barriers to Effective Coping Among Teachers

Subthemes	n	Example Quote(s)
Insufficient Job Resources	109	"Not having supportive parents or admin. Working with kids should be a team effort and it's far more challenging when not given the support." "Not enough resources and supports. If class sizes were smaller the behaviours in the room would not seem as large if administrators were able to take students when behaviours were bad. Everyone appears overworked and under supported by the ones in charge."
Overwhelming Job Demands	104	"Time, I have too much to do and not enough time to get it done. I have very little time for self-care or my healthy coping strategies." "I feel like teachers are constantly supposed to achieve higher and higher expectations without students being held to the same level of accountability. Sometimes I feel like I am expected to personalize lessons for each student to accommodate their needs, and in doing so I can't actually properly teach a lesson but rather spend the

		whole time bouncing between each child trying to give them one-on-one support which is impossible. I am absolutely 100% on board with inclusivity and modifying lessons for children who need it, but I feel like there is too much reinventing the wheel to the point where foundational skills and universal lessons are lost. Because of this, I feel like children are losing their ability to build resilience and find ways to avoid challenges rather than learn to face them. I also feel like it is increasingly more challenging to reinforce discipline and intrinsic motivation for success. I think part of this stems from the rise in "toxic positivity." "It's hard to cope in the moment, you have to cope afterwards. Sometimes you are so swamped with work and life it doesn't feel like you have time implement those coping strategies that help because you have another class or more students or another obligation. There's no time to decompress, you remain wound up for long periods of time."
Loss of Personal Resources	41	"Emotional and mental exhaustion that leads to no physical motivation." "Already being burnt out. Often, I know what strategies I should be using but I'm so mentally, emotionally and

	physically exhausted that I don't have enough left in me to actually use the strategies."

Note. The categories are not mutually exclusive. The frequencies represent the number of participants that mentioned the category. Most participants were counted towards the frequencies of several categories.

Insufficient Job Resources. The most frequently described barrier was the absence, or active failure, of school and system-level supports needed to manage escalating teaching demands. Participants repeatedly referenced leadership practices, workplace culture, and structural conditions that undermined their ability to rely on relational or collaborative coping strategies. Many described school cultures dominated by hierarchies or inconsistent leadership, "the culture and hierarchies present at my school" or reporting "no help from admin. No support from the school division." Teachers expressed frustration not only with non-existent support but with colleagues or administrators who exacerbated stress, such as coworkers who "make the lives of teachers harder," or divisional responses to violence that trivialized harm: "If you come to work expecting to get beat, it will make it easier to receive [a] beating." This lack of mentorship and relational trust left teachers "feeling like the teachers have been abandoned," as they were unsure where to turn when coping strategies required collaboration, emotional processing, or shared responsibility. These relational barriers were compounded by the isolating nature of the classroom itself. Teachers described being often "alone with students and not able to leave the classroom," with "no one else to take over class" when they needed a moment to regulate, ground themselves, or access support.

Participants also emphasized how broader structural and systemic conditions eroded their capacity to cope. Chronic underfunding was repeatedly cited, with teachers describing "a broken system," "the government's lack of funding and support," and the reality that "there would be

fewer stressful incidents if I had a regular Educational Assistant or other resource/special education support. this could include in-class direct support for challenging students, or withdrawal support for social skills development." Limited access to resources extended to benefits and income: "My benefits don't cover enough therapy," one teacher wrote, while another explained, "I work a second job and often feel worn out… I have to supplement my teaching income to afford my living expenses." Staffing shortages meant teachers could not take restorative time away. As one participant put plainly, "I wish I could take mental health days, but there's a sub shortage… it makes things exponentially worse."

ECTs also described feeling pressure to endure these conditions silently. A pervasive narrative of teaching as a calling positioned self-sacrifice as normal, even admirable. This left some feeling obligated to "prioritize other people's needs before my own," or unable to set boundaries because "it is hard saying no as a new teacher." These pressures were heightened for teachers working under temporary or unstable contracts, who reported "constantly [struggling' to make a good impression in order to get good references," and that "once you finally get a contract, you begin to be formally evaluated." Under these conditions, seeking help or slowing down risked being perceived as incompetence, further constraining coping.

Overwhelming Job Demands. The second major subtheme, overwhelming job demands and the erosion of work-life balance, captured how chronic time scarcity and relentless workload expectations made it difficult, and often impossible, for teachers to engage in restorative coping. Participants consistently described having "too much to do and not enough time to get it done," leaving "very little time for self-care or my healthy coping strategies." Work routinely extended into evenings and weekends: "I usually stay at the school and work till 6-8 pm. I go home exhausted with no social battery," one teacher explained. Many described schedules so

compressed that “there isn’t enough time in the day to use these [coping strategies’,” and emphasized that “there’s no time to get everything done to the expected level AND take care of myself.” Teachers described feeling persistently “wound up for long periods of time,” and in high-needs settings, “in my day-to-day teaching life I think mental burnout is the biggest barrier.” These challenges were compounded for substitutes navigating unpredictable contexts, where “the fast-paced nature of supply work leaves little room for personal breaks or reflection,” and for teachers required to “go an entire semester without a prep block,” described as “the biggest challenge.”

High expectations and social pressures further constrained coping. Teachers noted that “there is always something that needs to be done in teaching,” emphasizing that “if you leave work unfinished, you are screwed the next day. So work, work, work.” The profession’s “martyr mentality” meant that prioritizing personal responsibilities carried real social costs. Many struggled to meet both work and personal needs: “I do not have enough time between my personal responsibilities (children, spouse) and my work responsibilities,” while others noted that commuting or second jobs left them with “no time or energy to even think about effective coping mechanisms, just surviving day-to-day.”

Beyond the structural pressures of time scarcity and workload, teachers reported intensifying complexity of contemporary classrooms, which significantly undermined their ability to sustain work-life balance. Many described managing diverse and increasingly complex student needs with limited staffing or specialist support, explaining that the daily reality of teaching was “high pressure, lots of people, loud, overstimulating,” and that being “the sole adult of 25 plus children” left no margin to pause, regulate, or recover between incidents. Several participants described the emotional weight of attempting to meet student needs without

adequate systemic support: “I am always worrying about my students… especially my IPP [Individualized Program Plan] kiddos or kids that are struggling,” and some expressed a strong sense of personal responsibility: “I alone NEED to give 110% or they will be lost in the public system.” Behavioural intensity further amplified strain, with teachers facing “daily classroom violence and disrespect,” and returning to instruction immediately after incidents, “no physical break… encountering [the] student right away after [the] incident.” These in-class demands spilled into teachers’ personal lives. After days spent de-escalating, complex need students, or navigating overstimulating environments, as one ECT described “When I get home after a long day with 5/6 year olds… I am extremely sensitive to noise. I need quiet… it’s hard to find the energy to do my hobbies or walk the dog or make dinner.”

Loss of Personal Resources. Finally, the third subtheme reflected participants who were experiencing psychological depletion as a major barrier to enacting even the coping strategies they believed would be most effective. Participants repeatedly described emotional exhaustion as central impediments: “emotional and mental exhaustion that leads to no physical motivation,” “already being burnt out,” and being “too tired, not feeling like there is enough time.” For some, the intensity of daily demands meant that even when they knew what might help, they “didn’t have enough left in me to actually use the strategies.” Several participants highlighted the cyclical and unrelenting nature of their stress, noting that coping efforts felt futile when “the coping strategies I have are all only bandaids” and they still had to “go back into my classroom the next morning and deal with all of the same issues again.” Others captured this sense of chronic depletion succinctly: “It just feels inescapable,” “I’m too burned out to put in more energy to cope,” and “sometimes I just feel hopeless.” One participant described reaching a point where longstanding strategies no longer functioned: “I have significant mental health challenges

now to the point where my old coping strategies no longer work. I turn to substance abuse as a last resort."

Participants also described how internalized pressure and low coping self-efficacy shaped their experiences. Teachers expressed guilt, "guilt for needing them [coping strategies]," and self-blame believing they "just need to care less." Others felt trapped in "survival mode," where fear of judgement or perfectionistic expectations, for example, "being new and afraid to ask questions that make me seem dumb," or unclear boundaries "not having clear boundaries made it difficult to seek support" For some, the chronic nature of their stress eroded their belief that coping could make a meaningful difference: "the futility of it all… what's the point… if the situation is long-term and ongoing?"

Teaching Reframed Through Unsustainability

The barriers described by ECTs profoundly shaped how they perceived both the teaching profession and their place within it. For the 188 (60%) who responded to the final open-ended question, the most powerful driver of this shift was the prevailing sense of systemic failure. These systemic issues were often viewed as being rooted in escalating behavioural and emotional demands, and a sense that teachers are expected to shoulder the responsibilities far beyond their professional scope. See Table 11 for subtheme frequencies and example quotes.

Table 11

Frequencies and Quotes Reflecting How Barriers Shape Teachers' Professional Perspectives

Subthemes	n	Example Quote(s)
Systemic issues	96	"It feels like society doesn't care about us or what we're trying to accomplish. I believe that by going above and beyond for our students for so many years, we've created an

		environment where it's expected. When employees are working more than they should without a pay bump, the government is unlikely to properly fund the system we work in (in my opinion)."
		"I don't want to be here anymore and it's not because of the kids, even the ones that are lashing out the worst. It's the fact that everyone in the larger community (parents, the government) are doing nothing to help or to face the reality of where we are as a profession and a society."
Psychological Strain	95	"It feels like being in the classroom will never become an easy or predictable job. Regardless of how organized and planned I am to prepare for the days, I still am met with apathetic students and gruelling parents who make me feel like a worthless presence. No matter who I am outside of teaching, over the last 4 years, I have constantly felt like my job, and failure to be the teacher the world says my school needs, has overridden every coping strategy I have tried, including therapy."
		"I had always heard stories about compassion fatigue and imposter syndrome and couldn't imagine myself feeling that way when I first started teaching. Now it feels very real and I feel like I was

		not prepared to cope with it once it hit me."
Professional Unsustainability	78	"I always knew it would be tough, but I didn't understand how taxing it was. How burnt out I am. It makes me nervous for my future & unsure about how I will handle more years of teaching"
		"It pisses me off that this career isn't what it was when I was dreaming about it in grade 5. I don't feel supported by our central office. I don't feel like my classroom is properly funded. I feel that my position is replaceable at any moment. I am working way beyond contract hours & still feeling insufficient."
No Impact/Positive Outlook	19	"These barriers have given me a more realistic understanding of the challenges teachers face, particularly the need to balance ideal teaching practices with the realities of time, resources, and unpredictable circumstances. While they've shown me that teaching can be demanding and at times exhausting, they've also deepened my respect for the profession and the resilience it requires. Rather than discouraging me, this awareness has strengthened my commitment to developing adaptable strategies and prioritizing my well-being so I can sustain a long, fulfilling career in education."

	"I did not have a good early education experience as a student so I came into teaching somewhat reluctantly. But there has been little that has surprised me because I was already disillusioned with the system and still decided to become a teacher regardless."

Note. The categories are not mutually exclusive. The frequencies represent the number of participants that mentioned the category. Most participants were counted towards the frequencies of several categories.

Systemic issues. Once again, participants repeatedly described inadequate administrative leadership and inconsistent or dismissive responses to teacher concerns, leaving many feeling professionally unprotected and abandoned. As one participant summarized, "teachers feel abandoned and left to do a really hard job without the required help." Parent-teacher dynamics frequently compounded this strain, with several participants described navigating heightened parental expectations without administrative backing, emphasizing the need to tread carefully to avoid conflict, "tiptoeing around a student because we don't want to upset mom." While others expressed frustration that "teachers are always wrong and the parent is always right." These dynamics amplified teachers' sense of vulnerability and left them feeling unsupported in managing classroom behaviours or navigating relational conflict.

At the same time, teachers described escalating behavioural and emotional needs among students without the structural supports required to respond safely or effectively. Teachers reported being told to use "soft responses to dangerous situations," emphasizing that such approaches "are burning us out." Many spoke to the impossibility of meeting student needs in the absence of additional staffing or resources, stating plainly that they "can't do what students need on my own… there are no additional support staff." For some, these pressures contributed to a

sense of parentification, where teachers become the de facto caregivers. This dynamic was captured in the following response: “Teaching was supposed to be about making memories and teaching students. But realistically it is parenting kids because parents don’t want to… teaching them social emotional skills, manners, hygiene, ensuring they have food and sleep.”

Participants also reflected critically on their preparation for the profession, with some describing a profound mismatch between teacher education and classroom realities. One participant articulated this gap in detail, explaining that their training emphasized theory and academics, while failing to prepare them for the realities of the present-day classroom, arguing that teaching degrees should include specialized training and education:

> I feel that teachers are often very ill prepared for the job. My teaching degree focused on academics and theory. Practicums were supposed to prepare you for actual practical teaching. However, not all schools will prepare you for the challenges you can face in the classroom. It would be far more helpful if in teaching degrees they would prepare you for some of the extreme behaviours you are likely to encounter at some point. I think now that teaching degrees should have courses that are more like first aid trainings. They should aim to give teacher candidates chances to practice the steps, or options, of what they can do to respond to extreme behaviours such as hitting, throwing, spitting, running away, flipping desks, etc. Because once teachers are actually in the classroom for the first time, there is an unfounded expectation that we are prepared to deal with these behaviours. Of course, there is an understanding that as a new teacher you are still learning, but there is also always an element of expectation - that if you are struggling with student behaviours then maybe you just aren't cut out to teach.

Beyond schools themselves, ECTs described a broader societal narrative that minimized and misunderstood the scope of teachers' labour. Many felt that the emotional, logistical, and caregiving demands placed on them were rendered invisible or dismissed by the public. As one ECT shared, "it's so sad that the public views this as an easy job while teachers are giving more than they have to give." More respondents echoed this sentiment, describing teaching as a profession that "runs on our unpaid labour and sacrifice."

Psychological Strain. Participants frequently described the cumulative impact of systemic, relational, and structural barriers as a progressive erosion of their personal resources, fundamentally altering how they viewed themselves as teachers. Many ECTs reported that these barriers diminished their sense of confidence, efficacy, and emotional stability, leading them to perceive teaching as a profession that consumes rather than supports those within it. Teacher's spoke of feeling disillusioned and defeated, taking notice that their experiences had, "lowered my faith and confidence in the teaching profession," and left them "nervous for my future."

This perceptual shift was often accompanied by a sense of identity capture, where teaching became all consuming, "sometimes I feel like my whole identity is my profession." As barriers limited opportunities for recovery or balance, participants increasingly interpreted their inability to meet all demands as personal failure rather than systemic overload, stating that "I can't get everything done and I'm not a capable teacher." Loss of personal resources was also expressed through themes of hopelessness and emotional exhaustion. This emotional cost was described in the following quote: "Sometimes I feel hopeless, like I won't be able to do this job as long as I thought. I don't think anyone can give this much of themselves and life a healthy and happy lifestyle. In my short few years as a permanent teacher I've already spent over 50% of my home-life crying, stressing, and working. I know I can't continue like that and each year I start in

Sept with new boundaries and new work life balance goals but come November I'm always drowning in my work. I love my work, but I need to love my life too."

Professional Unsustainability. As perceptions of personal depletion intensified, participants increasingly re-evaluated the teaching profession, describing it as unsustainable and incompatible with long-term well-being. Several ECTs emphasized how the cumulative demands of teaching had exceeded their expectations:

> Expectations for a teacher to be superhuman. Nobody seems to recognize that teachers are people too and have families. I feel to live up to minimum expectations I sacrifice my personal well-being which impacts my own family life negatively. I live in a state of perpetual failure to meet any expectations because I can't do what I know my students need on my own. But I'm told there are no additional supports. No money to assess a kid, no additional support staff. Because I am skilled with challenging students, my classroom often gets stacked with them to ease administrations workload. I feel like I'm in a moral and ethical dilemma at this point.

This statement reflected a pivotal perceptual shift, from viewing endurance as a temporary necessity of early career adjustment to questioning whether continued participation in teaching was viable, ethical, or sustainable under current conditions.

Poor work-life balance emerged as a central lens through which participants interpreted professional unsustainability. Teaching was frequently described as all-consuming, leaving little psychological or temporal space for rest and recovery. Participants described persistent concern about their ability to sustain the profession alongside future life goals, such as parenting. One teacher reflected:

> It has made me question whether I want to continue/can continue in the profession. I worry for when I want to start a family and really struggle to visualize how I will balance being a teacher. As someone who had other careers prior to teaching, I find the idea of switching occupations more viable, despite the fact that there are many aspects of the job I greatly enjoy.

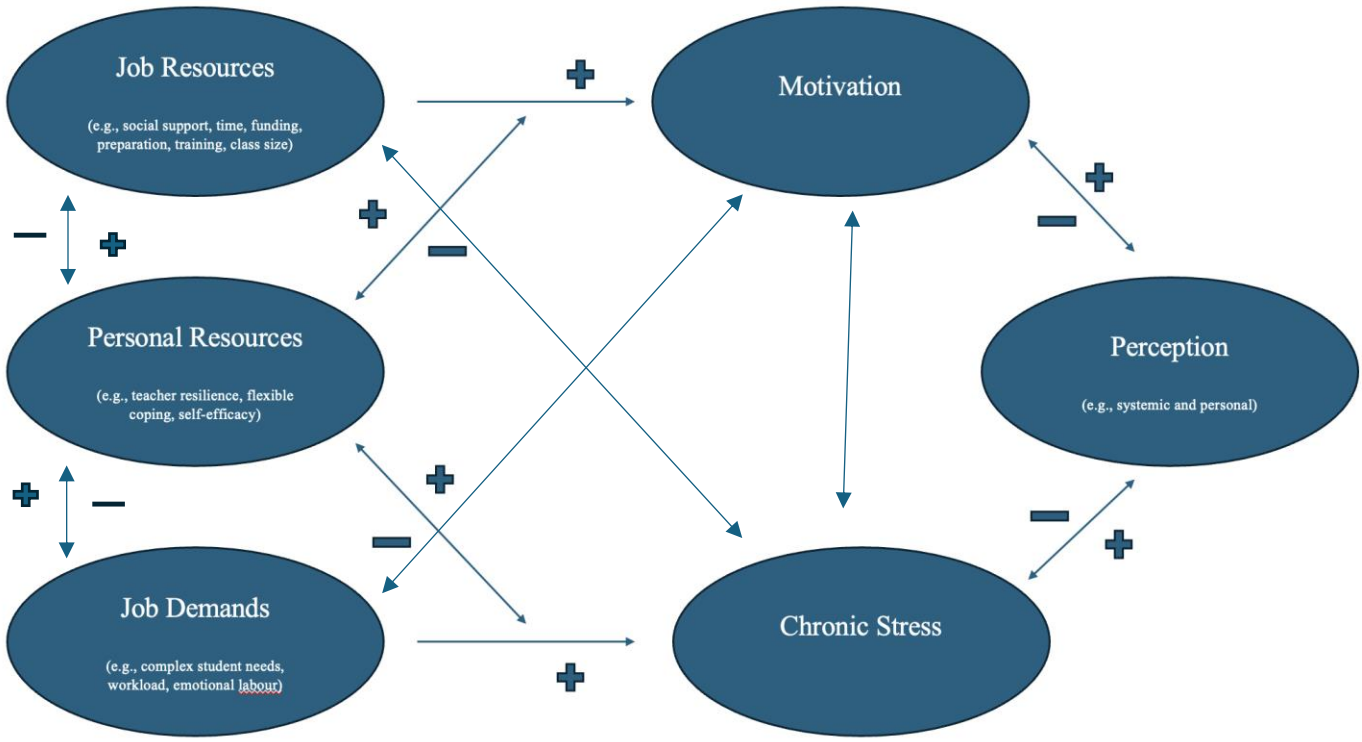
For many ECTs, this tension was not framed as a lack of commitment, but rather as a recognition that the structure of teaching demands ongoing self-sacrifice. Participants described repeated trade-offs in which personal health, relationships, and future aspirations were deprioritized to meet professional expectations. Chronic time scarcity and the absence of meaningful recovery periods reinforced the perception that teaching allows little opportunity to disengage from work demands. As one teacher pointed out: "It is unbelievably hard to maintain mental and physical health and relationships with family and friends when teaching full time." Several teachers indicated that they no longer recommended teaching as a profession to others, not because they disliked the work itself, but because of what the work required of them: "I have many colleagues that say that teaching has become extremely hard in the last five years. I've been teaching for a little over 2 years and with veteran opinions paired with my own experience, I tell aspiring teachers to think twice before applying."

No Impact/Positive Outlook. Only a small minority of participants reported that these barriers strengthened or did not impact their perception of teaching. Some expressed that the challenges clarified their boundaries or deepened their commitment, stating that "these experiences have made me set hard and fast boundaries" or that teaching remained both "challenging and rewarding" despite systemic strain. Yet these reflections of meaning-making were comparatively rare; for most teachers, their experiences with systemic failures, emotional

exhaustion, and relentless workload pressures led them to view teaching as increasingly devalued, unsustainable, and structurally unsupported. Please see Figure 2 for a thematic map of participants responses to the open-ended questions: *What barriers, if any, prevent you from using the coping strategies you believe would be most effective in managing teaching challenges and your well-being?* and *How has this impacted your perception of the teaching profession?*

Figure 2

Thematic Map



Note. Image based on the JD-R model, represents the relationship between participant themes regarding coping, resilience, burnout, intention to leave, and barriers.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The present mixed-methods study examined the coping strategies utilized by Canadian ECTs and their relationships with key indicators of teacher well-being, including personal and teacher-specific resilience, burnout, and intention to leave the profession. Guided by research questions addressing the coping strategies ECTs currently employ, their perceived effectiveness and barriers to implementation, and the associations between coping, resilience, burnout, and attrition-related intentions, this study responds to a notable gap in the literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, it represents the first empirical investigation to explore coping strategies among Canadian K-12 ECTs and their relationship with well-being outcomes. The purpose of this discussion chapter synthesizes and interprets the study's key quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to each research question. In doing so, it integrates results across methodologies, situates the findings within the broader context of teacher well-being and sustainability, and outlines implications for counselling psychology, education, and future research.

Research Question One

The first research question: *What coping strategies are early career teachers currently utilizing?*, sought to determine which coping strategies ECTs currently employ to manage workplace demands. Prior research has tended to find that teachers rely most heavily on emotion-focused coping strategies (e.g., acceptance, emotional support, humour, self-blame, religion, and venting; Beltman et al., 2020; Neufeld & Malin, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). This pattern is thought to reflect the chronic, relational, and often uncontrollable nature of teaching-related stressors (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). Although problem-focused strategies (e.g., active coping, instrumental support, planning, positive reframing) are also commonly used, their

relative prominence compared to emotion-focused coping remains inconsistent across studies (Neufeld & Malin, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). In contrast, avoidant strategies (e.g., denial, behavioural disengagement, substance use) are typically less frequent, though they appear more prevalent among beginning teachers and in high-stress contexts (Aulén et al., 2021; Herman et al., 2020).

Consistent with the literature, the findings indicate a pragmatic, relational coping profile marked by both emotion- and problem-focused strategies. Participants most strongly endorsed instrumental support, acceptance, and emotional support. Planning, self-distraction, and active coping followed closely. In contrast, strategies such as denial, behavioural disengagement, and substance use were among the least frequently cited, mirroring previous research that avoidance-based strategies are the least endorsed by educators (Aulén et al., 2021). While it is not possible to generalize broadly about how all ECTs cope with stress, the present findings suggest that coping strategies within this sample were largely adaptive rather than maladaptive. This interpretation is supported by participants' dominant use of emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies, alongside less frequent endorsement of passive and avoidant coping (Neufeld & Malin, 2021). Collectively, the findings indicate that coping among ECTs in the present study was not passive, but rather frequent, varied, and effortful.

The slightly greater reliance on emotion-focused coping suggests emotional regulation and meaning-making may be more accessible than direct problem resolution during this period. This finding may also reflect the Canadian school system's current landscape, where many stressors are viewed as uncontrollable, so emphasis is placed on controlling one's own response (Bakker & De Vries, 2021; Lindqvist et al., 2023). Moreover, this may highlight teacher emotions not as purely individual experiences, but as social, interactive, and performative

processes within school dynamics (Lindqvist et al., 2023). In such relational contexts, regulating emotional responses may be pragmatic, due to limited access to social support, protecting both teacher well-being and classroom climate (Chen, 2016).

Interestingly, quantitative and qualitative findings converged to suggest that ECTs engaged in a flexible and dynamic coping repertoire. Most strategies were endorsed at semi-frequent levels, with moderately endorsed strategies (e.g., venting, self-blame, positive reframing) closely following those reported most often, indicating that ECTs drew on multiple strategies rather than relying on a single dominant approach. Qualitative themes reinforced this pattern, with participants describing considerable adaptability in how they managed chronic and often uncontrollable stressors frequently shifting between emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and even avoidant strategies. This convergence provides initial evidence of flexible coping. Coping flexibility refers to the ability to adaptively shift between cognitive, emotional, and behavioural strategies in response to changing situational demands (Basińska et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2025). Flexibility depends on reflexivity, critical and creative thinking, and a broad coping repertoire, as individuals must be able to recognize ineffective strategies and generate alternatives (Basińska et al., 2021). Moreover, confidence in oneself and having diverse coping resources underpins this process, as those with rigid or limited options may be unable to adapt even when strategies prove ineffective (Basińska et al., 2021). Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of coping flexibility, with higher levels associated with lower anxiety, fewer psychosomatic and stress-related symptoms, better physiological outcomes, and greater teacher self-efficacy (Leslie-Miller et al., 2024; Yin et al., 2024).

Quantitative analyses revealed that instrumental and emotional support were among the most commonly used coping strategies. Complementing these findings, qualitative responses to

the first open-ended question consistently emphasized seeking social support as the dominant theme, underscoring the importance of relational resources in navigating workplace stressors. This finding is consistent with a plethora of prior research identifying social support as a primary coping resource for educators. To illustrate, Cross & Billingsley (1994) found that both instrumental and emotional support were among the most frequently used coping strategies for special and general educators and were associated with greater school commitment. More broadly, social support has been shown to bolster resilience, facilitate stress recovery, and enhance subjective well-being (De Neve & Devos, 2017; Løseth et al., 2022; Turner et al., 2022).

The prominence of socially mediated coping aligns with the stress-buffering model, which posits that the presence of supportive others can directly alter stress appraisals, enhance perceived coping capacity, and mitigate psychological strain (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Building on this theoretical foundation, perceived social support has been empirically linked to higher levels of engagement-oriented coping and positive thinking, alongside lower disengagement and negative affect, illustrating its functional role in sustaining teacher well-being (Einav et al., 2024). Such relational resources may be particularly salient for beginning teachers who are still developing professionally, functioning as a source of emotion regulation, validation, collective sense-making, and practical problem-solving (Beltman et al., 2020). However, the protective effects of social support are not uniform and depend on factors such as the type and quality of support provided, as well as individual characteristics (Einav et al., 2024). Thus, the mere presence of others does not guarantee benefits, highlighting the importance of the relational context in determining the effectiveness of socially mediated coping.

An inconsistency emerged regarding self-distraction as a coping strategy. Although self-distraction was among the most frequently endorsed strategies in the quantitative data (M = 2.82, SD = 0.71), it appeared far less often in participants' qualitative responses. This discrepancy may reflect factors such as social desirability bias, limited self-awareness, or methodological differences between structured survey items and open-ended responses. Self-distraction is typically classified as an avoidant and maladaptive coping strategy within the literature (Biggs et al., 2017). However, qualitative accounts suggested that avoidant strategies often took the form of brief, embodied regulation rather than sustained disengagement, such as stepping away, pausing, or engaging in breathing exercises when teachers felt emotionally overwhelmed or unable to engage meaningfully with the stressor. These in-the-moment, micro-regulatory strategies may serve a short-term protective function under conditions of emotional overload, particularly when direct resolution is not possible (Biggs et al., 2017). This pattern further suggests that coping may occur in brief intervals between demands rather than through sustained restorative processes, reflecting constrained recovery opportunities within the teaching context. Critically, chronic reliance on avoidant coping strategies, including self-distraction has been associated with increased burnout and professional attrition, underscoring the distinction between temporary regulatory withdrawal and longer-term disengagement (Chang, 2009; Pavlidou et al., 2022).

Research Question Two

The second research question: *What are the relationships between identified early career teachers coping strategies and reported resilience, burnout, and intentions to leave?* examined how ECTs' coping strategies related to resilience, burnout, and intention to leave the profession. Findings indicate that coping functions as a key mechanism mediating the relationship between

occupational stress and psychological and professional outcomes, reinforcing that personal resources can buffer but not eliminate the impact of stress on well-being. At the time of data collection, most participants reported high or very high burnout, and nearly two-thirds expressed strong intentions to leave, reflecting national and international trends (Sokal et al., 2025; Zito et al., 2024).

Consistent with prior research, engagement-oriented strategies, particularly active coping, emotional support, and positive reframing, were associated with higher personal and teacher-specific resilience (Wang & Hall, 2021). Instrumental support and acceptance were also positively related to resilience; however, their effects diminished when other strategies were considered, suggesting these may function as reactive responses mobilized when demands exceed resources rather than as proactive protective assets (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). In contrast, avoidance-based strategies (e.g., behavioural disengagement, self-blame) consistently predicted lower resilience, higher burnout, and stronger intention to leave, replicating well-established links between avoidant coping and psychological distress (Woloshyn et al., 2023).

A particularly salient finding was the coexistence of high burnout alongside moderate to high personal resilience but lower teacher-specific resilience. This pattern presents resilience as a domain-specific and dynamic process rather than a fixed trait (Li, 2023; Pearson et al., 2025). ECTs appeared able to remain resilient in their personal lives while experiencing erosion in their professional resilience, suggesting that individual resources may be insufficient to offset chronic occupational strain (Baatz & Wirzberger, 2025). This distinction challenges deficit-based narratives that position ECTs as inherently "less resilient" and instead points to systemic contributors shaping outcomes (Davis et al., 2025). Critically, both personal and teacher-specific

resilience were found to be protective against burnout and intention to leave, underscoring the importance of targeted supports that foster resilience during this critical developmental period.

Positive reframing emerged as uniquely protective and was the strongest predictor of teacher-specific resilience. As a metacognitive strategy, reframing facilitates meaning-making and emotional regulation by promoting alternative interpretations of stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Grounded in cognitive theory, this process may preserve agency, coherence, and professional identity under sustained strain (Beck, 1967). Reframing was also positively associated with personal resilience and inversely related to burnout and intention to leave, aligning with trauma-informed evidence that meaning-making can coexist with distress while supporting adaptive engagement (Munroe et al., 2022). In the context of teaching, positive reframing may help educators maintain a sense of professional identity and purpose despite ongoing strain, thereby buffering against burnout and withdrawal. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that reframing can promote adaptive emotion regulation and facilitate subsequent problem-focused coping when perceived control increases (Munroe et al., 2022). Highlighting the need for teacher training initiatives that support not only the development of positive reframing, but also the reflexive processing of stressful professional experiences. Within environments characterized by psychological safety, self-compassion, and an understanding that perfection is not the goal, educators may be better positioned to engage in reframing as a means of sustaining well-being and efficacy.

Conversely, behavioural disengagement and self-blame were strongly linked to burnout and withdrawal intentions. Although behavioural disengagement represents an avoidant strategy, self-blame reflects a maladaptive form of emotion-focused coping in which individuals internalize responsibility for stressors (Folkman et al., 1986). While both strategies may provide

short-term emotional relief by reducing immediate distress, they fail to address the underlying demands contributing to strain and can initiate downward resource-loss cycles (Bakker & De Vries, 2021; Beltman et al., 2020). This pattern aligns with prior research indicating that chronic reliance on avoidant and emotion-focused coping can become detrimental over time, contributing to emotional exhaustion, diminished well-being, and heightened psychological distress among educators (Harmsen et al., 2018; Stapleton et al., 2020; Woloshyn et al., 2023). As teachers disengage or turn distress inward, they are less likely to engage in problem-solving or seek support, further constraining access to potentially restorative resources (Biggs et al., 2017). Over time, these processes can erode professional agency and contribute to feelings of helplessness and depersonalization.

Further complicating the picture of coping, the finding that planning was associated with both higher resilience and greater burnout and intention to leave demonstrates the conditional and context-dependent nature of coping. Although planning is typically conceptualized as an adaptive, problem-focused strategy, its effectiveness for this cohort was possibly contingent on the availability of sufficient resources to enact plans. Under conditions of sustained overload, planning may instead signal continued overextension, with ECTs striving to meet escalating demands in the absence of adequate support or meaningful reprieve. This interpretation stems from participants' qualitative accounts, describing cycles of relentless task management and limited opportunities for recovery that closely reflected this pattern.

Chronically high demands combined with constrained resources can generate ongoing strain that erodes cognitive flexibility and fosters more rigid, survival-oriented patterns over time (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). While flexible coping initially enables ECTs to adapt to changing classroom demands, the absence of recovery and persistent resource depletion may gradually

shift this flexibility into chronic self-sacrifice. Over time, this self-sacrifice depletes personal resources, narrows available coping options, and transforms coping from adaptive regulation into survival-based persistence. These dynamics are particularly salient for ECTs, whose coping capacities are still developing, placing them at heightened risk for burnout and attrition (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020). This vulnerability is further amplified by growing job demands, alongside widespread resource deficits reported post-pandemic (Sokal et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study may provide an important caveat to the benefits of coping flexibility. Although coping flexibility can protect against future psychological distress, its benefits for individuals already experiencing high levels of stress may be constrained (Chen et al., 2025). Under sustained overload, depleted cognitive resources limit individuals' ability to assess situations and shift strategies effectively (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). As a result, individuals may continue "trying everything" while remaining unable to achieve psychological relief. Within this context, planning may function less as proactive mastery and more as a compensatory response to systemic issues, suggesting that even adaptive coping strategies can wear when deployed continuously and under-resourced.

Research Question Three

In addressing the third research question: *How do early career teachers perceive the effectiveness of their coping strategies, and what barriers do they perceive in implementing them effectively?* participants' accounts indicated that coping effectiveness was shaped less by the strategies ECTs employed and more by conditions under which they were enacted. Although ECTs reported awareness of, and flexibility in using, a broad repertoire of coping strategies, their perceived effectiveness was consistently evaluated in relation to time, support, and access to resources. Rather than reflecting uncertainty about how to cope, participants emphasized how

workplace demands constrained the enactment of coping, positioning it as conditional instead of inherently effective. Consistent with the JD-R model, coping flexibility is largely shaped by the balance between demands and available resources (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). When demands chronically outweigh resources, coping shifts from being growth-oriented and flexible to survival-focused and rigid, undermining the ability to adapt to stressors and the development of professional resilience among those entering the field (Bakker & de Vries, 2021).

Themes related to perceived barriers mirrored robust findings linking overwhelming workloads, limited resources, interpersonal conflict, and organizational unfairness to teacher stress, burnout, and attrition (Heffernan et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Within this broader context, interpersonal barriers emerged as particularly salient. Although emotional and instrumental support were widely recognized as ideal coping strategies, their effectiveness was often undermined by relational quality and systemic conditions. Social support is particularly critical for ECTs, who are developmentally reliant on help-seeking as they build professional self-efficacy and identity (Lindqvist et al., 2023). However, participants' capacity to access and benefit from relational support was shaped by the intensity and complexity of their daily teaching demands.

These pressures were intensified by increasing classroom complexity, insufficient support staff, and the growing diversity of students' academic, behavioural, and mental health needs. As student demands escalated, educators reported heightened exposure to aggression and safety-related incidents, conditions that represent some of the strongest predictors of emotional exhaustion and eventual burnout (McMahon et al., 2024). Participants reported feeling responsible for addressing learning loss, supporting students with disabilities, and managing complex classroom dynamics alongside expanding administrative tasks, trends that have

accelerated since the pandemic (T. Pressley et al., 2021; Sokal et al., 2025). National data mirror these perceptions, with most Canadian educators reporting longer working hours, worsening workload conditions, and substantial unpaid labour occurring outside contractual hours (Parachute, 2024).

This strain was further exacerbated by structural resource constrains, including chronic underfunding, inadequate benefits, and limited access to professional or community-based services to support student well-being (Woloshyn et al., 2023). Participants shared navigating increasingly complex student needs amid expectations of inclusion without adequate support, sustained emotional labour, and restricted autonomy over curriculum and classroom decisions (Agyapong et al., 2024). For example, a recent meta-analysis found that post Covid-19, 80% of educators had experienced verbal or threatening aggression, and 56% reported physical violence at least once during the school year (McMahon et al., 2024). Consistent with prior research, prolonged exposure to students' emotional and behavioural challenges, coupled with unclear expectations and insufficient support, contributes to burnout and psychological strain among teachers (Einav et al., 2024; McMahon et al., 2024; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021).

At their best, collegial relationships were described as valuable sources of validation, mentorship, and emotional relief. However, these benefits were frequently undermined by hierarchical cultures, disconnected leadership practices, and fears of negative appraisal. Some participants reported instances in which administrative responses to student behavioural incidents, parent conflict, or workload concerns were perceived as dismissive, minimizing, or misaligned with classroom realities. These experiences have also been documented in the literature, with perceived poor administrative support, particularly perceptions of unfairness or inconsistent discipline, contributing to feeling a lack of safety, self-blame, and reduced

autonomy (Collie, 2023b; Herman et al., 2023). A lack of relatedness between teachers and leadership has been found to predict depersonalization and diminished professional commitment (Collie, 2023b). Peer dynamics were similarly described as being a double-edged sword: while some participants emphasized the protective value of collaboration and shared problem-solving, others described climates marked by negativity, competition, or disengagement, prompting withdrawal from others. This pattern aligns with evidence that respectful and supportive collegial environments buffer stress, whereas strained relationships exacerbate burnout and negative stress appraisal (Chen et al., 2025; Collie & Martin, 2023; Herman et al., 2023).

Parent-teacher relationships further shaped coping perceptions, particularly when parental expectations conflicted with institutional capacity or administrative backing. Participants described navigating heightened parental scrutiny, emotional labour, and conflict without consistent leadership backing, reinforcing feelings of vulnerability and isolation. These experiences mirror broader societal discourses that position teachers as individually accountable for student outcomes while obscuring systemic constraints (Zito et al., 2024).

Participants' reflections also revealed that these conditions were interpreted through a powerful cultural narrative: teaching as a *calling.* A calling reflects an orientation to work grounded in meaning, service, and moral responsibility rather than financial reward (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Although positively associated with commitment, satisfaction, and motivation, recent research highlights its paradoxical nature, linking calling to burnout through patterns of ongoing self-sacrifice (Clinton et al., 2023; Duffy et al., 2018; Houlfort et al., 2022). Many ECTs described feeling obligated to extend themselves beyond their formal role, reflecting daily self-sacrifice behaviour: the repeated forfeiting of personal needs in service of professional goals (Clinton et al., 2023). These sacrifices took the form of frequent, minor trade-offs, skipped

breaks, extended evenings, reduced sleep, and diminished personal time, displacing opportunities for recovery and blurring work-life boundaries. Such trade-offs are not mechanisms of balance but of prioritization, creating self-discrepancy as ECTs move further away from their ideal personal lives to meet professional expectations and goals (Houlfort et al., 2022). Over time, this depletion of personal resources undermines the sustainability of coping and contributes to the rigid, survival-oriented patterns described earlier. Houlfort et al. (2022) found that psychological need sacrifices for one's occupation significantly decreased life and professional satisfaction over time, and increased work and family conflict. Signalling that personal need sacrifices come at a cost and may not be a sustainable long-term strategy to one's work and personal life.

Consistent with prior research, participants also expressed frustration with this cultural framing of teaching as a calling. This narrative normalizes excessive workload and emotional sacrifice while legitimizing public and policy-level disengagement (McMahon et al., 2024). Public recognition has been shown to bolster professional legitimacy and self-esteem, whereas its absence predicts burnout and identity erosion, especially among novice teachers (Ghasemi, 2025a). Participants further echoed this devaluation through references to negative portrayals of teachers in public discourse, chronic underfunding, and perceived parental blame, reflecting a broader societal disregard for the profession (Heffernan et al., 2022b; Woloshyn et al., 2023; Zito et al., 2024).

These perceptions were reinforced by policy-level conditions that intensified demands while constraining professional autonomy. Standardization, managerialism, and top-down governance have been shown to undermine teachers' sense of agency (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Heffernan et al., 2022). Participants frequently described feeling unsupported or second-guessed when responding to serious behavioural incidents, contributing to perceptions of unsafe working

conditions and ineffective disciplinary structures. Such policy environments have been linked to diminished trust, strained relationships, and poorer teacher well-being (Ghasemi et al., 2025; McMahon et al., 2020). Structural constrains further narrowed access to coping options. Staffing shortages, limited substitute availability, and restricted access to professional resources often rendered collegial support logistically inaccessible, even when relationships were positive. Participants noted being physically isolated in classrooms with no opportunity for relief during moments of distress, consistent with evidence that high workload and time pressure limit relational coping and contributes to burnout (Gadermann et al., 2023; Ghasemi, 2025b).

Participants' accounts underscored how chronic workload and time scarcity constrained coping effectiveness. Although ECTs demonstrated awareness of strategies that could support well-being, these were repeatedly described as incompatible with the pace, intensity, and expanding scope of daily teaching demands. Ongoing workload pressures, role expansion, and limited opportunities for recovery narrowed the space for restorative coping, contributing to emotional exhaustion and diminishing the feasibility of coping in practice (Gadermann et al., 2023; Ghasemi, 2025a). Importantly, participants did not frame time scarcity as a temporary feature of early career adjustment, but as a structural condition embedded within their work. Escalating instructional, behavioural, and administrative demands, without protected preparation time or adequate support personnel, meant coping efforts were routinely deferred to evenings or weekends, when emotional and cognitive resources were already depleted. This cumulative strain reflects what has been described as "death by a thousand cuts" within educational work (Dubois & Mistretta, 2019)

The erosion of personal resources represented a third major barrier. Sustained exposure to chronically high demands, coupled with insufficient structural and relational supports,

progressively depletes personal resources, undermining their psychological capacity to manage stressors effectively (Bakker & De Vries, 2021). This process may be particularly salient for ECTs, who tend to have fewer resources to begin with compared to their more experienced peers, rendering them more vulnerable to resource loss (Zito et al., 2024). This aligns with a health-impairment process within the JD-R model: chronic demands contribute to a loss spiral, where already limited resources continually decrease (Sheridan et al., 2025). This offers few opportunities to recover or thrive, thereby increasing susceptibility to burnout and disengagement. For the few participants who viewed their personal resources (e.g., resilience) as increasing, subthemes of positive meaning-making and relatedness with students, peers, and administration were common, signalling potential avenues such as mentorship and collective self-efficacy, for improving ECT well-being and retention (Collie, 2023b; Gunn et al., 2023; Sheridan et al., 2025).

Finally, these barriers shaped how participants evaluated not only their own coping strategies, but the profession itself. Many described a reappraisal of teaching as increasingly unsustainable, noting that expectations of constant availability, emotional labour, and self-sacrifice exceeded what they could reasonably maintain. This shift aligns with evidence linking chronic resource deficits to moral distress, identity strain, and attrition (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Ma et al., 2022). Notably, these reflections were not framed as a lack of commitment, but as recognition that the profession relies on ongoing personal sacrifice that conflicts with long-term well-being. Several participants expressed reluctance to recommend teaching to aspiring educators, reflecting broader patterns of disillusionment (Heffernan et al., 2022; Lindqvist et al., 2023). Taken together, these themes represent a dynamic process where escalating demands continue to outpace the resources available to teachers, creating strained coping efforts, depleted

personal reserves, and shifting perceptions of relationships, resilience, and long-term career sustainability.

Other Significant Findings

A salient theme that emerged regards self-care in managing workplace stress over time. Self-care is an intentional, reflective process involving deliberate strategies to promote healthy functioning and well-being, spanning a continuum from basic daily practices (e.g., sleep, nutrition) to targeted efforts aimed at stress management and recovery (Dorociak et al., 2017; Godfrey et al., 2011). In participant accounts, self-care was not conceptualized as solely individual but also relational, including engagement with family, community supports, and health professionals when personal capacity was limited. Consistent with prior research linking coping to self-care and engagement, participants described practices such as accessing counselling, exercise, mindfulness, hobbies, and establishing work-life boundaries. Self-directed strategies were more commonly used than professional supports, often due to structural barriers including cost, time constraints, and limited access to funded services, underscoring how systemic conditions shape teacher' capacity to engage in meaningful self-care.

While these practices did not eliminate external stressors, they supported psychological flexibility and more adaptive professional functioning (Hilligoss et al., 2025). Of note, it is worth highlight a major critique from the literature on self-care as an individualized and consumer-oriented response to systemic strain (Dunn, 2023). This framing of self-care risks shifting responsibility for well-being onto teachers themselves, potentially reinforcing oppressive institutional practices and fostering cultures of "toxic positivity" and professional perfectionism that have been shown to exacerbate burnout and discourage help-seeking.

Clinical and Educational Implications

The following recommendations and implications are directly derived from participants' mixed-method results and reported experiences, and are situated within the existing empirical literature, rather than imposed as externally generated solutions. The findings conceptualize teacher stress, coping, resilience, burnout, and attrition as multi-level phenomena shaped by individual, organizational, and policy-level conditions.

Implications and Recommendations for Teachers

Based on the present findings and existing literature, ECTs appear to be at heightened risk for compromised well-being, including burnout, relative to other helping professionals (McMahon et al., 2024). Consistent with this pattern, teacher-specific resilience in the current sample was notably lower than personal resilience, underscoring the vulnerability of ECTs within an increasingly complex and demanding educational context. Importantly, coping and resilience are not fixed traits but malleable capacities that can be strengthened through targeted supports and professional experiences. When adequately resourced, these personal assets may enhance teachers' ability to navigate daily challenges and sustain long-term well-being.

Although participants reported using a wide range of coping strategies, no single approach emerged as universally protective. Instead, the findings suggest that flexible, engagement-oriented coping, particularly problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, is most effective when embedded within supportive relational and organizational contexts. The capacity to shift strategies in response to situational demands appears especially adaptive for teachers managing diverse classroom, relational, and systemic pressures. While emotion-focused coping was most frequently used in-the-moment, prior research cautions that rigid reliance on such strategies may contribute to burnout (Pogere et al., 2019). Accordingly, developing

problem-focused strategies may enhance perceived control, strengthen teaching self-efficacy, and expand coping capacity.

Positive reframing emerged as a salient yet underexplored strategy within the teacher well-being literature. Cognitive reframing may be particularly beneficial in managing challenging student behaviour, as shifting interpretations from intentional "defiance" to unmet needs has been shown to influence emotional responses and promote supportive rather than punitive interactions (Mohn, 2024). By altering appraisal processes, positive reframing may reduce physiological stress responses and foster adaptive professional behaviour, strengthening emotional regulation and perceived competence over time.

Participants also consistently emphasized self-care as integral to their well-being. Critically, self-care should not be conceptualized as an individual responsibility divorced from organizational realities. Rather, the literature highlights the importance of structured, intentional self-care planning that integrates individual, professional, and systemic supports (Dubois & Mistretta, 2019; Hilligoss et al., 2025; Koenig et al., 2018). Embedding self-care planning during pre-service training or early career stages may help establish adaptive responses prior to prolonged exposure to chronic stressors. Normalizing self-care as a professional competency may further reduce stigma and encourage earlier help-seeking.

Intervention research similarly demonstrates that sustained professional development focused on coping (e.g., positive reframing), self-care, and mentorship is more effective than isolated, one-time sessions (McMahon et al., 2024). While brief interventions may yield short-term gains, benefits are more durable when learning is ongoing, contextually relevant, and grounded in teachers' lived experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Ideally, such initiatives should be delivered within work hours and resourced appropriately to avoid exacerbating

workload demands. Targeted professional development may be most meaningful when teachers retain agency in shaping content and when programming prioritizes engagement-oriented coping strategies while discouraging avoidant patterns (Patrick & Bensley, 2025; Woloshyn et al., 2023). Normalizing chronic stress as an inherent feature of caring professions may further reduce self-blame and promote collective coping (Dubois & Mistretta, 2019).

Finally, relational support emerged as a central protective factor across the dataset. Supportive professional relationships facilitate emotional regulation, problem-solving, and a sense of belonging (Pearson et al., 2025) Mentorship and peer support create spaces for shared reflection and collaborative meaning-making, buffering stress and promoting professional growth (Einav et al., 2024; Ghasemi, 2025b). In this sense, social support may function as a catalyst for resilience development, as repeated experiences of supported coping strengthen self-efficacy and professional confidence over time (Patrick & Bensley, 2025).

Implications and Recommendations for School Leadership

The present findings position school leadership as a critical leverage point for improving school-wide well-being, as administrators shape the organizational conditions that support or undermine coping, resilience, and meaningful professional engagement. Whereas teacher-focused recommendations emphasize individual skill development and relational support, leadership implications more directly concern the structural conditions that determine whether well-being can be sustained over time. Consistent with the mixed-methods results, teacher stress cannot be meaningfully addressed through individual strategies alone; rather, effective remediation requires systemic attention to how demands and resources are distributed, how safety is prioritized, and how professional judgement is recognized and respected (Ghasemi, 2025a). In this regard, school leaders act as mediators of occupational strain, with the capacity to

intensify depletion by rigid structures that buffer stress, fostering trust, communication, and shared purpose.

Leadership influences not only the reduction of strain but also whether teachers can engage with the core purpose of schooling: fostering learning, growth, and connection with students. When organizational demands dominate, teaching becomes task-driven rather than meaning-driven. From a PERMA perspective, leaders shape teachers' daily access to positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). This aligns with the PERMA-Lead model, which frames leadership as a behavioural approach that promotes flourishing by supporting autonomy, reinforcing meaning, cultivating relationships, and making accomplishments visible (Ebner, 2019, 2020). Leadership, therefore, contributes to whether teachers have the time and psychological space to invest in the aspects of their work that are intrinsically fulfilling and protective of well-being.

A key implication is the need for upstream, whole-school approaches to teacher well-being rather than downstream remediation once burnout has escalated. Teacher well-being is socially contagious; frequent exposure to burned-out colleagues heightens vulnerability to emotional exhaustion (Fitchett et al., 2021). Strengthening positive school climate and collegial interactions not only buffers burnout but creates space for ECTs to re-engage with the relational and intellectual aspects of teaching that initially drew them to the profession, reinforcing well-being through renewed purpose rather than recovery alone (Wammerl & Lichtinger, 2025). In practice, this may involve strengthening professional collaboration, shared leadership, and mentorship structures that promote collective efficacy and adaptive coping (Ghasemi, 2025a).

The findings also underscore the importance of trauma-informed leadership embedded within school policy and routine practice. Leadership approaches that prioritize safety,

trustworthiness, empowerment, appreciation, and collaboration may mitigate chronic stress while strengthening resilience (Eddy et al., 2019; Ghasemi, 2025b; McMahon et al., 2024). Due to teacher trauma being rooted in systemic realities, leadership must move beyond classroom strategies to revisit policies that address exposure to violence and sustained emotional labour. Such approaches are associated with greater compassion satisfaction and lower secondary traumatic stress when paired with supportive leadership and self-care practices (McMakin et al., 2023).

Workload and time constraints emerged as significant organizational barriers to effective coping. Reducing workload demands and protecting time for planning and reflection are not only recovery strategies but also enable teachers to reinvest in lesson creativity, student connection, and professional growth (Marshall et al., 2023; Wammerl & Lichtinger, 2025). When time scarcity dominates, meaningful engagement is displaced, undermining both well-being and professional fulfillment. Teachers who perceive strong organizational support are more likely to sustain instructional self-efficacy and remain in the profession (Pressley et al., 2025).

Finally, the findings emphasize the importance of centring teacher voices in the design, implementation, and evaluation of organizational well-being initiatives. Leadership efforts are most effective when educators are meaningfully involved in solution-building without added workload burden and when psychological safety, representation, and equity are prioritized (Pressley et al., 2025). Involving teachers in organizational decision-making further reinforces their sense of professional accomplishment and alignment with the school's mission. When educators see their input shaping the direction of the school, they may experience greater meaning, engagement, and accomplishment in the collective work of education (Wammerl & Lichtinger, 2025).

Implications and Recommendations for Mental Health Professionals

The present findings carry important implications for mental health professionals, particularly those working in counselling psychology, school psychology, and related applied fields. Given the inherently relational nature of counselling, practitioners are well-positioned to address the emotional, relational, and identity-based dimensions of teacher burnout. Doing so effectively, however, requires explicit awareness of the occupational specificity of teaching-related stress. When educators present with emotional exhaustion, cynicism, or depersonalization, clinicians familiar with the structural realities of teaching may be better equipped to normalize these experiences and situate them within broader professional demands, rather than conceptualizing them as individual pathology.

From an assessment and case conceptualization perspective, the findings underscore the importance of routinely attending to work-related contributors to distress. Clinicians are encouraged to assess for burnout-related symptoms (e.g., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, maladaptive self-appraisals) while also exploring clients' coping strategies, access to social support, and perceived organizational constraints. Assessment should also attend to patterns of chronic self-sacrifice and felt obligation, as many ECTs may not initially recognize the extent to which repeated small trade-offs are contributing to diminished well-being. Such practices allow for more contextualized formulations and facilitate collaborative goal-setting that is both realistic and therapeutically meaningful.

With respect to intervention, the findings support evidence-based approaches targeting maladaptive cognitions, emotion regulation, and self-evaluation processes implicated in burnout. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may help educators challenge beliefs associated with guilt, overwork, and self-criticism (Bakker & De Vries, 2021; Sokal & Eblie Trudel, 2023),

while Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) may foster awareness and reduce reactivity to stress (Shapiro et al., 2005). Acceptance, compassion, and values-based approaches may be particularly beneficial for ECTs. Psychological flexibility, closely related to coping flexibility, offers a useful therapeutic target (Cherry et al., 2021; Gloster et al., 2017). Interventions drawn from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), integrating mindfulness, acceptance, values-based action, and self-compassion, have demonstrated efficacy across a range of mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression (Hayes et al., 2006; Gloster et al., 2020). Strengthening psychological flexibility may help educators respond more adaptively to chronic stressors, disengage from unhelpful self-judgment and rumination, and re-engage with personal and professional values in sustainable ways. Evidence from ACT-based self-help interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic further showed improvements in psychological flexibility and reductions in distress (Shepherd et al., 2022), suggesting applicability during periods of heightened occupational strain. Other resilience-building approaches, including mindfulness and positive psychology interventions, may similarly support educators in managing chronic stress when adapted to individual contexts (Polizzi et al., 2023; Waters et al., 2022).

Practitioners may also explicitly raise client awareness of self-sacrifice as a powerful psychological process, encouraging educators to examine the broader landscape of their lives and values and to evaluate the appropriateness of any felt obligation to continually give of themselves (Clinton, 2023). Guiding clients to reflect on the gains and losses associated with different sacrifices, and the utility of these trade-offs over time, may support more sustainable engagement with their work. For ECTs who strongly identify with teaching as a calling and are experiencing burnout symptoms, it may be helpful to explore how goal shielding operates: how

the pursuit of professional goals can begin to compromise broader life goals related to well-being, relationships, and self-care (Clinton, 2023). Collaboratively examining how the long-term sustainability of calling goals depends on the preservation of these personal resources may reduce goal conflict and emotional exhaustion.

Beyond individual therapy, the findings highlight important roles for mental health professionals in consultation, prevention, and systems-level support. School psychologists and counsellors may contribute to the development of peer-support and mentoring initiatives for beginning teachers, such as protected "brown bag" discussion groups that facilitate psychoeducation and open dialogue (Shernoff et al., 2016). Critically, these spaces require intentional structures and facilitation to ensure they remain focused and supportive, balancing opportunities for emotional expression with guided reflection, skill-building, and solution-oriented dialogues, rather than becoming unstructured spaces for venting alone. When implemented collaboratively with school leadership, such initiatives may enhance social connectedness, strengthen coping competence, and reduce professional isolation, functioning as preventative interventions that support collective well-being.

Equally important are considerations related to accessibility and equity of mental health services, particularly for ECTs who may experience financial strain alongside occupational stress. Practitioners across private, non-profit, and publicly funded contexts should recognize cost as a significant barrier to care and consider practices such as sliding-scale fees to improve access and reduce delays in help-seeking. Ethically, these efforts align with the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, which emphasizes promoting societal well-being through equitable access to psychological services and the dissemination of knowledge (CPA, 2017, Principle II.34). Given that many counselling psychology programs are housed within faculties of

education, collaborative partnerships between counselling and teacher education programs are both feasible and strategically positioned. Integrating content on burnout, self-care, and the emotional demands of teaching into pre-service training represents a proactive approach to preventing burnout, aligning with psychology's broader social justice mandate to advance equity and systemic change alongside individual interventions.

Implications and Recommendations for Society

At the societal and policy level, the findings underscore that teacher well-being is shaped by higher-order decisions that structure the conditions of daily practice. Policies, resources, and accountability frameworks enacted by governments and school systems indirectly influence teacher mental health through workload expectations, performance pressures, and uneven access to supports (Ghasemi et al., 2025). Although some structural conditions are difficult to modify, examining these broader determinants remains essential, as it can illuminate systemic vulnerabilities and guide more equitable resource allocation. At the same time, policy reforms may produce unintended consequences when new demands are introduced without corresponding supports, further compounding occupational strain (Ghasemi et al., 2025).

Beyond workload and time pressures, financial security and access to benefits emerged as critical job resources shaping teachers' capacity to cope. While recruitment initiatives often emphasize financial incentives, evidence suggests that compensation alone is insufficient if working conditions remain unchanged (Heffernan et al., 2022). Teachers consistently report valuing access to mental health professionals, support staff, and inclusive services over modest salary increases, signalling that income must be considered alongside benefits and workplace resources rather than as a substitute for them (Pressley et al., 2025). Access to employer-provided supports, including counselling services and extended health benefits, has been

associated with lower stress and reduced intentions to leave the profession (Pressley et al., 2025). From a policy perspective, advocating for equitable compensation structures, stable employment, and comprehensive benefits is therefore central to promoting teacher well-being.

The findings further emphasize the need for cross-sector partnerships among education, government, and community organizations to strengthen system capacity and reduce the expectation that schools absorb escalating social and mental health needs without adequate infrastructure. Practical strategies include increased staffing, reduced class sizes, enhanced safety resources, and expanded access to mental health personnel, alongside training in de-escalation, trauma-informed practice, and socioemotional learning. Such recommendations are reinforced by evidence that educators are actively calling for additional mental health and behaviour management training, with inequities in access contributing to widespread burnout (Gunawardena et al., 2024). Notably, 85% of educators in a recent survey reported needing further mental health training, highlighting the scale of this gap (Gunawardena et al., 2024).

These implications also point to critical gaps in teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning. Despite increasing classroom complexity, pre-service training often provides limited preparation in socioemotional learning. For example, Schonert-Reichl (2017) found that fewer than 2% of required courses in teacher education programs addressed relational or self-awareness competencies. This gap is particularly concerning given that teacher shortages have been linked to relaxed training requirements, increasing the risk of underprepared educators entering high-demand contexts (McMahon et al., 2024). Coordinated, evidence-based training that integrates stress management, self-care, and mentoring may therefore be critical, not only for teachers but also for administrators and school mental health professionals as part of whole-system prevention efforts (McMahon et al., 2024).

Policy responses must prioritize sustainability rather than framing recruitment and retention as endpoints in themselves. Although financial incentives and accelerated pathways may increase entry into the profession, this approach risks obscuring the more fundamental issue of how teachers can be supported to thrive, not merely remain (Heffernan et al., 2022). Given the longstanding pattern of policies being enacted on teachers rather than developed with them, centring teacher voice in reform processes is essential. This includes addressing workload through curriculum decluttering, class-size reductions, role clarification, and limiting excessive monitoring and surveillance demands, even when broader structural reform is constrained (Heffernan et al., 2022).

Finally, teacher well-being is shaped not only by organizational factors but also by broader societal narratives surrounding the profession. Increasingly, teachers are positioned as individually responsible for addressing complex academic, behavioural, and psychosocial needs, often without sufficient autonomy or societal recognition (Ghasemi, 2025a). These expectations may intensify moral strain and feelings of devaluation. There is a need for greater collective responsibility extending beyond schools to families, communities, and public discourse. Policy and public education initiatives that clarify teachers' roles, acknowledge systemic constraints, and emphasize shared responsibility for student well-being may help recalibrate expectations and strengthen school–family partnerships. Reframing teaching as emotionally demanding and socially essential work may be critical to restoring professional trust and respect and sustaining long-term system change.

Limitations

As with all empirical research, the findings of the present study should be interpreted in light of several limitations related to self-report methodology, sampling and recruitment procedures, measurement considerations, and generalizability.

First, the exclusive reliance on self-report measures introduces the potential for response biases, including item misinterpretation and socially desirable responding, particularly given the sensitive nature of mental health and occupational well-being (Grimm, 2010). However, this concern is partially mitigated by the understanding that job demands and stress are inherently subjective experiences, positioning ECTs as the most valid informants of their own perceptions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The voluntary nature of participation also raises the possibility of self-selection bias. Because the study was explicitly framed around teacher well-being, individuals experiencing greater distress may have been more likely to participate, potentially inflating prevalence estimates. Although similar patterns have been documented in prior research, caution is warranted when generalizing levels of burnout to the broader ECT population.

Sampling procedures further constrain generalizability. Despite national recruitment efforts, participants were disproportionately drawn from Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, likely reflecting both provincial workforce size and the accessibility of online teacher networks. The sample was also predominantly female (87%), which, while reflective of the profession, limits generalizability to cisgender men and gender-diverse educators. As such, findings should not be interpreted as nationally representative. The timing of data collection may also have influenced responses. Surveys were administered during periods of heightened public discourse surrounding labour negotiations and during summer months when many educators

were not actively teaching. These contextual factors may have shaped reflections on stress and professional sustainability, potentially affecting participation and reported distress.

Measurement considerations represent another limitation. Although the findings supported the BCI's 14-factor structure, certain subscales (e.g., self-distraction) continue to raise conceptual and psychometric concerns consistent with prior critiques (Rodrigues et al., 2022). Alternative factor models remain contested, and future research should examine measurement invariance using techniques such as exploratory factor analysis to assess the stability of coping structures across teacher populations. Additionally, some features of the survey design offer limited analytic precision. For example, demographic items did not allow multiple selections, posing challenges for teachers in multi-grade classrooms. Several potentially influential contextual variables (e.g., class size, student needs, school socioeconomic context, remuneration, and teacher ethnicity) were also not assessed. Relatedly, the design of the open-ended questions may have shaped the nature of participants responses. The third open-ended question focused explicitly on demands, without a parallel prompt addressing available resources. This framing may have inadvertently directed participants' attention toward barriers and constraints, potentially underrepresenting the role of supportive factors in shaping coping. A more balanced or neutral question structure, or the inclusion of an additional item explicitly targeting resources, may have yielded a more comprehensive account of the demands-resources dynamic.

Finally, data integrity and qualitative representation warrant consideration. Although safeguards were implemented to detect fraudulent responses, the possibility of undetected inauthentic responses cannot be fully eliminated. Moreover, not all participants completed open-ended items, meaning qualitative findings may reflect the perspectives of those most motivated or able to articulate their experiences rather than the full sample. The mixed-methods design also

introduced an inherent methodological tension that required ongoing navigation as the researcher. Balancing both quantitative and qualitative approaches involved continuous reflexive decision-making, particularly in determining the level of depth achievable with a brief-text format and how to meaningfully integrate these insights with statistical findings. Although the convergent design allowed for complementary perspectives, the qualitative responses were inherently constrained by their brevity, and the integration reflects a pragmatic alignment rather than a full reconciliation of methodological traditions.

Future Directions

The limitations of the present study point to several important directions for future research. Although recent scholarship has documented the scope of teacher stress and burnout, there remains limited empirical attention to teachers' in-class experiences when students present with complex mental health needs. Future studies should more directly examine how student mental health challenges shape teachers' daily coping demands, emotional labour, and perceptions of professional sustainability, particularly within inclusive and under-resourced classroom contexts.

Another priority involves clarifying how ECTs draw on both personal and professional resources to manage work-related stress. Entering the profession with limited classroom mastery, heightened evaluative scrutiny, and constrained autonomy may restrict ECTs' engagement in problem-focused coping and increase reliance on emotion-focused or support-based strategies. Longitudinal research is needed to examine how self-efficacy develops across the early career period and whether growth in self-efficacy is associated with greater use of adaptive coping strategies, such as planning and positive reframing, as well as reduced vulnerability to burnout and intention to leave.

Future research should also attend to ECTs' access to and engagement with mental health supports, as structural barriers such as cost, limited benefits, time constraints, and stigma may impede help-seeking. Studies are needed examining how ECTs conceptualize psychological support, what facilitates or inhibits service use, and whether timely access to care moderates the relationship between occupational stress and professional sustainability. Additionally, research could explore the perceived utility of different counselling approaches (e.g., CBT, ACT, compassion-focused, relational) in strengthening personal resources such as resilience, self-efficacy, and cognitive flexibility.

Longitudinal and repeated-measures designs are particularly needed to capture coping as a dynamic process. Such approaches would allow researchers to examine how coping strategies and well-being fluctuate across academic cycles and career stages, and to differentiate strategies that primarily reduce negative outcomes (e.g., burnout) from those that promote positive indicators such as resilience and life satisfaction. This is particularly relevant in light of the present findings, where planning was associated with both higher resilience and increased burnout and intention to leave, suggesting that its function may differ across short and long-term timeframes. For example, while planning may support goal attainment, structure, and a sense of control in the moment, it may also contribute to sustained cognitive load and overextension under conditions of chronic demand. Problem-focused strategies, including planning, instrumental support, and active coping, remain underexplored in relation to positive well-being outcomes despite theoretical support for their long-term benefits.

Future studies should also incorporate a broader range of contextual and moderating variables, including leadership practices, school culture, classroom composition, workplace support, remuneration, and teacher self-efficacy. Greater attention to sociocultural factors such as

race, gender identity, socioeconomic context, and teaching environment is essential for understanding differential experiences of stress and resilience, particularly among historically underrepresented educators.

Methodologically, future research would benefit from multi-method designs and the inclusion of social desirability measures to strengthen construct validity. Stratified or randomly sampled approaches may reduce self-selection bias and improve representativeness, particularly when paired with recruitment strategies that extend beyond social media. Qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, including interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and diary methods could provide richer insight into teachers' lived experiences and address ongoing concerns regarding overreliance on self-report. Finally, future research should move beyond single-role perspectives to examine the broader school ecosystem. Systems-oriented approaches that include administrators, educational assistants, and mental health professionals may offer deeper insight into how organizational climates and interdependent roles jointly contribute to either the depletion or protection of educator well-being.

Conclusion

The present study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to examine the coping strategies utilized by Canadian ECTs, their relationship with key mental health outcomes (resilience, burnout, and intention to leave), their perceived effectiveness, and the barriers and stressors that shape teachers' capacity to cope effectively. By integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, this study sought to generate a more holistic and contextually grounded understanding of ECT well-being during a critical and vulnerable career period.

Consistent with the literature, the findings underscore that teaching remains one of the most psychologically demanding professions, with stressors becoming increasingly complex,

intensified, and insufficiently supported in the post-pandemic landscape (Sokal et al., 2025). If left unaddressed, these conditions could pose serious risks not only to educator well-being, but also the sustainability and quality of the education system. With approximately 40% of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years and declining interest in entering the field more broadly, teacher attrition represents a pressing societal concern (Gunn et al., 2023; Sokal et al., 2025). The present study contributes to this body of work by providing the first empirical examination of coping strategies and associated well-being outcomes among a Canadian ECT sample, offering timely insights into the lived realities of teachers navigating early professional demands.

Findings from this study substantiate and extend current understandings of educator well-being at a global level. Teachers reported drawing upon a diverse repertoire of coping strategies and self-care practices to manage stress and support their well-being, including strategies oriented toward emotion regulation, social connection, meaning-making, and professional engagement. Importantly, well-being was not solely defined by the absence of distress, but also be experiences of positive interpersonal relationships, a sense of purpose, and authentic engagement in meaningful work within school communities. At the same time, results revealed increasing mental health challenges among ECTs, potentially reflecting the inadequacy of relying exclusively on individual-level coping in the absence of supportive organizational and systemic conditions.

The qualitative findings further illuminated the presence of multiple factors threatening teacher mental health, including structural workload pressures, limited access to resources, financial strain, and systemic barriers to implementing preferred coping strategies, and developing teacher resilience. These findings underscore the need for interventions that operate

at corresponding ecological levels and involve system-level change agents, rather than placing the onus of change solely on individual teachers. Together, the integrated results emphasize that protective teacher well-being requires both strengthening personal coping capacities and addressing the broader organizational, policy, and cultural contexts in which ECTs work.

Finally, given the negative psychological and professional consequences of chronic work-related stress, continued research and coordinated actions are urgently needed to safeguard the mental health of ECTs. Mental health services for educators may require rethinking to move beyond reactive and downstream approaches and toward more holistic, preventative, specialized, and strengths-based approaches. In response to these findings, this study proposes an orientation that emphasizes resilience, social-emotional competencies, and systemic prevention as central components of sustainable teacher well-being. By informing early professional education, targeted training, and the development of accessible and contextually responsive mental health supports, this research aims to contribute to efforts to retain teachers, enhance educator well-being, and ultimately strengthen educational systems for the benefit of students, schools, and communities.

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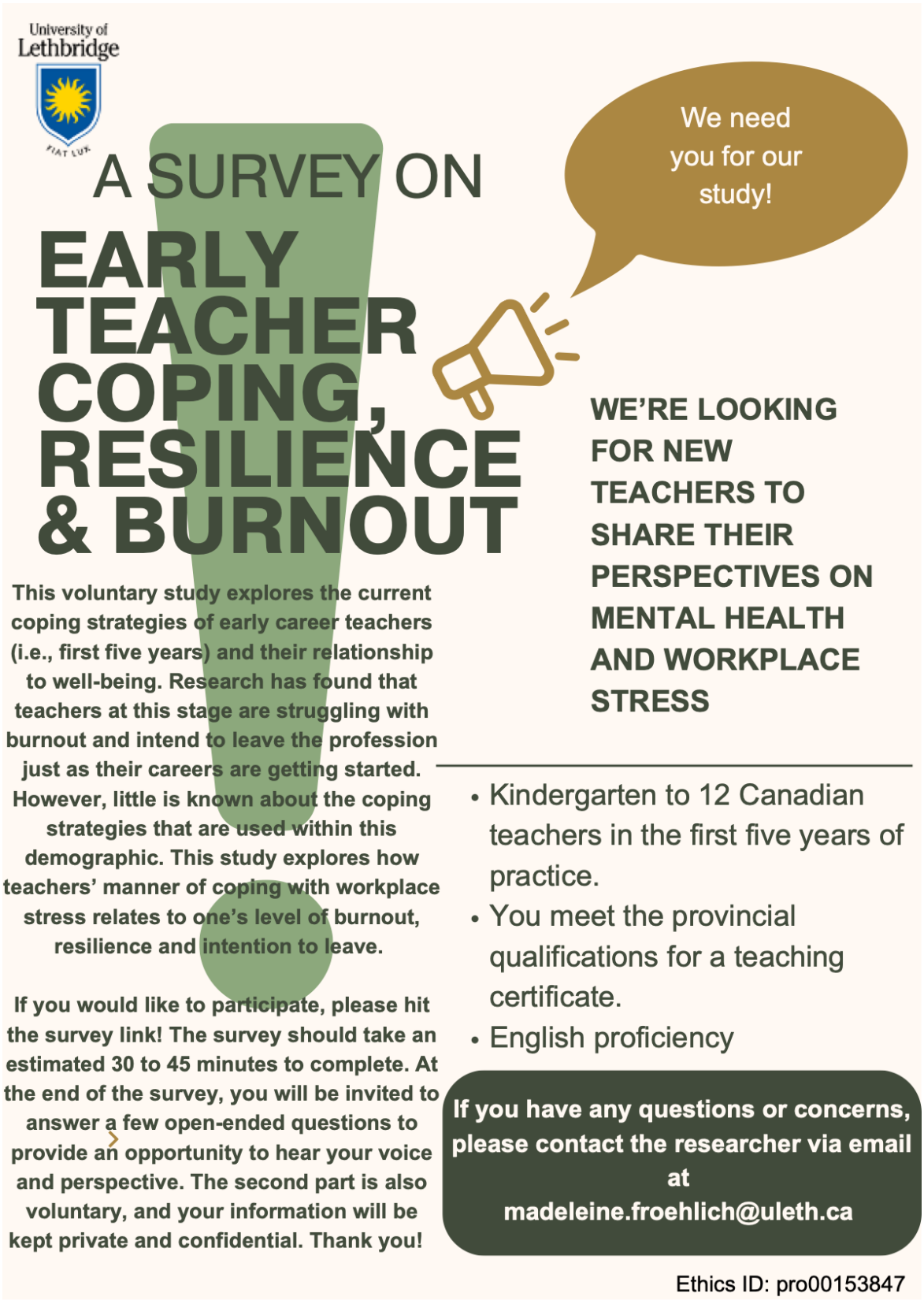
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT POSTER



APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Note to Participants: *You are under no obligation to provide an answer for any item you do not wish to. Please select the most appropriate answer.*

Please indicate your age.

- 18-20
- 20-25
- 26-34
- 35- 44
- 45- 54
- 55- 64
- 65+

Please indicate which gender you identify with:

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary
- Transgender
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to say

Do you live in Canada?

- Yes
- No

What province do you currently reside and practice in?

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Northwest Territories
- Nova Scotia
- Nunavut
- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan
- Yukon

What best describes the school system you are a part of?

- Public
- Private
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

Are you fluent in English?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your current relationship status.

- Unmarried, no partner

Unmarried, partner
Living, common-law
Married
Separated
Divorced
Widowed
Other: _____
Prefer not to say

Are you currently employed as a K – 12 teacher?
Yes
No

What is the highest level of education you have completed
Post-secondary (bachelor's) degree
Master's degree (e.g., MA, MEd, MSc)
Professional doctorate degree (e.g., JD, MD)
Doctorate degree (e.g., PhD)
Do not know
Other: _____

How many years have you been teaching?
Less than a year
1 year
2 years
3 years
4 years
5 years
Other_____

What is you contract type?
Full-time teacher
Part-time teacher
Probationary (no guarantee that the contract will be renewed at the end of its term)
Substitute
Other: _____

Are you a certified teacher, as defined by your jurisdiction of employment?
Yes
No
If not, please explain: _____

What grade(s) are you currently teaching?
Kindergarten
Grade 1
Grade 2
Grade 3
Grade 4
Grade 5
Grade 6
Grade 7
Grade 8

Grade 9
Grade 10
Grade 11
Grade 12
Other: _____

Do you work in a rural or urban area?

Urban (e.g., city over 10, 000 people)
Rural (e.g., under 10,000 people)
Both
Other_____

APPENDIX C: THE BRIEF COPING ORIENTATION TO PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED

1 = I haven't been doing this at all
2 = I've been doing this a little bit
3 = I've been doing this a medium amount
4 = I've been doing this a lot

I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.
I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.
I've been saying to myself "this isn't real.".
I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.
I've been getting emotional support from others.
I've been giving up trying to deal with it.
I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.
I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.
I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.
I've been getting help and advice from other people.
I've been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.
I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
I've been criticizing myself.
I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.
I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.
I've been giving up the attempt to cope.
I've been looking for something good in what is happening.
I've been making jokes about it.
I've been doing something to think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.
I've been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.
I've been expressing my negative feelings.
I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.
I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.
I've been learning to live with it.
I've been thinking hard about what steps to take.
I've been blaming myself for things that happened.
I've been praying or meditating.
I've been making fun of the situation.

(Carver, 1997)

APPENDIX D: MULTIDIMENSIONAL TEACHER RESILIENCE SCALE

	TR-Prof	At school I can be flexible when situations change	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Prof	I can quickly adapt to new situations at school	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Prof	I am well organised in my school work	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Prof	I reflect on my teaching and learning to make future plans	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Emot	When something goes wrong at school I don't take it too personally	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Emot	After reflection, I can usually find the funny side of challenging school situations	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Emot	When I feel upset or angry at school I can manage to stay calm	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Emot	I balance my role as a teacher with other dimensions in my life	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	TR-Mot	I am generally optimistic at school	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
0	TR-Mot	At school I focus on building my strengths more than focusing on my limitations	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
1	TR-Mot	When I make mistakes at school I see these as learning opportunities	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
2	TR-Mot	In my role as a teacher I set goals and work towards achieving them	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
3	TR-Mot	I have realistic expectations of myself as a teacher	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
4	TR-Mot	I believe that if I put my mind to something at school I can be successful	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

5	TR-Mot	I am good at maintaining my motivation and enthusiasm when things get challenging at school	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
6	TR-Mot	I enjoy learning when I am at work	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
7	TR-Mot	I like challenges in my work	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
8	TR-Mot	I am persistent in my work	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
9	TR-Mot	I believe that I have control over my work life	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
0	TR-Mot	It's important to me that I put in effort to do my job well	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
1	TR-Soc	When I am unsure of something I seek help from colleagues	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
2	TR-Soc	I am good at building relationships in new school environments	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
3	TR-Prof	In my role as a teacher, i am a good communicator	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
4	TR-Soc	In my work I can look at a situation a number of ways to find a solution	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
5	TR-Prof	At work I can view situations from other people's perspectives	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
6	TR-Soc	When I am at work I can generally resolve conflicts with others	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

(Mansfield & Wosnitza**,** 2015).

APPENDIX E: THE SCALE OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The following sentences describe how you feel about yourself. Read each statement carefully. Please circle a number next to each statement that most reflects your life. There are no right or wrong answers.

1=disagree completely, 2=disagree moderately, 3=disagree somewhat, 4= neither disagree not agree, 5=agree somewhat, 6=agree moderately, 7=agree completely

1. I am good at starting new conversations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. My friends and/or family, keep me up to speed on important events	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I am good at making new friendships	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. My friends and/or family, are supportive of one another	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. When working on something, I make a list of things to do in order of importance	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I am confident in my ability to solve problems	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. My friends and/or family, spend free time together	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. When working on something, I set priorities before I start	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. I am confident in my ability to succeed	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. I am confident in my ability to think out and plan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. I am confident in my ability to think on my feet	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I am good at working with others as part of a team	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. I am good at socializing with new people	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. I am confident in my ability to achieve goals	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. When working on something, I organize my time well	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. I am good at interacting with others	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. I am good at being with other people	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. When working on something, I plan things out	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. I am confident in my ability to make good decisions/choices	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. My friends and/or family see things the same way as I do	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. My friends and/or family are seen as united	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. When working on something, I do better if I set a goal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. My friends and/or family are optimistic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. When working on something, I can see the order in which to do things	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I.D. _____ Ethnicity_____ Age_____ Sex_____ Grade_____	

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY	
Total for questions 1, 3, 12, 13, 16, and 17	
Total for questions 2, 4, 7, 20, 21, and 23	
Total for questions 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 19	
Total for questions 5, 8, 15, 18, 22, and 24	
Total for all questions	
School ID (please indicate the school in which the child is enrolled)	

Please calculate the Mean scores for each of the subscales as follows:

The total for row A/6 = _____Social Skills
The total for row B/6 = _____Social Support
The total for row C/6 = _____Goal Efficacy
The total for row D/6 = _____Planning Prioritizing Behavior
The total score is the SUM of the Mean score for each subscale.
Total Score _____
Mean scores below 5 on any subscale indicate a deficit in that protective factor.
Please circle the type of administration which best applies:
Self-report Counselor Assisted

For additional materials please contact the SPF Lab at Elisabeth-poncegarcia@ouhsc.edu. (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015).

APPENDIX F: COPENHAGEN BURNOUT INVENTORY

Personal Burnout

1. How often do you feel tired?
2. How often are you physically exhausted?
3. How often are you emotionally exhausted?
4. How often do you think: “I can’t take it anymore?”
5. How often do you feel worn out?
6. How often do you feel weak and susceptible to illness?

Work-related Burnout

7. Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?
8. Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day at work?
9. Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?
10. Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time?*
11. Is your work emotionally exhausting?
12. Does your work frustrate you?
13. Do you feel burnt out because of your work?

Response Options:
Always - 100%
Often - 75%
Sometimes - 50%
Seldom - 25%
Never/almost never – 0%

Student-related Burnout

14. Do you find it hard to work with students?
15. Does it drain your energy to work with students?
16. Do you find it frustrating to work with students?
17. Do you feel that you give more than you get back when you work with students?

Response Options:
Always - 100%
Often - 75%
Sometimes - 50%
Seldom - 25%
Never/almost never - 0%

18. Are you tired of working with students?
19. Do you sometimes wonder how long you will be able to continue working with students?

Response Options:
To a very high degree - 100%
To a high degree - 75%
Somewhat - 50%

To a low degree - 25%
To a very low degree - 0%

**Item is revere scored*
**Note: For questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 & 19 the term “clients” was changed to “students.”

(Kristensen et al., 2005).

APPENDIX G: INTENTION TO LEAVE

1. "Thinking about quitting teaching" (Never to Constantly)
2. "Intention to quit teaching" (responses range from "Very unlikely" to "Certain")
3. "Intentions to move to another profession" (responses also range from "Very unlikely" to "Certain")

**Note: For questions 2 and 3, the term “profession” was changed to “teaching.”

(Hackett et al., 2005).

APPENDIX H: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. Thinking back to the most recent stressful event at work, please rate on a scale of 1 (not stressful) to 10 (highly stressful) how stressful the experience was.
    a) What strategies did you use to cope with the situation? (i.e., personal and/or professional)
    b) How did it impact your resilience as a teacher? (e.g., Did it make you stronger as a professional? Did it make you consider leaving the profession?)
2.
    a) What barriers, if any, prevent you from using the coping strategies you believe would be most effective in managing teaching challenges and supporting your well-being?
    b) How has this impacted your perception of the teaching profession?

APPENDIX I: RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD LETTER OF APPROVAL

Date:	May 26, 2025
Study ID:	Pro00153847
Principal Investigator:	Madeleine Froehlich
Study Supervisor:	Thelma Gunn
Study Title:	Thesis Proposal: Early Career Teachers' Coping Strategies and Mental Health: A Mixed-Methods Exploration
Approval Expiry Date:	May 25, 2026

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 2. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

Approved Documents:

Recruitment Materials
Recruitment Poster Version 3
Consent Forms
Updated Letter of Implied Consent
Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.
Demographic Questions
The Brief-Cope
Copenhagen Burnout Inventory
Multidimensional Teacher Resilience
Personal Resilience
Intention to Leave
Open-Ended Questions

Updated Demographic Questions
Other Documents
Debriefing Form

Any proposed changes to the study must be submitted to the REB for approval prior to implementation. A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the REB does not constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of this research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring required approvals from other involved organizations (e.g., University of Lethbridge, community organizations, school boards) are obtained, before the research begins.

Sincerely,

Ubaka Ogbogu, LLB, BL, LLM, SJD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 2

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

APPENDIX J: LETTER OF IMPLIED CONSENT

Title of the Study: Early Career Teachers' Coping Strategies and Mental Health: A Mixed-Methods Exploration

Principal Investigator: Madeleine Froehlich Graduate Student
Faculty of Education, Counselling Psychology University of Lethbridge
Lethbridge, AB
Supervisor: Dr. Thelma Gunn

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in this study about early career teachers coping strategies and mental health.

Purpose of the Study: The primary purpose of the research is to explore how teachers at the beginning of their career deal with the many stressors and barriers that currently exist. The study consists of a voluntary survey that has demographic questions, Likert scales assessing for coping strategies, burnout, resilience and intention to leave the profession and open-ended questions. The study aims to see how one's coping strategies relate to critical aspects of teacher mental health and see how it can be applied to improve teacher education, training and mental health support. This study is designed to bring both a quantitative investigation of the variables and a qualitative approach to understanding the experiences and meanings, providing real-world results.

Benefits: You may receive no personal benefits from participation in the study. Additionally, there is no guarantee that you will benefit from participating in this research in any way. However, you may contribute to improving research-based interventions focused on improving teacher mental health and combatting the high attrition rate within the profession, and an opportunity to gain insight into your perspective on the field and yourself.

Participation: If you wish to participate in this study, please proceed by clicking "next" to complete the survey.

By beginning the survey: You are indicating that you have the information needed to make an informed choice to participate. You agree to submit your anonymous data for inclusion in this study.

The survey should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. This study is completely voluntary, and you can skip a question or end it anytime. You will be asked questions about your current teaching role, your mental health and personal information (e.g., gender, age, relationship status) that has been found to be related to teacher burnout. Once the survey is completed, please click on the "Submit" button to so your answers will be recorded. Your participation will remain anonymous; however, your information will be collected and stored for analysis.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. Although there are no known risks, it is important to note that you are free not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, and you can end the survey at any time. Please be advised that some items in the survey contain items of sensitive nature related to burnout, such as negative emotions.
If you require immediate mental health support, please contact the 24-hour Crisis Services Canada at 1 (833) 456- 4566 or text 45645. If you would like to speak with a counsellor in your area, place consult the Canadian Mental Health Association at cmha.ca. If it is an emergency, please call 9-1-1.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information shared via the survey will be confidential and solely used for the study. The only individuals accessing the data will be the researcher, the supervisor and the committee members. All data will not be associated with any names or

personally identifying information. Moreover, all data will be summarized in aggregate form. All participant data will be held in a password-encrypted file. The information provided will be reviewed by the research team, allowing for checks of accuracy. For this reason, your data may be looked at people from the Research Ethics Board or by the University of Alberta auditors. Finally, the data is subjected to USA privacy legislation as it is collected via Qualtrics. Participants should be aware that privacy can never be guaranteed with electronic surveys. In order to minimize personal risk, it is recommended that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device once they are no longer in use.

Data Storage: Electronic copies of the survey will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer. Furthermore, all data will be permanently deleted five years after the completion of the study.

Compensation or Reimbursement: This study will have no personal compensation or reimbursement.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate, and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer. Should you withdraw midway through the electronic survey, close the link, and no response will be included. However, withdrawing from the survey once you have completed and submitted it will not be possible, due to its anonymous nature. Refusal to participate will not initiate prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits.

Information about the Study Results: The results of the study will be a part of Madeleine's Master's thesis at the University of Lethbridge. The results of the study are expected to be disseminated in academic presentations, conferences and papers. If you want to obtain the study's results, contact the principal researcher at

Contact Information: If you have any questions or require more information about the study, madeleine.froehlich@uleth.ca or the supervisor thelma.gunn@uleth.ca

A Research Ethics Board has reviewed the plan for this study at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Please print a copy of this for your records.

If you do not wish to consent to participate in this study, please close your window now.
Completion and submission of the survey means you consent to participate.

APPENDIX K: DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you for participating in this study! Your contribution is deeply appreciated.
Purpose: I previously informed you that this study aims to investigate the current coping strategies that Canadian early career teachers (i.e., first five years) are using to manage the many stressors and barriers at work and maintain their well-being. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a decrease in the number of individuals entering University education programs (Sokal et al., 2025). In addition, 40% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of entering the field (Gunn et al., 2023). Previous research has found that poor mental health outcomes, such as burnout, may be a leading contributor to the issue. The present study will help increase our understanding of how resilient teachers cope with stress and inform teacher education and interventions to improve well-being. Thank you again for your participation!
Confidentiality: Please do not disclose research procedures to anyone who might participate in this study, as this could impact the study results.
Final Report: The results of the study will be a part of Madeleine Froehlich's master's thesis, which is anticipated to be disseminated in academic presentations, conferences and papers. If you would like to receive a direct copy of the final paper, a summary of the findings or more information on any of the topics highlighted in the study, please feel free to contact us.
Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, its purpose or procedures or if you have a research-related problem, please feel free to contact us.
Questions or Concerns: If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the principal researcher at madeleine.froehlich@uleth.ca or the supervisor Dr. Thelma Gunn at thelma.gunn@uleth.ca. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Lethbridge Human Participation Research Ethics, research.services@uleth.ca or call (403)- 329-2747.
Mental Health Support: If you are experiencing any distress after completing the study or find that some questions or aspects of the study upsetting, speaking with a qualified mental health professional may help. The following is a list of Canada-wide mental health resources that are available:
Crisis Services Canada Toll-Free (24/7): 1 (833)- 456- 4566 or Text Support (4 pm-12 am ET daily): 45645
Canadian Crisis Hotline: 1 (888)- 353- 2273
The Canadian Mental Health Association (cmha.ca) to find a counsellor in your area

In a serious emergency, please remember that you can also call 9-1-1 for immediate assistance.