

# Burnout: Why Are Teacher Educators Reaching Their Limits?

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## Abstract

Burnout among our P-12 teachers has been well documented throughout the years. Yet, little research has been conducted into the burnout of higher education professionals in general, and teacher educators more specifically. Lackritz (2004) found that emotional exhaustion is significantly and positively related to teaching load, grading, office hours, grant money, service time, and number of service activities. This research looks further into the variables that may impact burnout for higher education faculty, specifically in teacher education, seeking to answer the questions: Are teacher educators in NY experiencing symptoms of burnout? If so, what internal and/or external factors/conditions are contributing to their burnout? Are specific groups of teacher educators more at-risk for developing burnout more so than others? Survey results reveal that teacher educators currently have a very low to moderate chance of burnout, but report experiencing many of the stressors that have been identified as leading to future burnout. The findings build on and extend beyond Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter's (2001) framework which includes factors of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values.

## Keywords

burnout, higher education, teacher educators

Burnout can come at a high cost for both employers and employees. Burnout has been linked to withdrawal, absenteeism, turnover, negative relationships with colleagues, substance abuse, health

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issues, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, ineffectiveness, mediocre productivity, and lack of accomplishment (Lackritz, 2004; Mashlach et al., 2001). From turnover alone, the financial costs for some universities could be up to \$68 million annually (Jo, 2008). In P-12 contexts, burnout can have even further reaching consequences as “Teacher burnout presents a problem for students, their families, and school systems as they attempt to respond to students’ academic, behavioral, and social struggles” (Burnsting et al., 2014, p.683). Higher education is not immune to such consequences. However, research examining the reasons for burnout among higher education faculty and specifically teacher educators, is sparse (Hogan & McKnight, 2007).

The term “burnout” was first used by Freudenberger in 1974 to explain a syndrome that he observed in healthcare workers. Over the years since Freudenberger first operationalized the term, researchers have refined and at times redefined “burnout.” For the purposes of this study we will use Maslach & Jackson’s (1986) definition of burnout which is, “Emotional exhaustion, feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work; depersonalization, an unfeeling or impersonal response toward students; and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, a loss of personal efficacy” (as cited in Hogan & Knight, 2007, p.119). It is important to note that in any definition of burnout, a person can be dissatisfied with their job and not have the other symptoms of burnout (Brunsting et al, 2014).

Although burnout is an identified condition, the causes of burnout are highly debatable. Over the years, researchers have studied variables such as

job satisfaction, job stress (workload, role conflict, and role ambiguity), job withdrawal (turnover, absenteeism), job expectations, relations with coworkers and supervisors (social support on the job), relations with clients, caseload, type of position and time in the job, agency policy, and so forth. (Maslach & Schaufeli, 2017, p.7)

Maslach and colleagues (2001), have done extensive research on the topic of burnout and have two theories about why individuals experience burnout. They believe that either the best and most idealistic people experience burnout because they end up doing too much and as a result become exhausted and cynical, or burnout is the manifestation of prolonged exposure to chronic stress. To date, Maslach and colleagues’ (2001) research has supported the later hypothesis, as their findings indicate that “situational and organizational factors play a bigger role in burnout than individual ones” (p.418). A newer publication by Maslach and Schaufeli in 2017 continues their support for this hypothesis.

### ***Organizational Factors Contributing to Burnout***

With results indicating organizational factors contribute to burnout, Maslach and colleagues (2001) explored how burnout is related to the degree of fit between a person and his or her job requirements. From their research results they theorized that “burnout arises from chronic mismatches between people and their work setting in terms of some or all of six areas” (Maslach et al., 2001, p.414). The six areas identified by Maslach and colleagues (2001) include: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values.

*Workload.* The idea that “too many demands exhaust an individual’s energy to the extent that recovery becomes impossible” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 414) does not come as any surprise. In higher education, workload demands vary in terms of time, intensity, and complexity and are impacted by things such as

the number of students taught, teaching load, grading time, office hours, grant pursuits, number of service activities, professional development opportunities, and publication demands (Lackritz, 2004). Lackritz (2004) found that several of these factors predicted emotional exhaustion, depression, and overall burnout. For example, Lackritz (2004) found that as the total number of students taught and the number of graduate students taught increased so did teacher educators' emotional exhaustion and depression. Teaching load, grading time, office hours, grant money, and number of service activities engaged in were all identified as significant predictors of emotional exhaustion (Lackritz, 2004). Maslach and colleagues (2001) believe that when faculty are unsure of their job responsibilities due to role ambiguity and conflict, burnout is more likely to occur.

*Control.* A mismatch in control is often related to a lack of feedback, autonomy, and participation in decision making (Maslach et al., 2001). This may manifest in one's responsibilities exceeding his or her authority; a lack of control over needed resources (Maslach et al., 2001) including personnel, equipment, supplies, and space (Schaufeli et al., 2009); or even lack of control in establishing priorities on a day to day basis (Lackritz, 2004). Even though Malendez and Guzman (1983) wrote the following description decades ago, their comments regarding a lack of control for college faculty are still highly applicable today,

College instructors consistently experience lack of control over time, lack of material resources, and lack of communication. Educators often feel they are victims of situational stress and have little control over such factors. Declining enrollments, dismissal of staff, and reassignments are just a few of the stressful situations... Decreasing authority and status, low salaries because of financial constraints, and an emphasis on accountability and evaluation create feelings of powerlessness among educators. (p. 29-30)

*Reward.* It should come as no surprise that burnout has been found to be related to feelings of insufficient financial rewards including salary and benefits, as well as insufficient social rewards (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Lackritz (2004), in higher education especially, there tends to be a feeling of having to take on more responsibilities for little to no reward, academic martyrdom if you will, which when coupled with the recent media/political assault on education, can exacerbate the feelings of insufficient rewards. In some disciplines, the salaries for college professors often do not justify the cost of obtaining a doctorate to teach (Minter, 2009).

*Community.* A loss of positive connections, chronic and unresolved conflicts, and a lack of social support, especially from supervisors has also been found to be contributing factors to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Vernold, 2008). When positive connections and relationships with others decline and become impersonal, feelings of isolation and conflict can develop which can also contribute to burnout (Lackritz, 2004; Maslach et al., 2001; Minter, 2009).

*Fairness.* According to Maslach and colleagues (2001), "fairness communicates respect and confirms a person's self-worth" (p. 415). Inequality of workload or pay, as well as cheating and/or cutting corners may also contribute to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). When a workplace is viewed as unfair, trust, respect, and openness are lost (Lackritz, 2004), and employees are left emotionally exhausted and likely more cynical and detached (Maslach et al., 2001).

*Values.* A conflict between organizational values and personal values is the sixth area of mismatch identified (Malendez & Guzman, 1983; Maslach et al., 2001; Shaufeli et al., 2009). Sometimes, people may even feel that they are asked to “do things that are unethical and not in accord with their own values” (Maslach et al., 2001, p.415). There may also be a lack of consistency between the organization’s stated mission and their actual practice (Lackritz, 2004; Maslach et al., 2001).

### ***Demographic Factors Contributing to Burnout***

Beyond the aforementioned six areas of situational context that previous studies have found contribute to burnout, there are several demographic factors that have also been found to correlate with burnout. For example, Lackritz (2004) found age to be significantly related to burnout, with younger faculty exhibiting more emotional exhaustion than their older colleagues (Lackritz, 2004). However, Lackritz (2004) also found that the longer someone was employed as a faculty member the more likely they were to be emotionally exhausted combined with lower feelings of personal accomplishment. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter’s (2001) study found that sex and marital status were not significant predictors of burnout, however employees who were unmarried, especially men, appeared to be more prone to burnout. Lackritz (2004) found that among higher education faculty, those with tenure or on a tenure track had higher levels of burnout than lecturers, but overall rank was not a predicting factor of burnout.

### ***Higher Education System and Teacher Educators***

According to Rush (2003), changes in the higher education system may be putting more stress on college and university professors than other professions. Changes to higher education include institutions offering greater accessibility for students with disabilities, and more nontraditional students (higher age, less than ideal academic performance, more minorities, more students of lower SES, and more from other countries), as well as implementing policies/procedures requiring greater technological skills and number of publications needed prior to faculty members obtaining tenure (Rush, 2003). Over the last two decades, teacher preparation programs have also seen an increase in regulations from state agencies as well as outside accreditors (Wieczorek et al., 2013), such as the current national accreditation agencies, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP). In some cases, the regulations of state agencies conflict with those of the national accreditation agencies, and at times these agencies create regulations in conflict with the core values of teacher education (Wieczorek et al., 2013). Such conflicts place teacher educators in a difficult position as they are forced to find ways to meet the new mandates while still maintaining the values of their programs. Given these additional challenges, it is important to ask teacher educators about the impact these factors have on their resiliency and burnout.

The current study seeks to do just that. The researchers have drawn on previous research into the contributing factors to burnout in order to survey current teacher preparation faculty about their levels of burnout and some of the factors that may be contributing to burnout. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Are current teacher educators in NY experiencing symptoms of burnout?
- If so, what internal and/or external factors/conditions are contributing to their burnout?
- Are specific groups of teacher educators at higher risk for developing burnout more so than others?

## Methods

The research was conducted in a natural setting and therefore can be considered as non-experimental in nature (Creswell, 2005). While this study relied on survey research to explore teacher educators' perspectives, the study may also be considered causal-comparative research as the study examined identified variables after they occurred in search of possible causes (Creswell, 2005).

Data for this study were collected through an electronic survey designed by the authors to examine educator burnout and related factors. Participation in the survey was voluntary and the survey was designed so that no names or personally identifying information were recorded on the survey materials. An electronic link to the survey was emailed to faculty, directors, and chairs who work in educator preparation programs throughout New York State prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. All emails were obtained through college and university websites. The survey contained questions regarding demographics of the individual and the institution for which they work. The survey also contained forty Likert scale questions and open-ended questions asking participants to rate different factors/situations they may have experienced in the workplace. The Likert questions were adapted from the *Educator Plateauing Survey* created by Henderson and Milstein (2003) and altered by the authors of this study, to include higher education specific questions. In the Likert scale questions, participants were presented with statements and asked to rate on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, how each statement applies to their beliefs about their positions. Examples of the Likert question statements presented to participants are as follows:

- The realities of my job come close to matching my initial expectations.
- When changes are made that impact my role and responsibilities, I feel included in decision-making process.
- I can complete my work duties and responsibilities during work hours and do not need to bring work home in order to meet deadlines.

The additional open ended questions were designed to give the participants the opportunity to share what they felt were the "biggest" stressors of their positions and to indicate whether or not they felt that the positive aspects of their jobs outweighed the negative stressors felt while working. Both the 40 Likert survey question responses and the open-ended question responses were categorized based upon the six areas, identified as impacting burnout; workload, control, rewards, community, fairness, and values, previously proposed by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001).

### *Participants*

The target population for this study was every teacher educator working in a New York State recognized teacher preparation program at the time of the study. The sample size for the study was determined by using self-selected sampling, hence, the participants of this study were selected because they were willing to participate.

The authors' electronic survey link was sent via email to 1463 teacher educators. 12 emails were bounced back with notifications that the intended recipients were no longer at the email addresses contacted. An additional 37 emails were bounced back with notifications that the intended recipients were out of the office for sabbaticals and/or other extended periods of time. Of the 1,414 teacher educators who received the survey, 162 teacher educators completed it, resulting in a final sample size of  $n = 162$  and response rate of 11.6 % of the target population.

Of the survey completers the majority were: between the ages of 55-64 (approximately 35%), White (approximately 86%), and female (approximately 69%). Over half of the survey completers worked at institutions with total institution enrollment of less than 10,000 students (approximately 61%) and had 11 or more years of experience in teacher education (approximately 67%). Of the survey completers approximately 40% had spent 11 or more years at their current institution. The majority of the survey completers were tenured or tenure track (approximately 67%), spent 50% of their time teaching, and worked in departments of 16 or more full-time employees (56%). Approximately 38% of the survey completers indicated that they worked in programs serving both undergraduate and graduate students.

### ***Data Analysis***

The authors of the study took a mixed-methods approach to analyzing the study's data. The authors used a number of quantitative statistical tests to determine relationships between variables as well as used qualitative coding techniques to categorize and analyze the responses to the open-ended questions. Both the 40 Likert survey responses and the open-ended responses were categorized based upon the six areas identified as impacting burnout, workload, control, rewards, community, fairness, and values, which were previously proposed by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001). The following data analysis techniques were used in this study:

- Descriptive statistics tests were used to summarize the overall trends/tendencies in the data, to provide information about the variability of scores compared to another.
- Multiple regression and logistic regression tests were used to examine the combined relationship of the multiple independent variables with the single dependent variable as well as were used to analyze the combined effect of all independent variables.
- Participants' responses to the open-ended questions were categorized and analyzed using a priori categories from Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter. However, not all data fit into these codes so grounded theory was used to analyze the data for other themes.

## **Results**

### ***Teacher Educators Experiencing Symptoms of Burnout***

Descriptive statistics were used to determine an overall burnout score and individual burnout subset scores in each of the six previously identified areas for situational context (workload, control, rewards, community, fairness, and values) found to contribute to burnout, for each participant. Overall burnout scores could fall on a 0 to 5.0 scale with lower burnout levels indicated by scores below 3.0 and higher burnout levels indicated by scores above 3.0. In this study, the overall burnout scores ranged from 1.87 to 4.75 with an average overall burnout score of 3.54. Of the study's participants, 77% had an overall burnout score above 3.0. Additionally, 90% of the participants in this study, had elevated (above a 3.0) burnout subset scores in at least of one of the six previously identified areas for situational context (workload, control, rewards, community, fairness, and values) found to contribute to burnout. The participants average burnout subset scores for each of the six areas ranged from 3.68 to 3.35 with rewards (3.68), fairness (3.58), and values (3.51) having the highest average burnout subset scores and control (3.49), community (3.37), and workload (3.35) having the lowest average burnout subset

scores. Based upon this data, it appears that yes, some teacher educators in NY are experiencing stressors identified as contributing to burnout.

### ***Internal and External Factors***

Quantitative and qualitative data from the survey was analyzed into the six areas identified as stressors impacting burnout; workload, control, rewards, community, fairness, and values, previously proposed by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001). Other internal and external conditions were also discovered and explored in the analysis process.

*Workload.* When asked, 84% of participants felt that they could not complete their work duties and responsibilities during work hours and needed to bring work home in order to meet deadlines. Survey results also revealed that 60% of participants felt burdened with the many things that they are responsible for at work. Many participants indicated they manage many responsibilities that often conflict, but are either necessary for tenure/promotion or keeping their position. As one participant noted; "Can't be a great teacher and have burden of research, which is only thing that matters for tenure."

A rough list of the responsibilities gathered from participants' overall comments (since we did not specifically ask about their responsibilities) includes: research and publication; tenure and promotion; service and committee work; teaching (planning, grading, etc.); managing facilities; meetings and emails; mentoring, advising, and helping students; boosting enrollment; placing and monitoring student fieldwork; administrative responsibilities; building and maintaining P-12 partnerships; accreditation; meeting state and federal requirements; supervising students in fieldwork and research; paperwork; leadership roles; grant writing; and teaching overloads: summer courses, night classes, and online classes. Here is what one participant said about his/her biggest stressor:

Too much to do. When you show competence at my institution, you are given more to do. I work 70-80 hours a week, even in the summer, and still cannot get everything done that needs to be done. I teach a full load (and extra) every semester, am the chair of my department, the accreditation coordinator and now the assessment coordinator for my school. I also have leadership positions on several important committees.

Despite heavy workloads, 74% of participants said they can usually find time to engage in leisure activities outside of work that they enjoy. However, participants still said lack of time in which to complete all of their work tasks and still maintain balance with home life was a major stressor. One participant commented, "Time is the resource I most lack. I find that I am stretched too thin and wish that I had more time to devote to all aspects of my job, but also to having a better work-life balance." Another participant, well into his or her career, reflected back on his/her career and the pressure for newer faculty,

Early on in my career, the top stressor was trying to balance research and publications with keeping my teaching scores on evaluations high. You simply cannot do both without something being sacrificed. I feel most new faculty, if they are successful as a faculty member, sacrifice family time. If they do not, they do not make tenure.

*Control.* Overall, comments by participants indicated that some of their administrators are making decisions without faculty input, and when specifically asked, 54% of participants did not feel included in

the decision-making process when changes were made that impact their roles and responsibilities. Half of participants (50%) also felt that their daily work schedules were often impacted by circumstances out of their control. One participant summed this up quite nicely when referring to his/her biggest stressor,

Requiring us to do things without asking for input from those front-line people in the trenches (my peers and me). In other words, shared decision-making...especially as it relates to the nitty-gritty of the job: the specific expectations (and the details that go along with those expectations) we have for new teachers and their mentor teachers and the timetable for rolling out new initiatives within the department. It appears that things are nearly always "last minute" and rushed as a result, instead of important stakeholders being included early on, changes being carefully thought through and the rollout timetable of those changes considered, and the program then evaluated after changes/improvements have been made to determine effectiveness of those changes.

Another challenge participants mentioned, was that they were expected to complete a task without access to the materials or systems necessary to do so. The comments make it clear these situations were not due to a lack of the resource, but restricted access to it, which made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to complete the task assigned to them.

*Reward.* When asked, 54% of participants indicated they did not feel they were justly compensated for the work that they do. One participant indicated his or her top stressor was wages and compared his or her wages to that of students just graduating from the program stating,

The top stressor is low wages. I am paid less than my students who graduate and get secondary teaching jobs...they start at Step 1 in the public school system in NYS, and begin making about \$10,000 more than I earn with 25 years teaching experience.

Analyzing the comments shows this lack of compensation goes beyond simply a monetary lack. As Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) explained, rewards are not just financial, but include social rewards such as esteem and gratitude. Participants felt there was a general lack of respect for educators in society, a lack of institutional respect for teacher educators or teacher preparation programs, a lack of respect for non-tenure track or tenured faculty, and a lack of recognition for much of the "extra" work done (usually things that do not lead to tenure and/or promotion). One participant said his/her top stressor was "The lack of support for public education; the lack of respect for teacher education; the business roundtable assault on university-based teacher education."

*Community.* Many of the top stressors indicated by participants included aspects of community relationships. Among these stressors were: unreasonable demands from senior faculty and administrators; lack of support from administrators and supervisors; university/college politics that prevent promotion; administrators who are not in tune with faculty needs, and/or program needs; lack of communication; lack of collaboration among all stakeholders; isolation; and poor leadership. One participant said his/her top stressor was, that their "New dean fears accreditors. We've taken a sudden and steep turn towards a bullying, corporate culture of leadership. As the administrative burden on the faculty increases the job is becoming not worth having." Another participant said his/her top stressor was "The politics from the dean/president's keep us/me down." When asked specifically, 40% of participants indicated they feel isolated when completing work tasks.

*Fairness.* Many of the participants indicated a lack of fairness at their institution; whether this was lack of institutional support for teacher preparation programs compared to other programs, unfair pay and/or



workload, lack of resources other programs on campus and/or other campuses possess, or lack of recognition for much of the “extra” work done (usually things that do not lead to promotion). In fact, 34% of participants felt like they did not have the resources to do their jobs, while 54% of participants did not feel they were justly compensated for the work that they do. One participant even commented that, “I find myself with more experience than everyone put together, but without the highest salary or salary title.” Another said that his/her “Dean doesn't 'believe in' teacher education because graduates don't give endowments so they won't add lines [for more faculty].”

There was also concern about fairness in position and/or title. Several participants noted being treated differently due to position (adjunct, clinical track, non-tenure track, tenure track, tenured, etc.) or education (Ph.D., Ed.D., Masters, etc.), while others noted that structures of tenure or seniority created a situation where some can say “no” to a task while others cannot. One participant also noted that “When you show competence at my institution, you are given more to do.”

While 63% of participants feel like they have the opportunity for advancement if they choose to pursue it, 39% of participants feel that advancing further in their organization's structure would require that they give up many of the things they really like about their current positions. So, while there seems to be more fairness in promotion at these institutions, some may not choose to advance because they would give up what they like most about their jobs.

Gender inequality in the tenure/promotion process was also brought up by participants. While this is an issue of fairness, it also speaks to the values of the institution in the tenure/promotion process. As one participant eloquently states,

The gender inequity is the biggest stressor. There is a gender inequity when it comes to balancing family, teaching, research, and service to the institution. What tends to happen to women is that they do less research and more service, so they can have a more flexible schedule in order to tend to children. Thus, women don't publish as much so they don't become full professors, since the criteria for full rests almost exclusively on publication. Men do less service, more research, and become full profs -- thus getting more money and more prestige.

*Values.* Throughout the participants' responses themes of value conflict can be found. Participants indicated differing opinions on priorities between faculty and administration and/or the institution as a whole; disagreement with state priorities, policies, and the certification process; and a mismatch between institutional values and those of teacher education. One participant said that to his/her institution, stating, “The least important part is the TEACHING and I feel this should be the MOST important!” Another participant expanded on this mismatch in values, stating,

I feel that there is a mismatch between the weight assigned to my work responsibilities by the institution with respect to retaining my job and the actual time commitment needed to fulfill the parts of my job that are least weighted by the institution.

Also included in participants comments, was the idea that best practices taught in teacher preparation are not in line with the certification process and sometimes not in line with practical PreK-12 experiences. One participant noted that a large stressor for his/her is “The conflict between State Certification Requirements and the realities of the public school system; there are far too many “hoops” for aspiring teachers to get through, and this distorts our programs in terms of content and curriculum.” Given these issues brought up by the participants, it is encouraging to note that only 19% of participants feel that their personal values and professional ethics are in conflict with the duties and responsibilities assigned to them by their supervisor and/or employer.

*Additional Factors.* Beyond these six areas, identified as stressors impacting burnout, the participants' responses to the open-ended questions highlighted additional areas of stress which appear to be unique to teacher educators.

*Students and Student Interactions.* As noted by Rush (2003), the population of students served by higher education institutions has changed. There is greater accessibility for students with disabilities; more nontraditional students (higher age, less than ideal academic performance, etc.) are being served; and there is greater diversity and globalization in the student population as well as curriculum. Participants in this study indicated their stressors include meeting the needs of traditional and non-traditional students and serving the diverse student population. Participants also indicated they are seeing a shift from viewing students as learners to viewing them as consumers and feeling pressure to meet the consumers' expectations. One participant commented that his/her biggest stressor was the "Marketplace structure where colleges are now "selling" their wares - education as a purchased commodity." This shift in view also seems to have placed more pressure on faculty to have positive student evaluations. Participants indicated other changes in students over the years, and stress over how to adequately support students as more come to college with a lack of maturity and readiness, and more emotional and mental health needs than ever before. One participant commented, "The students themselves have changed (over 30 years) and are now unbelievably stressed and less able to think for themselves." Another participant stressed the mental health needs of students, stating his/her top stressor is the "Increasing numbers of college students with serious mental health issues that prevent their successful engagement with college." Another repeated concern shared by the participants was feeling like they simply did not have enough time to address student concerns due to their time and energy being diverted to complete administrative duties.

*Finances.* Over the past few years, many institutions of higher education in New York have experienced financial difficulties for a number of reasons. In teacher education, we have seen a decline in enrollment, which has had a negative impact on budgets for teacher preparation programs, which our participants have indicated is a source of stress. There is also greater competition for students and resources both within the institution and between institutions. Federal and state economic instability and being in a budget crisis or shortfall were also cited by participants as sources of stress. Overall, the lack of funding for the institution and/or the teacher preparation program, lack of money for proper training for faculty and staff, lack of office space or classroom space, as well as lack of resources has become a stressor for teacher educators. One participant said, "I have not received sufficient training or information needed to perform as successfully in my role as I think I could with further guidance." Another indicated that he/she is "Expected to do more and better with less time and fewer resources."

*Staffing Decisions.* Due to the financial issues just discussed, it is no surprise that participants also expressed stress over being short staffed in both faculty and support staff positions due to hiring freezes, elimination of tenure-track positions, and the consolidation of positions/duties. Here are just a few of the things participants said regarding their stress related to staffing decisions:

- "Not having another person to share the work with or discuss how to get it organized and accomplished."
- "No redundancy in skill sets in the university, so this work falls on one or two people."

- “Staff are expected to do the job of 2-3 people because the university is "short-staffed" or "in a budget crisis", which is not fair, but we do what we do to get by.”
- “My top stressor is working in an environment where faculty have to do too many tasks that can be done by assistants and my time being wasted in those things rather than the strengths I can bring to the position/field.”

*External Pressures.* A unique aspect of teacher preparation programs are the external pressures from national accreditation agencies, such as CAEP and AAQEP; strict national and state regulations; the teacher certification process and certification exams (especially edTPA); and the need for P-12 partnerships. As one participant commented, “We have a mandate/requirement to place our teacher candidates in high quality P-12 educational venues, but there is no equivalent requirement for our P-12 partners to provide these placements for us.” Another participant commented that his/her biggest stressor was the “CAEP and SPA reports. Constant emails about data for spa reports. Other institutions have offices that do this work and write the endless reports. It is left on the faculty to do these and with no assurances that these reports count toward tenure and promotion.”

Participants also commented on the stress of a constantly changing political landscape in education and resulting changes to federal and state policies. There are also the changing priorities at the institutional level, which may or may not be in alignment with the national, state, and accreditation demands. One participant commented that his/her top stressor was “The constantly changing state regulations and national accreditation requirements that interfere with our ability to do our primary responsibilities effectively, given our capacity within our institution.” Another participant stated, “Dealing with NYSED, edTPA, accreditation, state cert tests, scrutiny of teacher educators, and all other federal and state reporting has sucked the joy from teacher education.”

### ***Demographic Impacts***

Multiple regression and logistic regression tests were used to examine the combined relationship of the multiple independent variables (age, position type, race, gender, etc.) with the single dependent variable (burnout) as well as were used to analyze the combined effect of all independent variables on overall burnout. The dependent variable was created by combining scores from all 40 of the Likert scale questions to determine an overall burnout average for each respondent. Overall burnout scores fell on a 0 to 5.0 scale with lower burnout levels indicated by scores below 3.0 and higher burnout levels indicated by scores above 3.0. In this study the overall burnout scores ranged from 1.87 to 4.75 with an average overall burnout score of 3.54. Two variables, age and position type, were found to be significant factors contributing to the overall likelihood of some teacher educators developing burnout more so than others.

*Stress/Burnout Average by Age.* Like Lackritz’s (2004) research, these findings also indicate that younger teacher educators are experiencing more stress than their older colleagues. By the 95% confidence intervals provided in Tables 1 and 2, the likelihood of experiencing burnout is moderate to low for those within the 25-34 year-old age group, moderate to high for those within the 35-44 year-old age group, 45-54 year-old age group, and 55-64 year-old age groups and high for those within the 65 and above age group. There is a statistically significant difference in the overall likelihood of experiencing burnout for some age groups (one-way ANOVA p-value < .001). By the Tukey

Simultaneous Tests for differences of means, the 65 and above age group has a significantly lower likelihood of experiencing burnout than the 25-34, 45-54, and 55-64 age groups (respective p-values: .008, .001, .008) as seen in Table 3.

Table 1  
*Analysis of Variance- Age Groups*

Source	DF	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Age	4	6.906	1.7264	5.69	<.001
Error	157	47.643	0.3035		
Total	161	54.548			

Table 2  
*Tukey Pairwise Comparisons- Age Groups*

Age	N	Mean	Grouping
65 and above	27	3.9185	A
35-44	34	3.6338	A B
55-64	57	3.4825	B
45-54	37	3.348	B
25-34	7	3.129	B

*Note.* Means that do not share a letter are significantly different.  
(Grouping Information Using the Tukey Method and 95% Confidence)

### ***Stress/Burnout Average by Position Type***

By the 95% confidence intervals provided in Tables 4 and 5, this study found that the likelihood of experiencing burnout is moderate for all positions. However, it found that there is a statistically significant difference in the overall likelihood of experiencing burnout for some positions (one-way ANOVA p-value = .007). By the Tukey Simultaneous Tests for differences of means, those in the “other” group have a lower likelihood of experiencing burnout than for those in the tenure track and on term appointment groups (respective p-values: .018 and .008) as seen in Table 6. These findings differ from Lackritz’s (2004) findings that indicated faculty members with tenure or on a tenure track had higher levels of burnout compared to lecturers.

*Stress/Burnout Average by Other Factors.* There is not enough evidence to suggest that there is a statistically significant difference in the overall likelihood of experiencing burnout by race groups (one-way ANOVA p-value = .102), by gender (one-way ANOVA p-value = .079), for those employed in institutions with different enrollment size groups (one-way ANOVA p-value = .529), based upon difference in the number of years of having worked in Teacher Education (one-way ANOVA p-value = .522), based upon difference in the number of years of having worked in Teacher Education at current institution (one-way ANOVA p-value = .485), for those employed in institutions with different Teacher Education levels (one-way ANOVA p-value = .739), or for all of those employed in

institutions with different amounts of full-time employees working in Teacher Education. (one-way ANOVA p-value = .566). Furthermore, unlike Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) study, this study did not ask participants to report their marital status and therefore, could not confirm nor dispute the previous findings that participants who were unmarried, especially men, appeared to be more prone to burnout.

Table 3  
*Tukey Simultaneous Tests for Differences of Means*

Difference of Levels	Difference of Means	SE of Difference	95% CI	T-Value	Adjusted P-Value
35-44 - 25-34	0.505	0.229	(-0.123, 1.136)	2.21	0.181
45-54 - 25-34	0.219	0.227	(-0.407, 0.846)	0.97	0.870
55-64 - 25-34	0.354	0.221	(-0.255, 0.962)	1.60	0.497
65 and above - 25-34	0.790	0.234	(0.146, 1.434)	3.38	0.008
45-54 - 35-44	-0.286	0.131	(-0.647, 0.075)	-2.18	0.191
55-64 - 35-44	-0.151	0.119	(-0.481, 0.178)	-1.27	0.711
65 and above - 35-44	0.285	0.142	(-0.107, 0.676)	2.00	0.268
55-64 - 45-54	0.134	0.116	(-0.186, 0.455)	1.16	0.776
65 and above - 45-54	0.571	0.139	(0.186, 0.955)	4.09	0.001
65 and above - 55-64	0.436	0.129	(0.081, 0.791)	3.39	0.008

*Note.* Individual confidence level = 99.35%

Table 4  
*Analysis of Variance- Position Type*

Source	DF	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Position Type	3	3.993	1.3311	4.16	0.007
Error	158	50.555	0.3200		
Total	161	54.548			

Table 5  
*Tukey Pairwise Comparisons- Position Type*

Position Type	N	Mean	Grouping	
Term Appointment	25	3.7140	A	
Adjunct	12	3.656	A	B
Tenure Track	99	3.5722	A	
Other (please specify)	26	3.202		B

*Note.* Means that do not share a letter are significantly different.  
(Grouping Information Using the Tukey Method and 95% Confidence)

Table 6  
*Tukey Simultaneous Tests for Differences of Means- Position Type*

Difference of Levels	Difference of Means	SE of Difference	95% CI	T-Value	Adjusted P-Value
Other - Adjunct	-0.454	0.197	(-0.967, 0.058)	-2.30	0.102
Tenure Track - Adjunct	-0.084	0.173	(-0.533, 0.365)	-0.49	0.962
Term Appoint - Adjunct	0.058	0.199	(-0.458, 0.573)	0.29	0.991
Tenure Track - Other	0.370	0.125	(0.047, 0.694)	2.97	0.018
Term Appoint - Other	0.512	0.158	(0.101, 0.923)	3.23	0.008
Term Appoint - Tenure Track	0.142	0.127	(-0.187, 0.470)	1.12	0.678

*Individual confidence level = 98.97%*

## Discussion

### *Limitations*

The authors of this study acknowledge that it has several limitations. Two such limitations were that the study was conducted only in New York State and that data collection took place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the findings from this study may not be applicable to teachers in other states and may not reflect the current conditions found in teacher education as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study was also limited by the time constraints placed on data collection. The study was conducted over a 2-week period at the beginning of the academic year which may have influenced who chose to participate in the study. Hence, the findings may be skewed because only those Teacher Educators whom had the time during the short data collection period, at the beginning of the academic year, chose to complete the survey.

It should also be noted that the majority of the participants in this study were white (86%) females (69%), which although reflective of the overall demographic of the teacher education workforce, did not yield enough data to fully examine the impact that race and gender may have had on the types of stressors teacher educators of color and/or those who identify as a gender other than female, face.

The study was further limited by the very nature of survey studies. Respondents in survey studies do not have the opportunity to gain clarification about the survey questions. Thus, possible response confusion may have occurred. For example, the authors found that the wording of the question, "In your current role/position you are?" and the choices provided to participants for answering the question were confusing for them. Several participants indicated that they viewed "tenured" as a different category from "tenure track" and because of this opted to select "other" indicating that they were tenured. Thus, the tenured faculty members responses were included in both the "tenure track" and "other" groups' data and may have skewed the results of the statistical tests performed.

The study may have also been limited by the fact that the authors of the study are themselves teacher educators. The possibility of influence may have existed because the authors had professional relationships with several of the potential respondents due to their past and current positions in the teacher preparation field. Due to this, a halo effect may have existed where the respondents may have answered according to how they thought the authors of the study wanted them to respond.

The last and largest limitation of this study stems from how the sample was selected. The sample size for the study was determined by using self-selected sampling, hence, the participants of this study were not randomly selected but participated because they were willing. Since the design of the study allowed for the participants to self-select whether or not to participate, it is not known if the results accurately reflect the extent to which this sample represents the traits or behaviors of the target population as a whole. By sampling voluntary participants as opposed to random sampling the target population, voluntary response bias may have existed whereby only the people who cared strongly enough about the subject one way or another, chose to participate in the study (Dorofeev & Grant, 2006). It is also possible that those who were feeling most stressed did not feel as if they had the time to complete the survey.

### ***Implications and Recommendations***

While the likelihood of burnout among the participants of this study ranged from very low to moderate, it is still important to note that all participants indicated some level of stress that has previously been identified as leading to greater burnout. The results align with Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) framework, which includes the six categories integrating individual and situational factors: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. The results also extend beyond their framework, revealing unique factors that should be further explored for higher education professionals in teacher preparation. These include students and student interactions, finances, staffing decisions, and external pressures. While it is not clear the extent to which these other factors influence burnout, it is clear that they are very real stressors negatively impacting the study's participants.

The results of this study are important for institutions of higher education in a number of ways. The most important is that the decisions of the institution and its administration can lead to burnout or prevent it. Many participants commented, either positively or negatively, about their institutional culture as well as their administrators. Some of the participants claimed that a lack of a positive work environment and a lack of administrator support were their largest stressors. Based on these finding,

there also seems to be a mismatch between expectations for tenure and the reality of the current positions within teacher preparation. Many participants indicated that the emphasis on research and service did not take into account all of the other tasks they completed, including all of the work they did for accreditation. While institutions are struggling with finances and staffing decisions, as well as changes in the student populations they serve, they still have control over their decisions regarding administrator appointments and training, fostering positive work environments, and overseeing the tenure process.

More research is needed to fully examine the burnout and plateauing of higher education professionals in teacher education. As previously mentioned, the majority of respondents (67%) had eleven or more years of experience in teacher education, which means that these are educators who have persisted and may have overcome burnout and/or managed their stress to an extent that led to their retention in the field. Therefore, more teacher educators who are at the start of their careers need to be targeted for further study. Additionally, given that the majority of participants in the study were white (86%) females (69%), it is suggested that future studies be designed to more thoroughly examine the impact race and gender may have on the types of stressors teacher educators of color and/or those who identify as a gender other female experience.

Also, the additional factors that were found beyond Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) original framework, including: students and student interactions, finances, staffing decisions, and external pressures, should be examined in more depth. A factor that was not explored in this study was the existence of unions on some campuses and how strong unions that negotiate working conditions for the faculty may impact burnout.

Lastly, it should be noted that the recent Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on higher education has required teacher educators, on very short notice, to revamp their instruction as well as adopt new technological platforms to teach remotely. These sudden changes and blurred lines between home and work have created additional stressors for teacher educators beyond what was researched in this study. It is recommended that targeted research be conducted to specifically look at the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the stress and burnout of teacher educators.

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