Spring 2022

Perceived Effects of COVID-19 on K-5 Educators and Learners

Fairbee Mintz
Gardner-Webb University, fmintz@gardner-webb.edu

Perceived Effects of COVID-19 on K-5 Educators and Learners

by

Fairbee J. Mintz

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Science in Nursing Degree

Boiling Springs, North Carolina

2021

Submitted by:	Approved by:
Fairbee J. Mintz	Abby Garlock, DNP, RN
11/8/2021 Date	11/8/2021 Date

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional teaching methods at all academic levels bringing about unprecedented changes in the way education was delivered. In-person learning was halted all over the world as educators scrambled to transition to virtual education. The purpose of this Master of Science in Nursing research was to examine the perceived effects of systematic learning changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on primary and secondary educators and students as reported by educators. This research will then be applied to implications for future nursing educators and students. Nine K-5 educators were interviewed via Zoom in the spring of 2021 and were asked two open-ended questions. Results were analyzed utilizing a qualitative descriptive phenomenological model and reported in six themes: negative experiences, positive experiences, coping and self-care, negative behavior, disparities, and technological challenges. Research revealed that teachers and students experienced frustration with online learning platforms and improved mental health upon returning to in-person learning.

Keywords: COVID-19, teacher stress, effects of online learning, school re-openings during COVID-19.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the continuous blessings that He bestows upon my life and the opportunity to serve Him in all things. Thank you to my friends and family for the constant support and encouragement throughout my nursing education. Thank you to my sister Becky, for your help in coordinating my research for this thesis. I would especially like to thank my husband Chris and our children Avery and Abbey for the love, support, and patience you all have shown me in allowing me to be a wife, mother, student, and nurse professional over the last decade! Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the faculty and staff of the Hunt School of Nursing with special thanks to Dr. Abby Garlock for your time, guidance, encouragement, Zoom meetings, and hundreds of emails pushing me to pursue excellence!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the closure of schools all over the world in the spring of 2020. Educational institutions of all levels in over 188 countries closed to in-person learning, which affected over 1.5 billion learners worldwide (Roca et al., 2020). School closures exposed the importance of services that students and parents receive from educational systems, specifically at the primary and secondary education levels. Some of the consequences of closing schools included disruption of learning, increased disparities such as food insecurity, lack of childcare leaving children alone at home for self-care and educational instruction, unequal access to learning technologies, decreased academic participation, and increased drop-out rates (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020). While the magnitude of the results of school closures was realized, a plan for safely reopening schools in the fall of 2020 became paramount.

In the creation of school reopening plans, health officials and educators concentrated on methods of reduced COVID-19 transmission through hand hygiene, physical distancing in classrooms, wearing of masks, daily temperature checks, student in-person alternate cohort attendance, and hybrid learning. While most students would be back in classrooms in person, at best it would be part-time. This continued the need for educators to utilize online teaching methods, to create hybrid lesson plans, determine how grading and attendance would be defined, and discover ways to assess student disparities with limited in-person interaction, all of which were still fairly new and ambiguous concepts. The abrupt conversion to online teaching added to the already heavy

workloads, time pressures, and difficulty in multitasking that educators faced prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Significance

While much research is being conducted regarding the effects COVID-19 had on physical and mental health, research is lacking on the effects COVID-19 will have on primary and secondary educators and learners. “The impact of missed education could be lasting. If a child is not reading at grade level by the third grade, they are four times less likely to graduate high school, and low-income children are six times less likely” (Hamzelou, 2020, p.10). “A survey of more than 10,000 teachers revealed that 92.8% of teachers suffered emotional exhaustion, stress, anguish, or anxiety due to confinement and distance education” (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020, p.1). It is necessary that researchers examine the impact of COVID-19 on primary and secondary educators and learners to determine the possible long-term effects of virtual and hybrid learning.

Purpose

The closing of school systems during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 revealed how vital school systems are for the educational continuity of students, food security, critical resources for children with disabilities, health and welfare protection for students, a source of childcare for working parents to continue employment, and community economic stabilization. While the safety of teachers and students was of utmost importance, the fact that students needed to return to educational classrooms was equally important. School educators and administrators should be aware of the literature that outlines the benefits primary and secondary learners gain from in-person education and services obtained through educational systems. The purpose of this Master of Science in

Nursing Education thesis was to examine the perceived experience of primary and secondary educators and students regarding the effect of systematic learning changes during the return to in-person learning in the midst of a pandemic.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

Roy's Adaptation Model (RAM) provided the theoretical framework guiding this research study to investigate the perceived effects of systematic learning changes on K-5 educators and learners when returning to the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. The RAM explains how people adapt to change in their environment created by stimuli or phenomena. Roy (2011) created three categories for the stimuli: "focal (immediate sensory experience), and contextual and residual involving education and experience" (Roy, 2011, p.312).

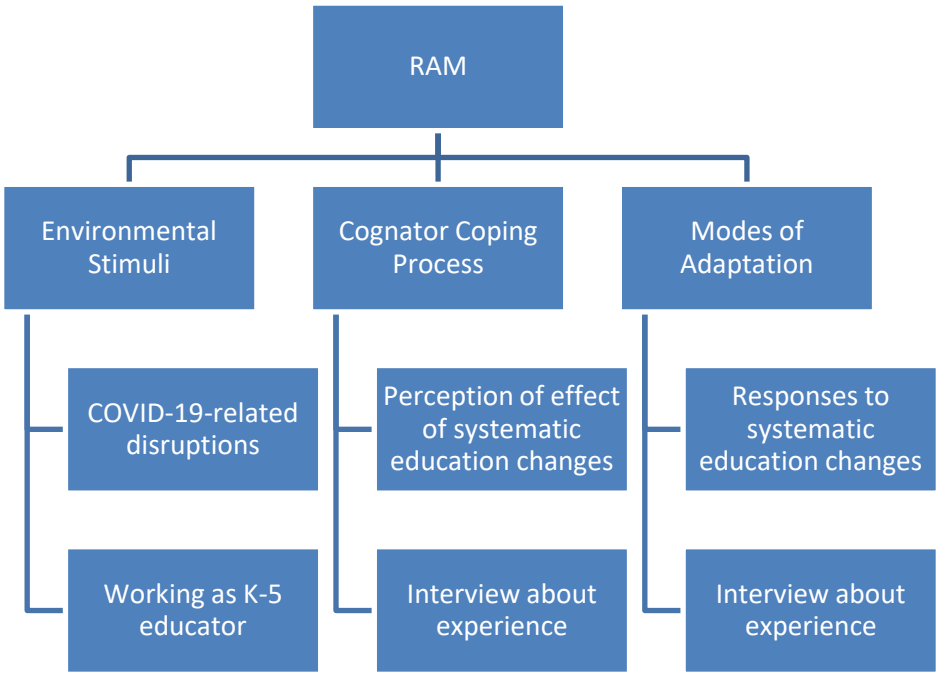
Roy (2011) classified the regulator and cognator subsystems as two ways people adapt to phenomena. According to Roy (2011), there are "four modes of adaptive coping: physiologic, self-concept, role function, and interdependence" (p. 316). The regulator subsystem characterizes physical coping strategies (physiologic), while the cognator denotes mental coping strategies. "Adaptation processing is the patterning of innate and acquired ways of taking in, handling, and responding to a changing environment in daily situations and in critical periods that direct behavior toward survival, growth, reproduction, mastery, and transcendence" (Roy, 2011, p. 316).

Roy's Adaptation Model "seeks to understand the subjective experience of individuals" (Perrett, 2007, p. 350). Qualitative research attempts to explore how people perceive reality and is compatible with the presumptions of Roy's Adaptation Model. Qualitative research using the RAM "should aim to advance knowledge by focusing on

human life patterns that emerge from adaptive processes." (Perrett, 2007, p. 350). Figure 1.

Figure 1

Roy's Middle-Range Theory of Coping and Adaptation Processing



Research Question or Hypothesis

This research study aimed to examine the perceived experience of primary and secondary educators and learners regarding the effects of systematic learning changes during the reopening of classrooms in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this Master of Science in Nursing thesis, the following terms required definition.

- **Virtual Learning-** "Virtual learning can be broadly defined as learning that is facilitated by a range of online technologies to enable communication and collaboration, where students and teachers are in different physical locations" (Whalley & Barbour, 2020, p. 110).
- **Hybrid Learning-** "Hybrid learning is a method of teaching that utilizes technology to create a variety of learning environments for students. Hybrid courses often result in a decrease of face time since in-class activities are replaced by time spent outside a traditional classroom setting" (Linder, 2017, p. 11).

Summary

Through this inquiry, a group of K-5 educators were interviewed utilizing open-ended questions to discover their perceived experience of the resumption of in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This thesis delved into the effects of systematic learning changes on K-5 learners and primary and secondary educators. Roy's Adaptation Model was the guiding framework in understanding the lived experiences of K-5 educators and learners during a pandemic. The purpose of this Master of Science in Nursing Education thesis was to examine the perceived experience of primary and secondary educators regarding the effect of systematic learning changes during the reopening of classrooms in the midst of a pandemic. As important as the benefits of in-person classroom education are to K-5 learners, it is necessary that the literature explore the perceived effects of virtual and hybrid education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

While much research is being conducted regarding the effects COVID-19 has on physical and mental health, research is lacking on the effects the pandemic will have on primary and secondary educators and learners. The author sought to examine teachers' perceived experiences of the effect that systematic learning changes had on educators and learners in kindergarten through fifth grade during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Review of Literature

An electronic search utilizing EBSCO host, Cumulative Index for Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) Plus, and Google was used to assess current literature. The search terms included: "COVID-19 origin", "COVID-19 preparedness", "teacher preparedness", "K-12 education", "teacher stress", "teacher self-care", "Phenomenology", "school re-openings during COVID-19", "Evidence-Based". This search was completed to examine the dearth in the literature regarding the perceived effects of COVID-19 on K-12 educators and the potential long-term effects of COVID-19 on K-12 student learners. Literature was also evaluated to examine the current findings of others who may have explored this topic. The literature was classified into five categories, which include two articles related to the explanation of COVID-19, two articles related to the Theory of Phenomenology, five articles related to the detrimental effects of COVID-19 on K-12 learners and the educational system, five articles related to teacher stress caused by COVID-19, and seven articles related to the re-openings of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Related to the Explanation of COVID-19

Many researchers have examined the process of the COVID-19 infection, transmission routes, and how it manifests and progresses related to age and comorbidities. Sokolowska et al. (2020) performed a literature review of current immunological data on immune responses to SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. Sokolowska et al. (2020) summarized "known and potential SARS-CoV-2 receptors on epithelial barriers, immune cells, endothelium and clinically involved organs such as lung, gut, kidney, cardiovascular, and neuronal system" (Sokolowska et al., 2020). Sokolowska et al. (2020) also discussed the involvement of underlying illness related to COVID-19 and highlighted the lack of data reflecting transmission rates by children, the need for increased and improved Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and antibody testing, knowledge gaps, and research needs for diagnosis, disease progression, and treatment of COVID-19.

Wiersinga et al. (2020) conducted a literature review on the etiology, spread, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19 for studies published during the first 6 months of 2020. Wiersinga et al. (2020) confirmed that SARS-CoV-2 can be spread by individuals who display no symptoms and the infection is mostly propagated through respiratory droplets. Respiratory symptoms are the most common such as cough, congestion, and difficulty breathing. Other symptoms may include stroke, blood clots, and sepsis (Wiersinga et al., 2020). School-age children are affected, with no more than 5% of students who are less than 18 years old however, less than 7% of children require hospital admission or mechanical ventilation (Wiersinga et al., 2020). It was also noted lower-income and minority populations represent "a disproportionate percentage of COVID-19

hospitalizations and deaths" (Wiersinga et al., 2020, p. 789). Although 120 vaccination trials are under development, while the public waits for effective vaccines and treatments, the most effective interventions continue to be personal actions (Wiersinga et al., 2020).

Literature Related to the Detrimental Effects of COVID-19 on K-12 Learners and the Educational System

While COVID-19 not only interrupted the economy, travel, and educational systems, it also brought to light food insecurities, and abuse and neglect of children all over the world. Without the support of the educational system, children have no relief from abuse and neglect which are monitored, reported, and negotiated by educators and support staff regularly. To address the potential increase in violence and neglect of school-aged children, Roca et al. (2020) applied evidence-based actions in nine schools in Spain, during the quarantine period with the hope of opening schools to prevent child abuse (Roca et al., 2020). The evidence-based actions included: "dialogic workspaces and gatherings, class assemblies, dialogic pedagogical gatherings with teachers, and dynamization of social networks with preventive messages which were implemented virtually" (Roca et al., 2020, p. 1). This study was conducted utilizing the communicative methodology, Dialogic Recreation of Knowledge (DRK). Information was gathered and developed virtually for 3 weeks in the spring of 2020. Focus groups and interviews were performed with administration and educators from nine schools whose participation was anonymous and voluntary. "The main implication of the Open Doors Action (ODA) is to implement evidence-based interventions for violence and abuse prevention during COVID-19 confinement" (Roca et al., 2020, p. 13). The noted limitation of the study is student technological disparities regarding internet access.

According to a study by Espino-Diaz et al. (2020), the abrupt transition from in-person learning to virtual education revealed three areas of concern: “the access gap (having or not having internet access and technological devices); the use gap (time of use and its quality); and the gap in teacher skills, availability of resources, and adaptation of online platforms to support teaching” (p. 5). Espino-Diaz et al. (2020) offered a “proposal that optimizes the work of education professionals in the current context of a pandemic through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)” (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020, p.1). A literature search was performed utilizing inductive methodology to know the disparities caused by the pandemic in the educational field. Espino-Diaz et al. (2020) concluded that “a review of online learning is necessary that can combine technological advances and the principles of neuroeducation focused on students, which can stimulate motivational processes toward meaningful learning” (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020, p.7).

School closures not only have detrimental effects for students and educators, but closures also affect patient outcomes in medical facilities and hospitals. Bayham and Fenichel (2020) examined whether the lack of child-care as a result of the closing of in-person learning could put limitations on the ability of healthcare systems to effectively respond to COVID-19. In this modeling analysis, Bayham and Fenichel (2020) assessed the most current data available from the US Current Population Survey (CPS) to estimate the potential dilemma affecting health care systems due to lack of child-care caused by the closing of schools. Bayham and Fenichel (2020) “then assessed what the increase in mortality would need to be with the expected decrease in healthcare workers to undermine the expected beneficial effects of school closures” (Bayham and Fenichel,

2020, p. 272). They examined monthly CPS data between January 2018 and January 2020 (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020). Findings revealed 28.8% of those employed in health-care need childcare for elementary-age children. “Our model estimates that if the infection mortality rate of COVID-19 increases from 2.00% to 2.35% when the health-care workforce declines by 15.0%, school closures could lead to a greater number of deaths than they prevent” (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020, p. 271). Indications for future school closures were made clear, and Bayham and Fenichel recommended that alternative options for child-care should be included in future plans for long-term school closures.

Wyse et al. (2020) looked at the impact of school closures and sudden transitions to online learning had on student learning with a focus on reading and math. While some students and parents may have navigated the technological transition easily, other students may not have had equal access to technology or the instructional support that they needed from their family and household for successful learning. Testing data from a widely used educational technology provider was examined for this study. In the study, three proposed scenarios were considered; “if a student stopped learning when COVID-19 started, if a student advanced a month in their learning after COVID-19, and if a student declined a month in their learning after COVID-19” (Wyse et al., 2020, p. 61). Wyse et al. (2020) looked at benchmark scores at the tenth, twenty-fifth and fortieth percentiles. Conclusions inferred the decline of test results during COVID-19 and learning gaps could potentially arise in comparison to normal year-end achievement level testing. These gaps in expected grade level testing results would potentially affect elementary-age learners where results in math and reading have high expectations for growth. Based on these results, it is suggested that lower academic performance should

be expected when students start school in 2020. Performance will vary across grade levels and states. Wyse et al. (2020) suggest that future research should be considered for other school configurations, which may impact student learning. A limitation of this study was that only one educational technology provider was utilized, noting that other providers may produce different results.

China reported that 276 million students were forced to transition to online learning after the breakout of COVID-19 in early 2020. China already had an online educational system, but that system needed improvement to become a solution to overcome the disparities in virtual learning during the pandemic. Huang et al. (2020) examined the literature regarding "open educational resources (OER) and open educational practices (OEP)" application in online education (p. 1). The recommendations made to improve online learning for Chinese students included openly licensing teaching materials, increased use of varied technologies made available to teachers and virtual tools to create and build a community of students connected online, implementing open teaching methodologies for students to create virtual pathways to learning based on individual need, open collaboration with other classes through social media to help students work in teams and promote interconnectedness, and open assessment so that students learn to evaluate one another. Huang et al. (2020) concluded that improvements could be made to OER and OEP resulting in improved experiences and outcomes in online learning, particularly during a crisis such as a pandemic (Huang et al., 2020).

Literature Related to Teacher Stress Caused by COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak in the spring of 2020 forced schools to close in-person learning all over the world. Teachers and educators suddenly had to convert in-person teaching to online learning seemingly, overnight. Using a descriptive, exploratory case study design, Kaden (2020) examined the experience of a schoolteacher of grades K-12 in rural Alaska who abruptly had to begin teaching classes virtually with no advance preparation. The study notes that all teachers and students had been given computers or laptops prior to the pandemic. The study revealed that many of the teachers and students in rural areas did not have a reliable connection to the internet in their homes, and the subject's workload increased with the most time spent at the beginning of the transition to prepare a workspace at home and convert lesson plans. The subject reported the highest stress level during this time, but workload and stress became manageable as he settled into a new daily routine. The subject reported that he felt moderately prepared for online teaching due to his recent experience in online education for his master's degree. He expressed concern about students who did not participate in virtual learning at all due to economic and home life disparities. Future research is needed regarding additional support for students that have disabilities and students that are transient or homeless.

The teaching profession is known for long days and an endless workload of preparing lesson plans and grading assignments. Transition to virtual learning has increased work stress and blurred the lines between work and home for the educator. MacIntyre et al. (2020) examined the coping responses related to the stress of 634 language teachers who answered questions utilizing a survey online with snowball sampling. Approximately 80% of the respondents were female, 51.4% came from Europe

with participants from all over the world (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Overall, 50% of respondents had at least 15 years of teaching experience while 3% were first-year teachers. The survey utilized nine tools to evaluate stress, coping, well-being, anxiety, and indicators of negative emotions. In April 2020, the survey was posted on online sharing applications and was shared via email to create the snowball sample. Educators accessed the survey via Google Docs. Results revealed that "approach-oriented coping produces more-favorable outcomes and avoidance-oriented coping produces less-favorable outcomes" (MacIntyre et al., 2020, p. 11). Seven suggestions were given to manage stress related to uncertainty (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Federkeil et al. (2020) performed a cross-sectional study utilizing an online questionnaire, which assessed the stress level of 380 participants in Germany which were selected using ad-hoc sampling and recruited through professional and social networking websites. The study assessed the strategies educators used to cope with stress and barriers experienced in providing online education. Study results showed that on average, educators experienced high to medium stress during the period of mandatory lockdown with female educators experiencing more stress than males. The most significant difference in stress levels was experienced between teachers in the highest tracks and special education teachers. Results showed that "teachers applied more functional coping strategies than dysfunctional coping strategies" (Federkeil et al., 2020, p. 6). Limitations posed by the study are the non-representativeness of the sample and the research instrument is self-constructed (Federkeil et al., 2020). Implications for the study are increased training to enhance educators' technical skills and professional training on coping strategies related to stress.

Guy and Arthur (2020), two mothers who work in an academic setting as educators, constructed a study of their own experiences as educators with children at home, teaching via virtual learning by "utilizing an autoethnographic approach to explore their experiences as working moms during COVID-19" (Guy & Arthur, 2020, p. 890). Guy and Arthur (2020) stated that the uncertainty and fear of their employers reopening plans heightened stress and anxiety levels and increased mental burdens. The article also points out a "new underlying fear and anxiety that has appeared in our everyday lives, and for working mothers, specifically, the closure of day cares and schools has particularly caused distress" (Guy & Arthur, 2020, p. 894). Both authors pointed out suggestions to feel less isolated and increase socialization including sharing space with others even virtually such as online meetings and group chats, asking for what you need such as alone time to regroup and recharge, creatively doing things that you once did prior to the pandemic such as virtual meals or virtual happy hours for socialization. Guy and Arthur (2020) concluded that by working remotely, they have been challenged to accept their flaws and learned to give themselves compassion. Guy and Arthur (2020) recommended that society needs to have more realistic expectations of working mothers in the future.

Obrad (2020) conducted a study of Romanian teachers related to the stress of converting to virtual education resulting from COVID-19. Obrad (2020) developed a questionnaire, which was deployed to a sample of 400 Romanian educators. Data was gathered through a Romanian online platform between May 24-June 3, 2020. Seven indicator dimensions were examined during the study: changes at the professional level, constraining conditions and stress generators, negative effects and burnout symptoms,

positive effects, resilience, and coping behaviors, work engagement, the professional assistance teachers received. Bartlett's Test and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin were implemented to determine the validity of the study with a ($p<0.05$) significance. Teachers felt moderate to high levels of stress since the beginning of COVID-19, related to new online teaching tools and technologies and increases in workload to convert lesson plans into virtual learning lessons (Obrad, 2020). Teachers were also concerned about maintaining their own health related to COVID-19, uncertainty regarding the next school year, and the lack of ordinary socialization. Female teachers also had a higher rate of stress than their fellow male educators due to additional stressors in their home life such as daycare issues and home-schooling their own children during the workday. Solutions offered for stress reduction included digital training for educators, reforming the education system to modernize and reorganize in order to "provide an education anchored in practice and adapted to the current context and needs of society" (Obrad, 2020, p. 16). This research is a cross-sectional study, which presents a limitation, "meaning that it is difficult to establish a causal determinism between the presented variables. The study can be completed by a longitudinal analysis to capture the cause-effect relationship" (Obrad, 2020, p. 17). Further research should be conducted regarding the ability to sustain the current educational system.

Literature Related to the Preparedness for Re-opening of Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic

It is estimated that over 1.5 billion students were removed from schools all over the world in the spring of 2020 after the COVID-19 outbreak. Limiting gatherings of people and total lockdown in some countries was thought to be a way to reduce the

infection rate of COVID-19. Since then, lawmakers and administrators have been faced with the task of how to safely reopen schools without causing spikes in the virus. Bonell et al. (2020) "examined existing reviews and literature to propose an evidence-based theory of change and diagrammatic logic model for safely reopening schools in the United Kingdom" (p. 2). Measures presented focused on preventative actions with the goal of limiting the infection rate of the virus. The intention of these measures is the disruption of SARS-CoV-2 transmission including cleaning behaviors, hand behavior, interaction behavior, attendance behavior, increase fresh air, and reduce aerosols from hand dryers. The study mentions the negative effects of some suggested measures due to various disparities. A limitation of the study is the fact that because COVID-19 is so new, no direct evidence exists regarding every measure. Bonell et al. (2020) have made recommendations based on behavioral science utilizing the study of other viral coronavirus infections.

Much knowledge can be gained regarding preparedness during a pandemic from hospitals. Hou et al. (2020) published a study that looked at emergency room preparedness during the COVID-19 onset as perceived by nurses. Using a qualitative method, three male and nine female nurses from the Emergency Department in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, China were obtained using purposive sampling. Hou et al. (2020) conducted semi-structured interviews of nurses who met the study criteria from February to March 2020. The nurses were asked three open-ended questions. Four themes became evident which were preparedness of the organization, the individual, the family, and the patient and challenges or deficiencies. Hou et al. (2020) noted when employees feel confident in the preparedness and organization of their employer their motivation and

willingness to work, even in uncertain circumstances, improve. This study had two limitations. This was a purposive sampling within a specific emergency room in China, so the results cannot be conclusive for other emergency departments. The results were influenced by the fact that participants were skewed toward emergency room charge nurses.

Panovska-Griffiths et al. (2020) performed a modeling study to measure the predicted outcome using two possible strategies of increased testing and contact tracing for school reopenings in the UK. Using the Covasim model, data were collated and used to generate a population of 100,000 individuals whose interaction occurs through traditional settings allowing daily interaction. Data were analyzed for the first 6 months of 2020. With "increased testing and effective contact tracing and isolation, an epidemic rebound might be prevented" (Panovska-Griffiths et al., 2020, p. 1). Without the suggested preventative measures, a resurgence of COVID-19 may occur once schools are opened to in-person learning with peaks in December 2020 for full-time school reopening and in February 2021 with part-time reopening (Panovska-Griffiths et al., 2020). Some study limitations would include that a few of the measures were from different countries other than the UK, a series of assumptions were made in regard to the percent of infections that are symptomatic, some assumptions regarding testing should be interpreted as minimal testing needed, assumptions were made of the infectiousness of children as future data may indicate infection rates less than 50% and a simulated level of tracing was made at 40% as an assumption. The study concludes that increased testing and contact tracing "would be an alternative to intermittent lockdown measures,

including further school closures while we await an effective vaccine against SARS-CoV-2" (Panovska-Griffiths et al., 2020, p. 10).

Macartney et al. (2020) performed a study in New South Wales (NSW), Australia which aimed to provide research regarding COVID-19 infection rates of students and educators to aid in policy and decision making regarding the reopening of schools during the pandemic. The time period for the study was late January to early April 2020 with follow-up of close contacts to cases until May 1, 2020. Contact tracing data were obtained from interviews with students, families, and educators. Results of the study reported low transmission rates of students and teachers, with infection occurring in only 25 of 7,700 schools. Second, staff members were reported as the primary source of infections occurring in 56% of facilities, which is consistent with the expectation of higher infection rates in adults. Third, secondary COVID-19 infections were reported in only three of 15 schools and one of ten early childhood educational care (ECEC) settings (Macartney et al., 2020). Results showed that students and educators were not significant sources of COVID-19 transmission in schools and classrooms (Macartney et al., 2020). Limitations of this study included most close contacts were tested in symptomatic subjects, so asymptomatic infections may have been missed. Macartney et al. (2020) did not attempt to adjust for sensitivity and specificity of test performance. Also, the definition of close contact varies, holiday student attendance rates and outside forms of contact might have influenced attack rates (Macartney et al., 2020).

Ludvigsson (2020) performed a systematic literature review to determine child transmission rates of COVID-19. Results revealed that children represented a small percentage of infections and interacted mostly with friends and family and not with older

generations (Ludvigsson, 2020). Instead of school closures, which have negatively affected children and the economy, other preventative actions should be utilized to slow the spread of COVID-19 such as physical distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing of masks. Ludvigsson (2020) also cited the Bayham and Fenichel (2020) study reiterating the possibility of increased mortality rates of COVID-19 patients due to healthcare worker shortages related to lack of childcare as a result of school closures. The review revealed that children are unlikely to cause increased COVID-19 infection rates (Ludvigsson, 2020). Future research should examine if adult infections progress to severe cases with infection from other adults compared to a child contact infection (Ludvigsson, 2020).

Social or physical distancing is a term that began being discussed as a preventative measure at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and it is a new concept to most of the general population. This study "simulated the ongoing trajectory of an outbreak in Wuhan using an age-structured susceptible-exposed-infected-removed (SEIR) model for several physical distancing measures" (Prem et al., 2020 p. 261). Results showed that physical distancing, staggering the return to school and work likely slowed the initial peak of the virus and decreased the transmission rate of COVID-19 infections in Wuhan. School children had the highest reduction in infection rates while working adults had the lowest reduction in infection rates (Prem et al., 2020). The study named limitations including "large uncertainties around estimates of basic reproduction number (*R) a*nd the duration of infectiousness" (Prem et al., 2020, p. 261). Further research is needed on earlier detection and isolation measures to protect individuals that are more susceptible to the infection.

Most parents and students contemplated how differently the reopening of schools in the fall of 2020 would look with mandatory masks and schedule adjustments. Li et al. (2020) performed a study to examine how equity concerns in K-12 schools would be addressed on the state level, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Li et al. (2020) performed an online document search for states across the US. The search examined whether states had plans to specifically address equity concerns related to school reopenings in grades K-12 (Li et al., 2020). Study results revealed that 86% of states mentioned concern regarding equity upon the reopening of schools (Li et al., 2020). Li et al. (2020) outlined adequate measures to address concerns of equity in primary and secondary education for each of the 11 areas of disparities. This study had several limitations which included the fact that Li et al. (2020) were only able to review documents that were posted online by state governments. States that had documentation to address equity concerns but were not available online were not included in this study. Secondly, local governments and boards of education may decide against state-provided guidance and third, the differences in state comprehensive guidance may not be reflected in the data extraction. Li et al. (2020) expected that "implementing some or all of these practices will help protect vulnerable populations in the 2020-2021academic year" (p. 5).

Literature Related to the Theory of Phenomenology

Matua and Van Der Wal (2015) set out to examine how nurse researchers can be guided by two different approaches to phenomenological research. Matua and Van Der Wal (2015) performed a literature review of peer-reviewed articles published between 1990 and 2013 in which Phenomenology was utilized as a research method and as philosophy. The conclusion reached by Matua and Van Der Wal (2015) was one of

importance to the understanding of the nursing community that the phenomenological research method provides the best approach to understanding the research and appropriate nursing application.

Karimi et al. (2020) sought to examine the perceived experience of nurses while caring for COVID-19 patients as there were no qualitative studies of this kind to date. Karimi et al. (2020) performed a qualitative research study utilizing descriptive phenomenology. The WhatsApp messaging application was utilized to conduct interviews and collect data. With permission from the nurses, the interviews were recorded and reviewed by two other experts. The data were analyzed utilizing Colaizzi's method. Twelve nurses were chosen using targeted sampling to identify participants who were knowledgeable of the phenomenon, worked in the unit designated for COVID-19 and were available for the interview session. Research revealed that "anxiety, stress, fear, witnessing the death of patients and colleagues, substandard care conditions, and a lack of facilities were the most pressing concerns identified in the nurses' statements" (Karimi et al., 2020, p. 1275). Inadequate self-care by nurses "can have serious consequences for patients" (Karimi et al., 2020, p. 1275). Karimi et al. (2020) concluded that nurses need more training and support for crisis situations, and further research is needed to improve nursing care for COVID-19 patients.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The closing of school systems during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought to light how vital school systems are for educational continuity, food security, and critical resources for children with disabilities. Schools also serve as a source of childcare for working parents to continue employment and support nationwide economic stabilization. While the safety of teachers and students was of utmost importance, the fact that students needed to return to educational classrooms was equally important.

The researcher sought to examine teachers' perceived experiences of the effect that systematic learning changes had on educators and learners in kindergarten through fifth grade during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers in an elementary school in the Southeastern United States volunteered to participate in the study during the fall of 2020. Teachers were questioned using a qualitative study model and asked the following open-ended questions: Describe your experience in returning to school during the COVID-19 pandemic and describe your student's experience in returning to school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional open-ended questions were asked when the researcher felt clarification was needed. Those questions included: Can you elaborate on your answer or can you explain that in more detail.

Study Design

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive phenomenological model with two open-ended questions. Data were organized using Husserl's four steps of descriptive phenomenology of bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and interpreting. Nine teachers volunteered to be interviewed utilizing Zoom meetings in the spring of 2021.

Setting

This study was conducted in a rural elementary school in the Southeastern United States. Grades taught at the school was kindergarten through fifth grade with 16 in-person homeroom teachers, eight virtual teachers, and nine supplemental teachers for Encore subjects such as art, music, gym, library, speech therapy, and special education. The total enrollment of the school was 437 students for the 2020-2021 school year. For comparison, school enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year was 470 students. In-person enrollment declined by 33 students compared to the previous school year prior to COVID-19.

Sample/Participants

The target population for this study included elementary school teachers with at least five years of teaching experience, who taught virtual and hybrid learning students and were willing to participate in the study. Teachers who met inclusion criteria were contacted through their school email addresses and invited to participate in the study. (Appendix A).

Measurement Methods

The research framework guiding this Master of Science in Nursing Education thesis was Edmund Husserl's Theory of Phenomenology, a qualitative human science methodology. Philosophically speaking, phenomena refer to an individual's perception of objects rather than the objects themselves. "Psychology is a science of experience, facts, and realities (Husserl, 2010, p. 49). "Psychological phenomenology, pure or transcendental phenomenology will be established not as a science of facts, but as a science of essential Being (as eidetic Science)" (Husserl, 2010, p. 49). "Our

phenomenology should be a theory of essential Being, dealing not with real but with transcendentally reduced phenomena" (Husserl, 2010, p. 50). "Phenomenology is a method of inquiry that aims to explore and understand people's everyday experiences and describes the appearance of things in people's minds" (Matua and Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 23). For the most accurate vision of a phenomenon, researchers should "seek the content of consciousness in a 'pure form', devoid of any preconceptions, by engaging in 'phenomenological epoché' or 'bracketing' – ignoring all existing knowledge about a phenomenon so they can grasp its 'essential' elements" (Matua and Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 23). Husserl's research method of descriptive phenomenology utilizes four steps of bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and interpreting. Polit and Beck (2017) describe bracketing in the following manner:

> Bracketing is the process of identifying and holding in abeyance preconceived beliefs and opinions about the phenomenon under study. Researchers attempt to bracket out the world and any presuppositions in an effort to confront the data in pure form. Bracketing is an iterative process that involves preparing, evaluating, and providing systematic ongoing feedback about the effectiveness of the bracketing. (Polit & Beck, 2017, p. 471)

"Intuiting occurs when the researchers remain open to the meanings attributed to the phenomenon by those who have experienced it" (Polit & Beck, 2017, p. 472).

Descriptive phenomenological research has been chosen for this Master of Science in Nursing Education study in an attempt to discover the lived experience of educators and learners while reopening the classroom during a pandemic. The researcher's goal was to identify essential themes of the phenomena while emphasizing

individual or universal features. This thesis aimed to overcome pre-existing opinions in order to achieve an essential understanding of the phenomena being examined.

Data Collection Procedures

Teachers at a rural Southeastern elementary school who had at least five years of teaching experience, who taught virtual and hybrid learning students and were willing to participate in the study in the spring of 2021 were sent an email from the school's administrative assistant inviting them to participate. Teachers who were willing to participate contacted the researcher via the email link to volunteer to participate in the study. A reminder email was sent to participants which included the Zoom interview link and the consent form was attached if not previously signed (Appendix B). The researcher scheduled a date with each teacher for a Zoom interview according to the teacher's preference. Nine teachers participated in the study in April and May 2021. Each teacher was asked the same two open-ended questions during the interview which were recorded on the Zoom data cloud (Appendix C). Participants gave permission for recording and transcription. Data was transcribed utilizing the dictation feature in the Microsoft Word program. Transcribed data were then reviewed by the researcher for accuracy.

With the help of the school's Administrative Assistant, the researcher collected demographic data regarding the school of interest. This included information on the teacher population, and the number of students currently enrolled.

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to the implementation of this research, approval was obtained from the school's Principal, School Administration (Appendix D), and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix E) of the academic institution attended by the researcher.

Teachers were not asked to give their names during the recorded interviews. Each teacher was assigned a pseudonym and was referred to by that pseudonym during transcription and analysis processes. Neither the school Principal nor the school Administrative Assistant was made aware of the sequence of teacher interviews. There was no apparent risk to the research participants.

Data Analysis

Prior to analyzing the data, the researcher engaged in Husserl's four steps of research methodology in an attempt to identify any presumptions or prejudices held by the researcher. The researcher acknowledged that biases may influence the way the data is interpreted. The recordings from the educator's interviews were transcribed verbatim. To validate the credibility of the data, the educator's responses to the open-ended questions were examined by the researcher and a second academic reviewer. Transcripts were emailed to the educators to ensure the accuracy of the intended responses.

The data was organized into recurring themes discovered from the recorded interviews. These themes were: negative experiences, positive experiences, coping and self-care, negative behavior, disparities, and technological challenges. Recurring themes were organized into a table with sub-themes and sample quotes from research interviews.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this Master of Science in Nursing Education thesis was to examine the perceived effects of systematic learning changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on primary and secondary educators, and students as reported by educators. K-5 educators were interviewed via Zoom in the spring of 2021 and were asked to answer two open-ended questions. The following chapter will present the qualitative results of the interview questions following data analysis.

Sample Characteristics

Educators employed at a rural elementary school in the southeastern United States were asked two open-ended questions during Zoom interviews. Due to significant changes in primary and secondary education during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to examine the perceived effects of systematic changes in the education system. The researcher requested 10 elementary educators who had at least five years of teaching experience as volunteers to be interviewed. Nine educators who had at least five years of teaching experience volunteered for the research thesis. At the time of research, students enrolled in this county were attending in-person classes two days a week in cohorts according to the alphabet to allow for smaller class sizes. All students attended school virtually or online on Wednesdays, also known as the remote day. No quantitative data were collected as a part of this study.

Major Findings

Interviews from nine elementary teachers who had at least five years of teaching experience were included in this research. The study included one educator from each of

the following grades: Kindergarten, 1st through 5th grades, and three teachers of Encore or elective classes. One educator taught the grade level in the Virtual Academy (100% online education) and all other grade level educators taught virtually on Wednesday, which was the students' remote day across the entire county. Six educators had children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study explored the perceived effects of systematic learning changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on primary and secondary educators and students as reported by educators. Six themes were discovered that are summarized below.

Theme I: Negative Experiences

All study participants (n=9) reported negative experiences in returning to the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some educators (n=6) reported that they and their students had feelings of stress and anxiety related to returning to school and experienced worry over the unknown of consistent change in schedules, routines, and procedures. A few educators (n=3) reported fear of contracting COVID-19 or infecting other family members as a result of returning to in-person learning and had students who voiced their fears of contracting the virus. Due to changes in the work environment, continued separation of cohorts, social distancing, and wearing of masks, several educators (n=3) discussed that they had feelings of isolation or observed student behaviors indicating feelings of isolation and even declining mental health in students.

Increased workload was experienced by all educators (n=9). The school system required daily COVID-19 contact exposure and temperature reporting by the administration, teachers, and students. Educators reported adjustments to the teaching curriculum due to the shortened in-person learning time, and the necessity to create

videos or upload instructions for additional student learning resources. Educators also used innovative methods to improve communication with Spanish-speaking parents, such as translating instructional materials and utilizing translation messaging reminder systems.

Six (n=6) educators discussed frustration as a working parent while teaching during the pandemic. Changes in school schedules affected the home lives of educators and extended family due to the necessity to drop off their own children earlier than usual. Educators reported the above-mentioned increased workload caused them to miss time with their families and they felt forced to send their own children back to school without having the choice for them to remain 100% virtual because of working in the school system. The weekly remote day was a source of frustration for all educators with school-aged children at home. Educators discussed having to ignore their own children on remote days while they moderated their virtual classroom meetings and instructional time. Teachers described feelings regarding the remote teaching day as frustrating and sad, causing high stress, resulting in "short fuses" with their own children.

Almost all educators (n=8) reported concerns that students are performing below grade level and will have difficulty meeting expected educational standards. Cohort attendance allows students only two days of in-person classroom instruction, one day of virtual or remote learning, and two days of self-paced work completed online or through work packets sent home with students. Educators voiced concern that while in-person teaching days have been reduced to two days a week, the state-required curriculum is designed for five days of instruction each week. Teachers say this is too much to expect from K-5 students to be able to learn at home without considerable parental assistance,

which is not the case in most homes due to working parents or lack of parental concern for academic performance. Other disadvantageous results of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic are deficiencies in fine motor skills such as writing abilities and enunciation abilities in early learners who have not attended school prior to the pandemic. Negative experience quotations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Negative Experiences Theme

Subtheme	Quotations
Feelings of stress and anxiety	• "I was a little nervous (in returning to school)." • "They were a little nervous (in returning to school)." • "A lot of them have said they didn't like school at first." • "The stress was like up and down throughout the year for me personally." • "Every time we would make a change it was stressful."
Worry over the unknown	• "You're watching board meetings waiting to see how it's going to change your life for the next however long." • "I really didn't know what to expect. Things were going to be so different."
Managing job changes	• "I just received an email saying we're using your classroom for (another subject), so that means I've just been at home ever since." • "That was a bit much to juggle (hybrid schedule) especially with meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities and special learning needs because our instruction is tailored to their individual needs and some of their individual education plans were written for five days a week of instruction."
Fear of exposure to COVID-19	• "The county throwing that at us this year (new online learning platform) was a bit, it made our job much, much more difficult."

Subtheme	Quotations
	• "At home wise I was like super stressed out. I was, I was so afraid I was going get COVID and you know, it just it freaked me out." • "We have had to be very careful with their exposure to their very own grandparents because I couldn't keep them at home." • "They also had concerns about their safety. More kids in the room meant more possibility to be sick. Being within three feet instead of six meant a whole lot more risk for them and even at the age of 10 and 11 they understood that." • "They wanted to know if the schools were being cleaned. What I was doing to clean the desks."
Poor mental health	• "My son suffered more mentally than I think that I gave him credit for, and I just had that epiphany this week." • "I see a lot of kids who are a little more sad this year than they have been in the past and it could be because their home situations are not great and there are home more."
Feelings of isolation	• "I didn't have a spot any longer at that school made me feel even more isolated." • "Same thing with me, missing people, and just running into them, just that socialization." • "We are very social, and we had to social distance, and we still have to socially distance and it's just a different atmosphere." • "Some of the students that come to my classroom I can see that they don't go anywhere else or do anything else and there's like kind of like a fear of other people." • "His screen time has increased. As his screen time has increased and his interaction with peers has decreased, he doesn't smile as much. He doesn't engage as much." • "I think they missed social interaction and being with kids their own age." • "The kids have said like "I miss my old teacher" and "I miss my friends" so there definitely, there is a need for social outlets."

Subtheme	Quotations
Increased workload	• "I've had to adjust and redo everything which is a lot of work" • "I made videos on how to do things, sent information sheets like step by step how to work things out that everybody wasn't on board with checking into it because they've got their own things to do." • "I also translate every document that I send home in our messaging app that I use, Remind, it translates my messages for me and I also make sure any flyers or information that I'm sending home to parents I'm putting that in English in Spanish just to make sure I'm getting information to everybody." • "I try to schedule classes also in consideration with the student's age." • "We had to fill out a form (COVID-19 contact) every single morning." • "We have to get our temps checked every morning."
Frustration as a working parent	• "Dropping (my child) off at 6:30am is really early for everyone involved so that's really been a struggle." • "I've done double the work this year, taking time from my family to create these new online lessons, create new videos because that's the only way that my kids will be able to see my full face and see how to do this." • "On Wednesdays I have to try to balance being a professional and being a parent and a parent supporting a kid with those previously mentioned new learning platforms, new learning technologies and so that has been a challenge." • "My children didn't have much of an option when it came to what their education would look like and I didn't get to keep them home all day long because I work. My spouse works. I didn't have a choice in my home. I had to send my kids to school." • "It makes me sad that I have to ignore my children for the sake of being able to just complete my job and do what I have to do."

Subtheme	Quotations
	• "It's just too much to bear sometimes and by the end of most Wednesdays, by the time that this school day is done, my frustration is very high, my fuse is very short. That's not fair to my own children. They don't get the best of me. That turns into a stressor."
Difficulty meeting expected educational standards	• "The biggest thing was just how am I going to get all of the same amount of material in in two days of in person learning that I was getting in in five days, and the curriculum speed did not change. The state expectations did not change. None of those expectations changed. They still expected you to teach the same amount of material in you know two days a week versus five." • "It was impossible for us to teach new material on their remote days just because they didn't have the support without us to teach things such as adding and subtracting fractions, multiplying and dividing. I mean it was just so much material that it was really difficult for them to do on their own." • "Pretty much those in person days just became a lot of review which was helpful for those that completed it, but then those that didn't, that was the other struggle." • "I personally would have liked to have filled up what they missed the year before in first grade so that we really had a solid foundation for all of those second -grade skills but unfortunately, that just wasn't the case." • "Everything builds on one another so if they don't get those foundational skills, the social skills, I think that's going to effect the next year and the following year." • "I was doing the same thing Monday, Tuesday as Thursday, Friday so it felt like we were never moving forward with anything."
Lack of fine motor skills	• "A lot of kindergarten, they have to see your face. They read your face a lot, but they can't do that when all they see is your eyes up. Phonics skills in kindergarten, you have to be able to see how to form the sounds, but with a mask you can't do that, so it's made my job a little bit harder."

Subtheme	Quotations
	• "They can read words on a page but then they don't retain anything because they have a hard time telling what the story was about because they don't have to talk about it." • "Kindergarten, first grade and 2nd grade students in my view we're not getting the same level of writing instruction. Their writing could not be corrected as I could not quite see what they did if they showed it to me online. I tried to hold them accountable, but we could not quite do it you know, so I think that probably would be one of the major academic areas of concern." • "I have a lot more students that don't know how to hold a pencil, who can't write their name because they don't have to, it's on the computer they can click and drag but they don't they have fine motor skills or they're losing it because they don't use them as much."

Theme II: Positive Experiences

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be a threat when schools returned to the classrooms, educators reported positive experiences for themselves and the students in returning to in-person learning. Most educators (n=7) were well pleased with the school administration's handling of COVID-19 protocols. No educators reported dissatisfaction with school administration regarding safety protocols or the return to in-person learning.

As a result of reduced days of in-person learning and the addition of a weekly virtual or remote learning day, some educators (n=4) expressed improved communication with parents. Teachers reported having a lens into their student's homes through the virtual learning tool, which allowed educators to better understand family dynamics, students' hobbies and interests, student disparities, and social interactions outside of school.

In some ways, virtual learning increased disparities in students' lives. For the first time ever, to comply with academic requirements, students needed internet service in their home or close enough to be able to utilize a Wi-Fi connection. Cohort attendance schedules of two days of weekly in-person learning also removed a reliable food source from some students' lives. The school system involved in this research provided Wi-Fi hotspot devices and Chromebooks to all students who were in need. Students were also supplied with meals for their remote days and were offered food to take home for the weekend if needed. Educators found this comforting to know that students were being supplied food even on remote learning days.

Educators described their students' mental health as sad, isolated, lonely, and scared of other people in returning to in-person learning in the fall of 2020. More than half of the educators (n=6) reported improved happiness in their students at the time of this research study due to increased socialization, a sense of normalcy, and feelings of safety and togetherness in the spring of 2021. Educators attribute this improvement to the return to in-person learning. Positive experience quotations are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Positive Experiences Theme

Subtheme	Quotations
Confidence in school administration	• "They (administration) took the concern for our health and safety into high regards." • "Coming back, I've never once felt that I was in danger or that my health and safety was being put aside just for others and to get this whole system back into its normal routine." • "Myself and my teammate, had great support from the administration so the return to the school was the school

Subtheme	Quotations
	as a whole and my administration handled it with poise dignity and diligence." • "They (administration) kept us up to date. They have us informed and we all knew everything that we had to do."
Appropriate COVID-19 safety protocols	• "I felt like our school really worked together to come up with procedures to allow people to come to school and be safe." • "I feel that there was adequate cleaning and spacing for different people to work in the same room." • "They made sure we had hand sanitizer, masks, extra masks."
Increased parental communication	• "I have learned a lot just about working together with the family as a team like this year specially you need the parents and teacher working together." • "There's constant communication (with parents) and constant knowing of what's going on which has been highly beneficial just to have a better in-depth view of what is happening in these children's lives outside of school, so I felt like that's been one big, big plus." • "You do feel like you're a whole lot more involved with the families to know more of what's going on." • "I think it's opened a whole variety of ways to be supportive for parents."
Meeting student's tangible needs	"All kids have been able to have free breakfast and free lunch this year which is kind of a relief for teachers knowing that our students are fed and know that students aren't having to worry about that." "On Tuesday afternoons we'll send a bag of lunch and a breakfast home for Wednesday. Then on Fridays they send them home with enough food for Saturday and Sunday which has been really nice and the kids can just decide if they want it or not." "The county started getting hot spots for the kids you know along with their chrome book."

Subtheme	Quotations
Increased student socialization and happiness	• "What I saw was that they (students) were so excited to be together again." • "They (students) seem to be happy to be at school." • "They (students) had a lot of things that they were excited about like getting to see the whole class at one time." • "If they (students) were asked, did your teacher do her best at keeping you safe, I think they would say yes. Did your teacher do her best with meeting your social emotional needs, I think they would say yes, did your teacher provide you with all of your curriculum, I think they would say yes." • "I think they (students) feel safe in school." • "It didn't seem to be that they (students) were fearful or afraid. I think they were just happy to have some sense of normal and togetherness." • "As school has continued to go and look more normal his mental health is improved (educator's son)."

Theme III: Coping and Self-Care

While more than half of the educators (n=6) reported that they and their students had feelings of stress and anxiety related to returning to school, only two educators discussed coping and self-care when teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. A quiet, designated workspace for teaching was key for one educator. The second educator taught in the school's Virtual Academy and taught from her home daily. She utilized relaxation techniques such as baths, enjoying nature, and quiet time. The educator also increased her sleep time and incorporated physical exercise into her daily routine. Coping and Self-Care experience quotations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Coping and Self-Care Theme

Subtheme	Quotations
Methods of educator's physical and emotional self-care	• "As far as how I handle stress, I don't know, I've always loved taking baths. I think that's a big stress reliever for me." • "On my lunch break I'll go and ride my bike. I did that more in the fall and taking the dog for a walk. Just being outside helps." • "I have noticed that I need more sleep than usual." • "I can get up early and have my cup of coffee on the porch, listening to the birds, have my cup of coffee and get ready for the day." • "I still have a routine in my day." • "I took a bedroom, made an office and just where I could close myself off… and I just taught."

Theme IV: Negative Behavior

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down school systems all over the world and most school systems passed students to the following grade due to a lack of benchmark testing and final exams. All educators participating in this survey reported apathy as a leading negative behavior by students as they returned to school in the fall of 2020.

There were two in-person learning days every week and one remote day at the participating school. Most educators (n=8) reported that students were not logging in for online classes on their remote day, there were students who had not attended school in-person all year, students were not turning in work, and one teacher reported having a few students who had not submitted any remote work all year.

Another leading negative behavior reported by educators was academic dishonesty. Teachers reported students who turned in work in their parent's handwriting

and students admitted that their parents did their work. Another clue for educators that parents were doing their children's work was a noticeable difference between a student's in-person abilities and the work being submitted on paper or online. Dishonesty also became a recurring theme regarding online assignments as students became familiar with "excusable reasons" for not turning in online assignments such as stating that the online platform was not working, or by saying they "thought it went through online" when teachers could see how much time the student actually spent on the platform. Negative behavior experience quotations are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Negative Behavior Theme

Subtheme	Quotations
Apathy	• "When everyone came back, I realized how they had gotten used to not even trying to problem solve on their own but just getting someone else to do it." • "They just didn't do their work on their off days, on their remote days." • "I have some students who have yet to complete remote work all year." • "My largest attendance is about 60%. So, I want to say that the large number of students who had (SPCL) classes consistently before pandemic did not come to Google meets." • "It's just kind of like well you're not going to hold us back so what does it matter?" • "It was kind of like everyone got a free pass for so long they weren't used to having like work for something." • "They're going to pass me on to the next grade even if I fail this stuff. It's not really going to matter."
Academic dishonesty	• "I probably had like four or five students where their work came back in their parents handwriting." • "Because the parents who are beside them are often doing the work for the kids and I see that."

Subtheme	Quotations
	• "What they're able to do through our live Google meetings does not match up to what they're doing with their assignments." • "Some little kids will say well my mom, my mom did my work." • "A lot of students have turned into great little liars by saying "oh, I did my work" and no they didn't."

Theme V: Disparities

Student disparities have been amplified by the systematic learning changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to food disparities and lack of internet connection as discussed in Theme II, six educators discussed additional disparities affecting the student's academic performance.

The educational plan utilized in the county of research was Plan B which was a hybrid model of in-person learning and virtual or remote learning. Students were provided a Chromebook if needed and a hotspot device for remote learning days. Educators reported that students would often have no individualized place for schoolwork or to attend online classes. Students who live in smaller homes or multi-generational homes often were unable to find a quiet place to attend virtual classes and had many distractions.

Students that chose to attend school through the county's Virtual Academy were required to have a parent present during online learning sessions. Most students did not have parental supervision during the school day because both parents were working. Educators reported that students were left to utilize the online platforms on their own. Completing online assignments was not a priority in the household or parents viewed schoolwork as the child's responsibility to complete.

Language barriers also created disparities for students and for adults attempting to monitor their children's education. Spanish-speaking parents had to use special smart applications or programs to translate reminder messages from teachers and to compose a reply message. Educators stated that it was more difficult for Spanish-speaking parents to understand their children's assignments and offer assistance with schoolwork. Disparities experience quotations are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Disparities Theme

Subtheme	Quotations
Student physical disparities such as lack of appropriate home learning environment	• "It's not fair and equitable when you're expecting, you know, it's a school expectation that they work in a quiet place free from distraction when they may live in a townhome with like you know, seven people in an apartment." • "A lot of kids, they have difficulty with paying attention anyway then you add the family members yelling in the background, the older brothers playing video games in the background."
Lack of parental supervision for online learning	• "I think that students in many cases were just left to practice on the platform on their own." • "They're choosing not to make sure their child gets it done." • "I had some (parents) who kind of made it seem like it was their child's responsibility and not theirs"
Language barriers	• "A lot of my English language learner students whose families do not speak English, that's been a real struggle for them just to understand what to do because it's a little difficult for them to always help their student with that work."

Subtheme	Quotations
	• "If they send me a message I'll respond because you know it took a lot of time for them to translate it, you know, and put it in (the message)."

Theme VI: Technological Challenges

Technological challenges were reported by more than half (n=5) of the educators who participated in this survey. While hotspot devices were provided for teachers and students who requested equipment, the hotspots only performed well in one internet carrier's network. Educators reported that if students were out of the specified network area, they would have to seek Wi-Fi services at a coffee shop, store, or restaurant if they were open.

Lack of online platform training and poor program performance were other complaints that educators and parents both experienced. According to educators, parents repeatedly stated that they did not know how to use the technology that was provided to the students, or the program would stop functioning, which caused parents to give up on assisting their students with schoolwork submission. Other times the online platform would fail, causing issues system-wide for students, parents, and educators. Technological challenge quotations are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Technological Challenges Theme

Subtheme	Quotations
Poor internet connection	• "If you're in a dead zone for Verizon then your hotspot did not work and there were no other options and that point, other than the family probably having to go to seek free Wi-

Subtheme	Quotations
	Fi at a McDonald's, the coffee shop, library what have you, if those places were open." • "For the kiddos that didn't have Internet access, home hotspots were provided which was very beneficial, as long as you were within Verizon area."
Lack of online platform training	• "I don't have internet at home. I had no clue… I can turn my phone into a hotspot?" • "After school started like in November, imagine that even opening in different tabs or navigating from one tab to another that was a challenge, and we learned how to do that you know, especially with the younger students." • "They (students) think they've done their work and they forget to hit the submit button, because you know, we threw a new platform at them."
Poor program performance	• "Every single meeting that I have, I have parents that tell me that they don't know how to use the technology that's been provided." • "I think a lot of times if it (Schoology) didn't work the first couple times they tried it they just kind of gave up." • "I know a lot of times we wouldn't get the assignments turned in or parents would say they were having trouble with the program." • "Sometimes you know the program just failed altogether and wouldn't let anybody in so and then it was very frustrating on all ends."

Summary

Full participation in this study helped to yield qualitative results to be analyzed by the researcher. This study revealed six themes related to the perceived effects of systematic learning changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on primary and secondary educators, and students as reported by educators. These themes were: negative

experiences, positive experiences, coping and self-care, negative behavior, disparities, and technological challenges.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional teaching methods for learners at all academic levels bringing about unprecedented changes in the way education was delivered. The purpose of this Master of Science in Nursing research was to examine the perceived effects of systematic learning changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on primary and secondary educators and students as reported by educators. This research will then be applied to implications for future nursing educators and students. Educators reported perceived positive and negative emotions when returning to the classroom for themselves and students.

This research revealed that while online learning became a quick fix for the continuity of education, educators reported increases in workload and stress levels and feelings of uncertainty regarding changes in schedules, procedures, and even employment status. Compounding the stress of educators was the feeling of unpreparedness to teach curriculum virtually which is supported by previous research from Kaden (2020) in which teachers reported greatly underestimating the complexity of successful online teaching, the amount of content that could be covered, and how to engage students in an online format.

The researcher recognizes the importance of face-to-face educational instruction, academic accountability, socialization, and equity in the learning environment for ideal academic performance. Educators interviewed for this research stressed their concern that students were behind on grade-level testing at the end of the academic year and no plan was presented by the state Board of Education to meet those gaps. Current literature

suggests that the absence of in-person learning has detrimental, long-term effects on primary and secondary learners. “More intensive instruction and catch-up may be needed in early grades for reading” (Wyse et al., 2020, p. 63).

Implication of Findings

The participants of this research study included nine K-5 educators with at least five years of teaching experience who taught in-person and virtual classes at a rural southeastern elementary school. Teachers reported negative feelings of anxiety and stress regarding workplace changes, increased workload, fear of contracting the virus or infecting their family, feelings of isolation, frustrations as working parents, technological frustrations, poor student mental health, and difficulty meeting educational standards. Teachers expressed concern over student inequities, student apathy, and academic dishonesty. Teachers reported that more time was spent than ever before communicating with families, particularly with non-English speaking families to be sure information and expectations were clear for student performance.

While educators interviewed for this study expectedly reported negative experiences, they also reported positive experiences when returning to the classroom. Teachers expressed praise to school administration for providing a safe environment for teachers and students with clear instruction on COVID-19 protocols and a clean physical environment to avoid virus contamination. Obrad (2020) discussed the teacher’s need for guidance from leaders when adapting to new tools or activities as “one of the premises for ensuring sustainability in education” (p. 5).

Teachers and students alike experienced improved mental health and reported feeling happier with the return to in-person learning and teachers felt that their

communication and relationships with families had improved with the use of technology. This is supported in Roca et al. (2020), whose research reported that "the creation of spaces where quality learning occurs at the same time as dialogues that give meaning to the topics that are the children's concerns, creating an environment of confidence where they feel heard and supported" (p. 14).

Application to Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Roy's Adaptation Model explains how people adapt to change in their environment. The implementation of interviewing educators with the use of open-ended questions provided the opportunity for educators to express their perceived effects of systematic learning changes on K-5 educators and learners when returning to the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic through the process recommended in Roy's Adaptation Model. Roy's regulator subsystem allowed educators to describe physiologic or physical coping strategies while the cognator subsystem helped educators describe mental coping strategies.

Limitations

The researcher was limited to 10 participants by county administrative officials for the school system. Considering the small sample size from one school, this research may not include adequate data to make broad conclusions across different populations, thus limiting generalizability. The interview of students could have rendered more specific data regarding the student's perception of returning to the classroom during a pandemic compared to having the educator's perception only.

Implications for Nursing

For specific nursing implications, this research could be replicated using nursing students as research subjects in the future. As a result of this research, future nurse educators will be prepared for the challenges ahead in the event of a catastrophe that changes the delivery of education as we once knew it. This research reflects educators should expect an increase in stress and workload if education must be converted from in-person to virtual with little to no warning. Educators should practice self-care such as increased sleep, exercise, or quiet time and take adequate time away from work to reduce stress levels. Educators should look to the administration for support and the proper tools to adequately perform their job duties.

The result of this research also allows nurse educators to glean insight into possible poor academic habits and learning deficits of future nursing students. Evidence shows that many primary and secondary learners have become apathetic to attending class and toward the submission of assignments virtually or in-person which could carry forward into their college careers. Students have also become apathetic to meeting academic requirements and are expectant that they will be "passed" along to the next grade level due to the lack of academic accountability from school systems and the lack of college testing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students may not fully understand the weight of academic dishonesty witnessed by educators during online learning which was reported to be practiced by students and parents. Future nursing students may have also experienced gaps in learning processes during COVID-19 which may mean below learning levels in math and reading from which they may never academically recover. Nursing students may also be less proficient in performing nursing

skills if in-person skills labs and clinical experiences are converted to digital learning experiences which may affect their future nursing careers.

Recommendations

This researcher recommends that further research should be conducted on the long-term effects on academic testing scores and dropout rates of primary and secondary learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, research should also be conducted on graduation rates of nursing students affected by systemic learning changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. More education and preparation should be implemented toward the delivery of online education and the management of education opportunities to reduce disparities.

Conclusion

While COVID-19 was the catalyst that caused the disruption in education worldwide, as a result, educators will be more prepared to transition education delivery in the future. COVID-19 may have changed education methods and expectations for parents, students, and teachers permanently. Future education may be more flexible in scheduling and may include hybrid learning methods. Teachers, parents, and administrators should work together to create a learning system that works for all stakeholders and is inclusive for vulnerable populations.

References

Bayham, J., & Fenichel, E. P. (2020). Impact of school closures for COVID-19 on the US healthcare workforce and net mortality: A modelling study. *The Lancet Public health*, *5*(5), e271–e278. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30082-7

Bonell, C., Melendez-Torres, G., Viner, R. M., Rogers, M. B., Whitworth, M., Rutter, H., & Patton, G. (2020). An evidence-based theory of change for reducing SARS-CoV-2 transmission in reopened schools. *Health & Place*, *64*, 102398. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2020.102398

Espino-Díaz, L., Fernandez-Caminero, G., Hernandez-Lloret, C., Gonzalez-Gonzalez, H., & Alvarez-Castillo, J. (2020). Analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on education professionals toward a paradigm shift: ICT and neuroeducation as a binomial of action. *Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland)*, *12*(14), 5646. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12145646

Federkeil, L., Heinschke, F., & Klapproth, F. (2020). Teachers experiences of stress and their coping strategies during COVID -19 induced distance teaching. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.2020062805

Guy, B., & Arthur, B. (2020). Academic motherhood during COVID-19: Navigating our dual roles as educators and mothers. *Gender, Work, and Organization, 27*(5), 887-899. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12493

Hamzelou, J. (2020). How to safely reopen schools. *New Scientist*, *247*(3298), 8â€“10. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0262-4079(20)31518-9

Hou, Y., Zhou, Q., Li, D., Guo, Y., Fan, J., & Wang, J. (2020). Preparedness of our emergency department during novel coronavirus pneumonia from the nurses' perspectives: A qualitative research study. *Journal of Emergency Nursing,* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jen.2020.07.008

Huang, R., Tlili, A., Chang, T., Zhang, X., Nascimbeni, F., & Burgos, D. (2020). Disrupted classes, undisrupted learning during COVID-19 outbreak in China: Application of open educational practices and resources. *Smart Learning Environments, 7*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-020-00125-8

Husserl, E. (2010). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kaden, U. (2020). COVID-19 school closure-related changes to the professional life of a K–12 teacher. *Education Sciences, 10*(6), 165. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10060165

Karimi, Z., Fereidouni, Z., Behnammoghadam, M., Alimohammadi, N., Mousavizadeh, A., Salehi, T., . . . & Mirzaee, S. (2020). The lived experience of nurses caring for patients with COVID-19 in Iran: A phenomenological study. *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy,13*, 1271-1278. https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S258785

Li, A., Harries, M., & Ross, L. F. (2020). Reopening K-12 schools in the era of covid-19: Review of state-level guidance addressing equity concerns. *The Journal of Pediatrics*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.08.069

Linder, K. E. (2017). Fundamentals of hybrid teaching and learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2017*(149), 11-18. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20222

Ludvigsson, J. F. (2020). Children are unlikely to be the main drivers of the covid-19 pandemic – A systematic review. *Acta Paediatrica, 109*(8), 1525-1530. https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.15371

Macartney, K., Quinn, H. E., Pillsbury, A. J., Koirala, A., Deng, L., Winkler, N., Katelaris, A. L., O'Sullivan, M., Dalton, C., Wood, N., & NSW COVID-19 Schools Study Team (2020). Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in Australian educational settings: A prospective cohort study. *The Lancet. Child & Adolescent Health*, S2352-4642(20)30251-0. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30251-0

MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2020). Language teachers coping strategies during the covid-19 conversion to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing, and negative emotions. *System*, *94*, 102352. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102352

Matua, G. A., & Van Der Wal, D. M. (2015). Differentiating between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches. *Nurse Researcher, 22*(6), 22-27. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.22.6.22.e1344

Obrad, C. (2020). Constraints and consequences of online teaching. *Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland), 12*(17), 6982. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12176982

Panovska-Griffiths, J., Kerr, C. C., Stuart, R. M., Mistry, D., Klein, D. J., Viner, R. M., & Bonell, C. (2020). Determining the optimal strategy for reopening schools, the impact of test and trace interventions, and the risk of occurrence of a second covid-19 epidemic wave in the UK: A modelling study. *The Lancet. Child & Adolescent Health*, S2352-4642(20)30250-9. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30250-9

Perrett, S. E. (2007). *Review of Roy Adaptation Model-Based Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894318407306538

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2017). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice* (10th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer.

Prem, K., Liu, Y., Russell, T. W., Kucharski, A. J., Eggo, R. M., Davies, N., … & Hellewell, J. (2020). The effect of control strategies to reduce social mixing on outcomes of the covid-19 epidemic in Wuhan, China: A modelling study. *The Lancet Public Health*, *5*(5). https://doi.org/10.1016/s2468-2667(20)30073-6

Roca, E., Melgar, P., Gairal-Casadó, R., & Pulido-Rodríguez, M. A. (2020). Schools that 'open doors' to prevent child abuse in confinement by covid-19. *Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland)*, *12*(11), 4685. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114685

Roy, C. (2011). Research based on the roy adaptation model: Last 25 years. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, *24*(4), 312-320. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894318411419218

Sokolowska, M., Lukasik, Z., Agache, I., Akdis, C., Akdis, D., Akdis, M., . . . & Untersmayr, E. (2020). Immunology of covid-19: Mechanisms, clinical outcome, diagnostics and perspectives – a report of the European academy of allergy and clinical immunology (EAACI). *Allergy (Copenhagen)*, https://doi.org/10.1111/all.14462

Whalley, R., & K. Barbour, M. (2020). Collaboration and virtual learning in New Zealand rural primary schools: A review of the literature. *The Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education TOJDE, 21*(2), 102-125. https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.727983

Wiersinga, W. J., Rhodes, A., Cheng, A. C., Peacock, S. J., & Prescott, H. C. (2020). Pathophysiology, transmission, diagnosis, and treatment of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): A review. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association, 324*(8), 782-793. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.12839

Wyse, A. E., Stickney, E. M., Butz, D., Beckler, A., & Close, C. N. (2020). The potential impact of covid-19 on student learning and how schools can respond. *Educational Measurement, Issues, and Practice, 39*(3), 60-64. https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12357

Appendix A

Email Sent to Teachers to Request Participation in the Study

Hello,

I am Fairbee Mintz and I am obtaining my Master of Science in Nursing Education at Gardner-Webb University. I am completing my thesis research in partnership with your school on the effects of COVID-19 on K-5 educators and learners.

This project involves ZOOM interviews of K-5 educators who have at least five years of teaching experience who are teaching virtual or hybrid learning students. Participation in this research is voluntary. ZOOM interviews will take place over a designated two-week time span at the convenience of the participant. Only one interview is expected to be necessary by each participant and is expected to last 20-30 minutes.

To participate in this study, please respond to me by email in 3 business days. Within this email is the informed consent form to be completed and returned to me should you choose to participate in the study. The information you provide in the interview is confidential. Please email me if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and contributions to this project,

Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN

Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN
MSN Ed Candidate
Gardner-Webb University
704.616.3820
fmintz@gardner-webb.edu

Appendix B

Reminder Email Sent to Teachers to Request Participation in Study

Hello,

This is a reminder that you have been invited to participate in a Master of Science in Nursing Education research project regarding the effects of COVID-19 on K-5 educators and learners.

This project involves ZOOM interviews of K-5 educators who have at least five years of teaching experience who are teaching virtual or hybrid learning students. Participation in this research is voluntary. ZOOM interviews will take place over a designated two-week time span at the convenience of the participant. Only one interview is expected to be necessary by each participant and is expected to last 20-30 minutes.

To participate in this study, please respond to me by email in 3 business days. Within this email is the informed consent form to be completed and returned to me should you choose to participate in the study. The information you provide in the interview is confidential. Please email me if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and contributions to this project,

Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN

Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN
MSN Ed Candidate
Gardner-Webb University
704.616.3820
fmintz@gardner-webb.edu

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience in returning to school during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Describe your student's experience in returning to school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

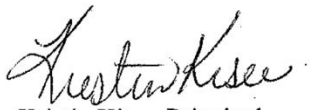
Appendix D

Permission to Conduct Research

September 28, 2020

Kristin Kiser, Principal
Lowell Elementary School
1500 Power Drive
Lowell, NC 28098

I, Kristin Kiser agree to allow Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN of the Gardner Webb University Master of Science Nursing program, survey teachers at Lowell Elementary for thesis research on effects of COVID 19. Teachers will be surveyed in person or via Zoom video conference until Mrs. Mintz reaches content saturation.



Kristin Kiser, Principal
Lowell Elementary School
704-836-9118
ktkiser@gaston.k12.nc.us

Appendix E

GWU IRB Informed Consent Form

Title of Study

Teacher perceptions of effects of COVID-19 on K-5 educators and learners

Researcher

Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN

Master of Science in Nursing Education Candidate

Hunt School of Nursing

Gardner Webb University

Purpose

The purpose of this Master of Science in Nursing Education thesis is to examine the perceived experience of primary and secondary educators regarding the effect of systematic learning changes during the reopening of classrooms in the midst of a pandemic.

Procedure

You will be interviewed via ZOOM conference meeting which will be audio and video recorded using the ZOOM record feature. Recordings will be stored on the researcher's password protected laptop and will only be accessible by the researcher. Once the meeting has concluded, your responses will be transcribed verbatim and emailed to you for accuracy approval. Once the transcript has been verified, the recording will be deleted. Electronic transcripts will be assigned a pseudonym and will be stored on the researcher's password protected laptop and only accessible by the researcher. Participation in this study is voluntary and you will have the right to withdraw or not participate at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any

question(s) for any reason. If you choose to withdraw, you can request your data that has been collected be destroyed.

Time Required

It is anticipated that the study will require about 20-30 minutes of your time.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality

Data Linked with Identifying Information

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your name will not be used in any report. Your information will be assigned a pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be stored electronically on the researcher's password protected laptop. When the study has been completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be deleted. ZOOM recordings will be deleted once you have approved the interview transcription. Transcribed interviews will be stored on a flash drive which will be given to Gardner-Webb University and original data will be deleted from the researcher's laptop. Original data on the flash drive will be stored by Gardner-Webb University for three years and will then be destroyed.

Risks

Minimal psychological risk may arise within participants when answering questions that involve thoughts and attitudes regarding the effects of COVID-19 on K-5 educators and learners. If, as a result of the study, you experience discomfort and would like to discuss your thoughts or feelings with a counselor, please contact the school counselor for assistance: Mary Warner, M. Ed., Monday-Friday 8am-3pm.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand the effects of COVID-19 on K-5 educators and learners. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment

You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your ZOOM audio/video recording and electronic transcript will be deleted from the researcher's laptop unless data is in a de-identified state.

How to Withdraw From the Study

- If you want to withdraw from the study during the ZOOM interview, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like your data to be deleted, make that request at this time.
- If you would like to withdraw from the study after your materials have been submitted, please contact the researcher by phone 704.616.3820 or email at fmintz@gardner-webb.edu. If your data is identifiable by the researcher, it will be

deleted from the researcher's password protected laptop. If your data has been de-identified using a pseudonym, the researcher may not be able to delete the data.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Fairbee Mintz, BSN, RN

MSN Ed Candidate

Hunt School of Nursing

Gardner-Webb University

Phone 704.616.3820

fmintz@gardner-webb.edu

Abby Garlock, DNP, RN, LCCE

Chair, Doctoral Nursing Programs

Associate Professor

Hunt School of Nursing

Gardner-Webb University

Phone 704.406.2306

agarlock@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Sydney K. Brown

IRB Institutional Administrator

Gardner-Webb University

Telephone: 704-406-3019

Email: skbrown@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me. I agree to participate in this study.

_____ Date:

Participant Printed Name

_____ Date:

Participant Signature (virtual signatures are acceptable)

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.