

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND BURNOUT AMONG TEACHERS IN A RURAL  
FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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For Maclaine and Whitney

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## LIST OF TERMS

Burnout	A condition whereby individuals experience emotional exhaustion, depression, cynicism, perceived professional and/or personal failure
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to accurately appraise, use and express emotion; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to use emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 2004).
MBI-ES	Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey is an instrument used to measure an educator's levels of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and level of perceived personal accomplishment.
MSCEIT	Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test is an instrument used to assess emotional intelligence that indexes how accurately a person can read and express emotion and how well a person can compare that emotional stimulation with other sorts of sensory experiences (Mayer, 2001).

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By

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The purpose of this exploratory quantitative study was to determine if there was a relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBIES). Teachers from four different elementary schools in one rural Florida district participated in the study. Demographic factors, including gender, age, ethnicity, participation in a mentoring program, and years of experience in the classroom and at their current school, and participants' self-reported stressors were examined to determine if they were explanatory factors.

While there was no relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout, there were significant findings regarding emotional intelligence and teacher gender and race/ethnicity. Males had higher scores regarding perceiving emotions (a MSCEIT subcategory) than women while whites had higher scores on experiential emotional intelligence, the ability to perceive and utilize emotions frequently (a MSCEIT category) than blacks or Hispanics. There was also a relationship between the number of teacher-generated stressors listed in the survey and two areas of emotional intelligence:

participants' abilities to use emotions (a subcategory of EI) and participants' total overall emotional intelligence. The more stressors listed, the lower the participants' ability to use emotions to do certain tasks, and the lower their overall EI.

Related to burn-out, teachers with 15 or more years of experience had significantly lower feelings of personal accomplishment. Also, the more stressors teachers listed, the higher their emotional exhaustion scores. While this study found no relationship between teacher burnout and emotional intelligence, there were significant relationships between stressors and teacher characteristics. This study contributes to the field of educational leadership, teacher training and mentoring, and to individual school administrators and teachers by highlighting the factors related to the relationship between EI and burnout. The findings suggest there may be inherent benefits of improving emotional intelligence, such as decreasing teacher stress and by extension teacher attrition. Providing targeted training in these areas aimed at improving EI and reducing burnout could be useful towards mitigating teacher attrition.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2003-04, there were over 3.25 million public school teachers in the United States. Three fourths were females, and 18% comprised new or beginning teachers (Strizek, Pittonsonberger, Riordan, Liter, & Orlofsky, 2006). In an average year approximately 1,000 teachers quit each school day and another 1,000 teachers transfer to other schools. A third of the newly hired teachers leave during their first three years, and almost half leave during the first five years (National Commission of Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003).

Ingersoll (2002) has compared teacher attrition and the replacement cycle to a bucket with a hole in it. Continuous turnover of teachers predominately hurts low-income schools, which suffer from turnover rates as much as 50% higher than affluent schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Such churning results in a constant influx of inexperienced teachers and causes schools financial burdens due to expenses required for recruiting and training. A pilot study conducted by Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) concluded that teacher turnover costs taxpayers \$7.3 billion dollars each year. In a 2005 policy brief, the Alliance for Excellent Education estimated that attrition could cost as much as 30% of the leaver's salary. .

Michael Allen reviewed 91 studies pertaining to teacher recruitment and retention to determine whether there was strong, moderate, limited, or inconclusive evidence to support their conclusions regarding who is likely to leave the profession. He reviewed only quantitative studies including experimental, quasi-experimental and correlational studies that used advanced statistical approaches such as regression analysis. Allen (2005) reported that there was moderate evidence suggesting white teachers have

greater attrition rates than African-American or Hispanic teachers. Specifically, he found that minority teachers were more likely than white teachers to remain in schools with higher proportions of minority students. He found limited evidence that teachers with high intellectual proficiency are more likely to leave teaching compared to individuals with significantly lower intellectual proficiency. However, in terms of academic qualifications, there was limited evidence that teachers with subject expertise or certification are less likely to leave than teachers with fewer qualifications. There was strong evidence that attrition is greater among middle school and high school teachers than among elementary school teachers, and moderate evidence was found that science and mathematics teachers are more likely to leave their jobs than secondary school teachers of other subjects.

There was strong evidence that teacher attrition is most severe among beginning teachers but that the likelihood of a teacher leaving declines significantly after he or she has been in the classroom for four to five years and then increases again markedly after 25-30 years in the profession. While Allen found that younger women were most likely to leave teaching, moderate evidence supported the idea that pregnancy and childrearing were the reasons for departure. In regards to the relationship between teacher attrition and other teacher characteristics, such as socioeconomic status; academic degree; and beliefs, values and attitudes, the literature was inconclusive. When efforts were made to stem teacher attrition, such as creating smaller classes and reducing teachers' workloads, the findings were also inconclusive (Allen, 2005).

While there are many reasons for the continuing mass exodus of teachers (including "quick fix" approaches such as alternate-route certification programs,

resulting in ill-prepared teachers; poor working conditions; and low pay) researchers have also been exploring the effects of teacher burnout as it relates to teachers' longevity (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Researchers have found that burnout affects commitment to teaching and contributes to teacher attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Day, Elliot, & Kingston 2005). Byrne (1999) pointed out that teachers are not just providers of academic instruction; they also undertake multiple roles to meet the needs of a wide range of students. For example, they work in overcapacity classrooms, deal with varied student issues and handle discipline, usually with little or no support from parents and school administrators.

Phillips and Raman (1994) point out how damaging stress can be to educators:

it is increasing exponentially . . . chaotic homes, peer and gang influences, media impact, etc., all resulting in needier clients in schools. Our stress is sometimes expressed outwardly in the form of faculty lounge whining, tears, anger in the classroom, or even violence. Often, stress is less visible . . . resulting in depression, irritability, alcohol abuse, or subtle damage to physical health as in heightened blood pressure. (p. iv)

Teacher stress is not just an American issue. Studies from Jordan, Greece, Germany, China, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Australia, Slovenia, Canada, and Hong Kong have also examined the effects of stress on teachers. Negative physical and mental symptoms abound (digestive issues, poor sleeping habits, irritability, etc.) and are very similar despite cultural differences (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). In 2000, the National Association of Head Teachers in England observed that 40% of teachers reported visiting a physician due to a stress-related problem during the previous year, 20% believed they drank too much, 15% felt they were alcoholics, while 25% reported suffering from a serious stress related problem such as hypertension, depression, insomnia, and/or gastrointestinal disorders (Jarvis, 2002).

The quality of education suffers when teachers choose to stay despite being burned out (Moore-Johnson, 2006). Most teachers enter the profession with high expectations, and are not prepared for the stress-inducing experiences that occur, combined with a lack of support and an overload of work. When burned out, teachers lose confidence in their ability to make a difference. They may minimize their involvement, relinquish their ideals, and treat those they encounter with detachment or coldness and see their work as burdensome (Friedman, 2000). Research has also shown that burnout can spread throughout an organization if teachers discuss organizational or student problems with colleagues and principals (Westman & Ethicon, 1999; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000).

An exploration of emotional intelligence, often called social competence or social-emotional skills may reveal this factor can mitigate stress before it becomes burnout. According to King (2005), “recent educational reforms and social changes have only added to the stress load teachers experience on a daily basis. Most contemporary educators have not been taught techniques or methods to relieve stress and anxiety in their lives” (p.17). While burnout in teachers has been examined in previous studies and emotional intelligence has been explored as a subject in and of itself among different populations, very little has been written about emotional intelligence (EI) as it relates to burnout in teachers. This study’s findings may contribute to both areas of research and provide additional insight and information to assist teachers.

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence is

the capacity to reason about emotions and of emotions to enhance thinking; it involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings so as to assist thought; the

ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (p.10)

EI researchers agree that an individual's capacity for emotional intelligence can be developed, enhanced, and this can help offset the negative consequences of burnout (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004). Thus, research in emotional intelligence and its relationship to teacher burn-out has the potential to promote inquiry and problem-solving in this area. "Our knowledge and understanding of ourselves, in relation to those around us, can only strengthen our resolve and our vision for the students in our care. Emotional intelligence is the foundation for these relationships and relationships are the foundation for change" (Lyons, p. 6).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout by assessing a sample of Florida teachers using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBIES). Demographic factors, including gender, age, ethnicity, participation in a mentoring program, and years of experience in the classroom and at their current school were also examined to determine if they were causal factors.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?
2. Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher characteristics when compared by a) gender, b) age, c) total years experience, d) years experience at the current school, e) participation in a mentoring program, and f) ethnicity?
3. Is there a relationship between burnout and teacher characteristics when compared by a) gender, b) age, c) total years experience, and d) years

experience at the current school, e) participation in a mentoring program, and f) ethnicity?

4. Is there a relationship among the perceived stressors and burnout?
5. Is there a relationship among the perceived stressors and emotional intelligence?

### **Significance of the Study**

The average cost to recruit, hire, train and lose a teacher is \$50,000 (Carroll & Fulton, 2004). Teacher attrition is not only costly, it is disruptive and detrimental to the education of students. According to Chase (2000), “high turnover has devastating consequences for children. Research shows that the single most important factor in a child’s education is the quality of his or her teacher – and quality depends in large measure upon years of experience” (p. 5).

A large percentage of new teachers leave the field within their first five years. Stress has been identified as a significant factor affecting teacher retention (Jarvis, 2002). As Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) have observed, it is of the utmost importance that teachers and their experience and knowledge are retained. Perhaps an even more important recognition is that the attrition resulting from high levels of stress is indicative of an organizational culture that is not developing resiliency in educators.

Teacher attrition, and the burnout that is oftentimes the cause, warrants study. Understanding and assessing the emotional strengths and needs of teachers by using the MSCEIT may prove beneficial when examined in conjunction with assessments of teachers’ feelings of burnout as measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey and compared with other teacher demographic characteristics. Many researchers believe that emotional intelligence is learnable (Caruso & Wolf, 2001). The

study of emotional intelligence as it relates to teacher burnout may lead to new and better ways to help teachers.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. Study participants were limited to a convenience sample of teachers in a rural southeast Florida school district, and thus the findings should be considered only within the context of this study.
2. The veracity of the findings was influenced by participants' willingness to answer MSCEIT and MBI-ES questions honestly.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, teacher attrition has been addressed with increased efforts to attract and hire new teachers while ignoring the impact of teacher burnout (Ingersoll, 2001). Since teacher burnout has most likely been a contributing factor to teacher turnover, early detection of burnout may help in addressing attrition (Hakanen, Bakker, & Shaufeli, 2006). Although many studies have examined teacher attrition, some researchers have recognized the need for a more complete analysis of the impact of teacher burnout on teacher turnover (McCoy, 2003).

Emotional intelligence becomes a plausible factor when one considers that “EI positively correlates to job performance when the maintenance of positive personal commitments is important to success,” according to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004, p. 209). When educators are more successful in school and life this enhances their students’ chances of success as well (Ryiel, Bernshausen, & Van Tassell, 2001).

### **Teacher Stress**

Teachers and the stressors they endure have become a topic of growing interest and research, as studies suggest that teachers experience greater levels of stress when compared to other professionals. According to Russell (2000) research on high stress occupational groups, including teachers, police officers, politicians, and air traffic controllers, demonstrate that these groups are at high risk of depression serious enough to possibly require therapy. According to Black (2003), stress has become a way of life for teachers, and is the expected norm. It is common knowledge that a high percentage of teachers leave the field early in their careers, but it is difficult to know how many leave due to stress or burnout. However, studies do suggest that stress and

burnout can result in increased teacher attrition (Gersten et al., 2001; Montgomery, & Rupp, 2005). Several stressors have been identified, such as interpersonal demands, inconsistent or a lack of professional recognition, dealing with student discipline, or large amounts of paperwork, inadequate resources and time, adapting to change (Kyriacou, 2001), and poor relationships with colleagues and principals (Troman, 2000). Working alone in their classrooms, teachers are often hesitant to seek out help or advice, depending on their school culture. Their work roles often result in professional isolation and occupational stress (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001).

Long-term stress can affect the physical and mental health of teachers. Elevated blood pressure, dietary changes, headaches, heart rate and/or hormonal changes, loss of weight, or loss of energy may result, as well as more reports of psychosomatic symptoms (Kyriacou, 2001). Feelings of inferiority, resignation, helplessness, nervousness, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms render these teachers among the most likely to experience long-term stress (Bauer. et al. 2006).

These stressors may adversely affect the classroom environment and teacher interactions with students and others. Stressed teachers were less task-oriented, used less positive reinforcement, were less focused during instruction, and were viewed as less approachable or interested in their students and their well-being. Interpersonal conflicts with colleagues and parents were also more likely (Israel, 2005).

### **Organizational Contributing Factors to Stress**

Historically, several organizational factors such as inadequate buildings and facilities, (Buckley et al., 2004); salary considerations (Tye & O'Brien, 2002); a lack of resources, disruptive students (Martin, 2010); and a need for increased administrative support (Israel, 2005) have contributed to teacher stress. A school's organizational

climate can also affect teacher stress and morale. Lower teacher commitment and job satisfaction are usually the product of traditional and bureaucratically rigid schools, while less stress occurs in more flexible schools where teachers believe their ideas are valuable and they can contribute positively to school change (Ma & Macmillan, 1999).

Urban schools teachers reported more stress and dissatisfaction than rural teachers, primarily due to student discipline and behavior problems (Ingersoll, 2004). Rural teachers may have stressful conditions radiating from time demands and fewer resources, but they were more positive and perceived their conditions, professional recognition, and social support as good (Monk, 2007). Urban teachers viewed their working conditions as worsening, and had more negative views of their school systems' policies, curricula and academic standards, autonomy, and salaries (Ingersoll, 2004).

Increased teacher accountability and high stakes tests have led some teachers to follow a "drill and kill" curriculum, which takes the enjoyment out of learning and increases stress for teachers and students (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Also, stress resulted from teaching in schools that were designated as failing (Figlio, 2001). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has reinforced teacher-centered classrooms in many schools, conflicting with the aims of student-centered learning and restricting pedagogy (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Nieto, 2003). Accountability is necessary and can be productive and useful to improving teaching practices and efforts. If carried to the extreme, accountability can lead to increased stress when teachers feel forced to second-guess their professional decisions (Jeffrey, 2002), increased teacher demoralization (McNeil, 2000), and increased teacher attrition (NCTAF, 2003).

## **From Stress to Burnout**

Teachers' stress resulting from a lack of reciprocity or perceived rewards gained has also been studied. According to Schaufeli and Buunk (2003), if they feel that their investments in their students are greater than their expected outcomes, they will have negative emotional, psychological, and professional repercussions. These negative consequences grow in proportion to how demanding teachers perceive their jobs to be (Demrouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) if: "the particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" is seen as a stressor, (p.19). then this stressor, whether real or perceived, is viewed as taxing and detrimental. Strain is a possible negative consequence of stress (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). While some teachers can handle stress, to others frequent or prolonged periods under stress and the resulting strain may produce feelings of emotional exhaustion, a reduction in personal accomplishment, a sense of professional failure, and a tendency to depersonalize the recipient of services (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). Burnout has also been described as a negative result of stress ending in "a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term in work situations that are emotionally demanding" (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001, p. 501).

When the daily roles of teachers are observed, the reasons that they experience burnout become clearer. Teachers try to resolve student discipline issues while teaching large classes comprised of students with varied needs, learning styles, and levels of functioning, often receiving conflicting or competing input from the public and administrators (Croom, 2003). Also contributing to teacher burnout are organizational

stressors relating to workload and role stress such as unclear and inconsistent policies pertaining to student behaviors, and adjusting curricula and schedules to accommodate changing government mandates. The perception of not being appreciated by students, parents, administrators, and the general public also contributes to teacher burnout (Sava, 2002).

### **Burnout and its Effects on School Culture**

According to Farber (1991), even though stress and burnout may plague other professions “teachers do deserve special attention and consideration even if they are no more stressed and burned out than other professionals. It is to teachers that we entrust our children and thus our future” (p. 44). Teacher burnout should be considered critically important since it can result in a teacher’s breakdown of physical health, emotional wellbeing and an inability to consider innovative classroom practices. Teachers who are resilient and confident in their abilities to teach tend to modify or adjust interventions so that they are constructive, thoughtful, and in the best interest of students (Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004).

When a teacher experiences burnout, the goal is just to survive the day (Friedman, 2000). This does not go unnoticed, because students sense when teachers are burned out and they must endure the result: teachers’ impatience and lack of support. Interactions with colleagues and parents are also impacted. Educators experiencing stress have been described as more cynical, less flexible, more likely to experience interpersonal conflicts with colleagues. Additional conflict leads to feelings of social inadequacy and isolation (Gaitan, 2009). Teachers who suffer from burnout may spread their negativity by behaving rigidly, showing an overly tough attitude towards their students, expecting less from students, demonstrating less involvement in

teaching, and showing little concern for their students (Hughes, 2001). Wiley (2000) reports that teachers who experience chronic feelings of emotional exhaustion and fatigue may develop “negative attitudes toward their students, and feeling of diminishing job accomplishments. . . these feelings are aspects of stress and often result in absenteeism, which may lead to student absenteeism and a lack of academic achievement” (p. 81). Unfortunately, teachers who become burned out or feel that they are not making a difference do not necessarily seek help or quit but sometimes remain in their jobs out of economic need, which can impact a school’s culture (Dworkin, 2001).

While high achieving teachers take on additional roles and responsibilities to benefit schools and students, researchers have shown that there is a correlation between additional roles, responsibilities, and burnout (Talmor, et al., 2005)). Stress is a negative factor in many cases, but for others, it caused them to work harder or to excel in their endeavors (Sheesley, 2001). Thus, it is important to distinguish among individuals' characteristics, traits or abilities that make stress a positive or negative experience.

### **Burnout and Teacher Characteristics**

The review of literature revealed that there is no consensus in regards to years of experience and how it might relate to teacher burnout. Some studies showed that younger, less-experienced teachers experience more alienation, powerlessness and stress (Black, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002). However, other studies reported that burnout was less likely among those with very little experience and quite extensive among those with 24 years or more experience (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2001). Ingersoll’s studies relating teacher age and attrition depict the rate of

teacher turnover when graphed, as a “U.” The rate of turnover rose the first year, decreased during the middle years and rose again towards the last years (2001).

According to Stuart and Thurlow (2000), novice teachers’ beliefs and views are erroneous and simplistic. They contend that beginning teachers’ lack of training in problem-solving and an oversimplification of how to relay academic content knowledge may lead them to become discouraged, and to a belief that they are ineffective.

Salamanca (2005) found that teachers who have a firmly established core of beliefs and practices experience greater success and contentment.

In a study conducted with a sample of Queensland, Australia, first year teachers, Goddard (2006) found that pre-service education might be predictive of burnout. In a sample of 100 teachers participants, this study showed that there was a significant relationship among teachers who completed less than four years of pre-service teacher education, their emotional exhaustion and depersonalization scores as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Along these same lines, when novice teachers evaluated their undergraduate education training as inadequate to meet their rigorous instructional demands, they reported discouragement, feelings of inadequacy, and finally, burnout (Taris, LeBlanc & Schaufeli et al., 2005).

Overall, however, female teachers tend to be more satisfied with teaching than males and, elementary teachers report less stress than secondary teachers (Black, 2001). Special education teachers have the highest attrition rate: four of ten will leave the field before their fifth year of teaching. Their attrition resulted in hiring under-qualified personnel and had other negative repercussions due to the decreased quantity

and quality of services provided to students with exceptional needs (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000).

### **The History of Emotional Intelligence**

A precursor to emotional intelligence was Gardner's (1983) theories of multiple intelligences. Although it was not among the seven intelligences Gardner identified, however, he described two personal intelligences (intrapersonal and interpersonal) that are similar to emotional intelligence. According to Gardner, "intrapersonal intelligence is involved chiefly in an individual's examination and knowledge of his own feelings, while the interpersonal intelligence looks outward, toward the behavior, feelings, and motivations of others" (p. 240-241).

Salovey and Mayer (1990), the "fathers" of emotional intelligence, were the first theorists to create and define emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligences that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use that information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). Goleman (1998) referred to emotional intelligence as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (p. 317).

Emotional intelligence is also described as "the ability to recognize feelings, control emotional balance, maintain a positive attitude when confronted by frustrations and difficulties, and connect with the feelings of others" (McDowelle & Bell, 1997, p. 2).

Cooper and Sawaf (1997) described a four-cornerstone model of emotional intelligence, which includes emotional literacy, emotional fitness, emotional depth, and emotional alchemy. Emotional literacy builds a core of personal efficacy through developing emotional honesty, awareness, feedback, intuition, and connections.

Emotional fitness is the second cornerstone and improves an individual's authenticity, believability, and resilience, while also improving abilities in listening and managing conflict. The third cornerstone, emotional depth, assists individuals in aligning life and work with their specific potentials and purposes, and by having integrity, commitment, and accountability. Emotional alchemy extends one's creative and problem-solving capabilities, using pressure and emotions to find and explore hidden solutions and opportunities.

Emotional intelligence studies and varied approaches have led to different opinions as to what and how to study EI. There are all-encompassing models that focus on personality (introversion and extroversion), motivational abilities (achievement orientation) or cognitive abilities (problem-solving), and specific models that examine cognitive factors (social judgment, emotional perception). Some approaches overlap the two, by attempting to decode nonverbal information or interpret emotions (Hedlund & Sternberg, 2000).

Mayer and Cobb (2000) describe intelligence as a "hierarchy of mental abilities with general intelligences at the top, verbal and spatial next, and then more specific intelligences thereafter" (p. 172). Emotional intelligence may be useful and quantifiable if there is an overall quotient, much like a "g" in traditional intelligence tests, which could represent an overall emotional ability, according to Salovey and Mayer (1990). They further proposed that assessing core abilities in terms of processes, behaviors and outcomes could isolate this ability or "g." There are two models that most EI research has followed: the cognitive model or the trait or personality model (some researchers have used mixed models by combining areas of both). Mayer and Salovey's cognitive or

ability model was the first model to be proposed, and has received the most rigorous testing of any model of emotional intelligence to date (Mayer & Salovey, 2004). Trait or personality models (or mixed), encapsulate a host of skills, essentially encompassing personality. In terms of the Bar-On model, created by Reuven Bar-On, these skills include self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, flexibility, problem-solving, optimism, and happiness (Okech, 2004). The Bar-On model describes EI as a cross-section of these interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that impact intelligent behavior.

Along with these models are two different types of assessments: self-report and performance assessments (Cornell, 2003). Self-reporting focuses and is related to personality traits (as included by Goleman), specifically the factors that make up the Big Five factor model (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism). Performance measures of EI are more aligned with traditional intelligence tests and measurements (Ciarrochi, Chan, Caputi & Roberts, 2001). According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, EI meets three criteria, which are standard for a traditional intelligence test. First, EI test items are operationalized in such a way that there are correct answers; second, EI shows specific patterns of correlations similar to those of known intelligences; and lastly, EI should develop with age (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

### **Emotional Intelligence and Demographic Factors**

Just as traditional assessments of intelligence show some improvement with age, research with the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) shows similar and significant increases in emotional intelligence as individuals age (Mayer,

Salovey & Caruso, 1999). Current statistics on the MSCEIT show significant gender differences. Women outperform men in emotional intelligence in total scores and area scores, including perceiving and identifying emotions, facilitating thought using emotions, and understanding emotions. The only area where women did not outperform men were in managing emotions (Mayer et al., 1999). The Bar-On model also showed that older individuals are emotionally and socially more intelligent than younger ones, that women are more aware of emotions than men, with the caveat that men are more adept at managing emotions (Bar-On, 2006).

### **Developing Emotional Intelligence**

Educators have a vested interest in developing Emotional Intelligence because it may have a positive effect on the organizational relationships: work-group cohesion, employee performance, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship (Carmeli, 2003). According to Elias and Arnold (2006), school success is a combination of academic achievement and social competence. They report that the most successful middle schools have teachers, administrators, and students trained in social, emotional, and academic needs. Also, Gohm, Corser, and Dalsky (2004) found that EI was positively related to stress management among college students that closely attended to their emotions and/or intellectualized their feelings.

In meta-analysis of emotional intelligence and performance Elfenbein, Der Foo, White and Tan (2007) found that Emotion Recognition Accuracy predicted a modest but significant and consistent rise in workplace effectiveness for a diverse group of professionals studied, including physicians, teachers, principals, and business managers, and increased participants' interest in developing such skills. According to Cohen (2001), "it is important that all members of school communities . . . become

involved with social emotional learning. When children learn about effective and flexible problem-solving in the classroom but see their parents and administrators fighting in rigid, problematic ways, classroom-based instruction can go out the window” (p. 5).

“Emotional capacities may be partly influenced by genetic factors and early development but there is room for learning,” according to Lopes, Cote and Salovey (2006, p. 173). However, they point out that one cannot assume that all emotional abilities share the same capacity for development, or that no studies have explored the effects of a training program on the development of specific emotional abilities (2006).

While a proven training program created specifically for enhancing EI has not been studied, incidental or unplanned EI learning has been investigated via “workplace learning” or the learning that occurs while at work or by doing one’s job. Team learning, undertaking projects, increasing job scope and self-directed learning like reading and mentoring, for example, suggest that certain emotional abilities may be learned or developed. The processes and systems that work, along with participation in the accompanying social groups, and reflection and dialogue, result in tacit learning (Boud & Garrick, 1999; Clarke, 2004).

Evidence shows that team-based learning activities may be effective in developing emotional abilities, such as in using emotions to facilitate thought and abilities to perceive emotions (Moriarty & Buckley, 2003). In Clarke’s (2005) study, two focus groups (hospice employees) indicated that their self-efficacy in dealing with their own emotions and those of others was improved as a direct result of learning how to develop coping skills and manage emotion and anxiety in the context of their jobs. Discussions and taking time to reflect upon their work experiences with other hospice employees

was seen as of the utmost importance in their professional growth and development. In a study of mental health nurses, Akerdordet and Severinsson (2004) reported that EI was highly significant, and that informal learning was the primary means by which EI abilities were developed. Dialogue and reflection were important vehicles in improving how nurses coped with their feelings and how they revealed and managed their own and others' emotions. The evidence as it pertains to the development of EI abilities is limited. However, the aforementioned studies show that if emotional intelligence can be developed, it is more likely to occur informally and in the workplace rather than as a stand-alone training program.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the correlations between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout by assessing a sample of rural Florida teachers using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBIES). Demographic factors, including gender, age, years of experience in the classroom, years of experience at the current school, race/ethnicity, and participation in a mentoring program, were also examined to assess any impact they may have. In this chapter the setting and participants precede a discussion of the theoretical framework for the methods. Next, an overview of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis are presented.

### **Setting**

This study was conducted in a rural public school district in southwest Florida. Four towns comprise the district; the average household income is \$26,595. Four elementary schools, three middle schools (including one charter school), two high schools, one middle/high school combination, two K-8 schools (one is a charter school), one K-12 school, and one middle/high alternative school, or 14 schools with approximately 6,600 students comprise this district. Minorities accounted for 35% of the student population, free or reduced students comprised 52%, while students with disabilities totaled 17%.

The district employs 424 teachers, 68 male and 356 female; 79% of the teachers are white. The average teacher has 14 years of teaching experience. In terms of teacher attrition, the district replaces approximately 60 classroom teachers or 14%

annually. Of the 12 schools that receive school grades, in 2007, three received an “A”, five a “B”, three a “C”, and one a “D,” while two schools did not receive grades.

Convenience sampling was used in the selection of the school district and the four elementary schools that comprised this study. While McMillan and Schumacher (2006) point out that researchers need to be wary of convenience samples, they concede that if the primary purpose of the research is to better understand relationships rather than to generalize, probability sampling may be unnecessary.

### **Participants**

Selection of participants was done through convenience sampling resulting in 96 individuals, more than the minimum of 30 suggested for correlation research (Creswell, 2008). Prior to the study, permission was obtained from the district and individual school administrators, participants (signed consent forms), and the University of Florida’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following the receipt of IRB approval, the researcher sought permission from the district, individual school administrators and the potential participants, the teachers. Teacher selection was determined by an individual’s classification as a classroom teacher. In this district, several professionals were categorized as teachers, but may have served in different capacities at their schools, such as reading coaches or teachers on special assignment (TSA). Recruitment of participants took place at school faculty meetings in the district where this study was conducted. Teachers from each of the four schools were asked to participate in this study at the conclusion of one of their monthly faculty meetings. Drawings for mall gift cards were offered as an incentive at each school site to maximize participation. Participants remained anonymous to ensure their confidentiality.

The four elementary schools from which participations were solicited provided a teacher population of 170. Of those, 96 teachers elected to participate in this study (a response rate of 56.47%). Thirty-four participants were classified as veteran teachers (16 or more years), 20 were very experienced (10-15 years), 22 were experienced (4-9 years), and 17 were newer to the profession (0-3 years). Three teachers did not provide their years of experience. Among this sample, 30 teachers were new or relatively new to the school (0-3 years), 26 had been teaching at their current school for between four and nine years, 13 had been teaching at the same site for 10-15 years, and 24 had been teaching at the school for 16 years or more. Three teachers did not respond. Sixty-eight teachers had taken part in a mentoring program as a beginning teacher, while 25 had not. Three teachers did not indicate if they had participated in a mentoring program. Most participants (n=84, 88%) were white, while six (6%) were black and six (6%) were Hispanic participants. The sample was comprised primarily of women (n=91, 95%) while there were five (5%) males.

### **Theoretical Framework for the Methods**

Objectivism is a philosophy that aims at achieving knowledge about the natural world. Objectivist studies are grounded by a belief that individuals can translate perception (i.e., awareness acquired through the senses) into valid concepts that are observable or measurable facets of reality (Locke, 2006). A central goal of this study was to demonstrate the existence or non-existence of a relationship between the participants' emotional intelligence (EI) and their levels of burnout. Positivism grounds this study because of its emphasis on seeking empirical regularities, that is, correlations between two variables. These relationships do not need to be causal in nature; just identifying relationships lays the foundation for developing laws and making predictions

(ChangingMinds, 2008). If there is a relationship between EI and teacher burnout, then efforts can be made to help teachers.

## **Instrumentation**

### **The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has been in use for over 20 years. There are three versions of the MBI: the original, which was MBI-HSS (Human Services Survey), the MBI-GS (General Survey), and the survey used in this study, the MBI-ES (Educators Survey). The only difference between the original MBI, HSS and the MBI-ES is that the word “student” is used instead of “recipient” to keep the survey items clear and consistent. These changes did nothing to diminish the validity or reliability of the instrument (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey consists of 22 items across three subscales: emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalization (5 items), and lack of a sense of personal accomplishment (8 items). The emotional exhaustion subscale (EE) measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work. The depersonalization subscale (DEP) assesses an impersonal response toward recipients of one’s care or service. The personal accomplishment subscale (PA) measures feelings of competence and success in working with people. Burnout is considered a continuous variable, ranging from low, to moderate, to high levels of feeling. Participants rate the frequency of these feelings using a 7-point scale, ranging from “never” to “daily.”

### **Reliability of the MBI**

Internal consistency for the MBI was estimated by Cronbach’s coefficient alpha ( $n=1,316$ ). Reliability coefficients for the subscales were .90 for EE, .79 for DEP, and

.71 for PA (Maslach et al., 1996). Test-retest reliability for the subscales used five samples .82 for EE, .60 for DEP, and .80 for PA. All were significant beyond the .001 level (Maslach et al., 1996).

### **Validity of the MBI**

While the three factors of burnout (EE, DEP, and PA) were identified in the initial developmental research through principal component analyses, other studies have also confirmed the MBI's construct validity. Using a confirmatory factors analysis, Lee and Ashforth (1993) found that there are three subscales. They also observed that EE and DEP were distinct factors but highly correlated, and that both EE and DEP were more highly correlated with measures of psychological strain than was PA. However, PA was more closely related to control-oriented coping, or the proactive use of one's personal coping skills (p. 11).

### **The MSCEIT 2.0**

The MSCEIT is unique among EI measures because it meets several standard criteria in measuring EI as a new intelligence. Emotional intelligence is operationalized as a set of abilities; it is objective, since answers on the test are either right or wrong as compared to a predetermined consensus or expert scoring; its scores correlate with existing intelligences but also show separate variance; and scores increase with age (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Mayer et al., 2002). The MSCEIT is a 141-item performance scale that measures how well people perform EI tasks rather than asking them for their own assessment of their emotional sensitivity. Responses to the MSCEIT represent the actual ability to solve emotional problems. Scores are relatively unaffected by self-concept, emotional state, and other confounding variables. The MSCEIT provides 15 main scores: a total EI score, two area scores (Experimental Emotional

Intelligence score and Strategic Emotional Intelligence score), four branch scores (perceiving emotions, facilitating thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions), eight task scores (faces task, pictures task, sensations task, facilitation task, blends task, changes task, emotion management task, emotional relations task) and three supplemental scores (scatter score and positive-negative bias score).

### **Reliability of the MSCEIT**

The MSCEIT scores are highly reliable for the overall EI and branch scores. The coefficient alpha reliability scores is .90 for overall EI (n=945), .87 for perception (n=1211), .76 for facilitation (n=1500), .73 for understanding (n=1561) and .82 for management (n=1334) (Cornell, 2003). The MSCEIT's test-retest reliability is  $r = .86$  (n=60) (Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

### **Validity of the MSCEIT**

The MSCEIT is designed to measure EI as defined by Mayer and Salovey and reportedly has good face validity (Mayer et al., 1999; Pusey, 2000). In terms of structural validity, the MSCEIT matches the theory proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and does measure the four branches of emotional intelligence. Factor analyses revealed an unrotated factor on which all the tasks loaded above  $r = .10$ , and usually at fairly high levels between  $r = .30$ - $.80$ . This indicates a general factor of emotional intelligence, or "g" (Mayer et al., 1999, p. 88).

### **Data Collection**

Both the MSCEIT and the MBI-ES are self-administered and include instructions. A research-constructed questionnaire requesting demographic data, such as gender, age, experience, and subject area was also given to participants. Participants completed both instruments and the questionnaire either at the conclusion of a faculty

meeting, or sent completed materials to the researcher via interschool mail. The researcher wrote identification codes on the inventories so that participants could access individual results. After providing each school with a list of results by identification codes, the code list with participant names was destroyed to protect participants' identities.

### **Data Analysis**

The MBI-ES was hand scored. Scores from the MSCEIT were entered into the MSCEIT online database to be analyzed by MHS (Multiple Health Solutions). Raw data for both scales were imported and analyzed using SAS (Statistical Analysis System). A frequency table was created for burnout levels for the sample and cross-tabulations for gender, age, race, experience, mentoring, and burnout levels was compiled. Based upon the range of the results, high, moderate, and low levels of emotional intelligence were identified.

To determine relationships between EI and burnout, a Spearman correlation was calculated to determine the level of statistical significance ( $p=.05$ ). Correlations between the MCEIT subscales and the MBI-ES subscales were calculated for the sample, and a multiple regression analysis was computed to determine the amount of variance predicted by EI scores and subscales. An NPARIWAY Procedure was computed for variables to predict emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. MBI-ES burnout and MCEIT Wilcoxon Two-Sample tests were calculated for veteran versus new teachers; for EI and MBI-ES burnout as a function of gender; for EI and MBI-ES burnout as a function of age; for EI and MBI-ES burnout as a function of race; for EI and MBI-ES burnout as a function of tenure; for EI and MBI-ES

burnout as a function of tenure at the same school, and for EI and MBI-ES burnout as a function of mentoring.

### **Variables**

This study examined relationships between emotional intelligence, as assessed by the MSCEIT and teacher burnout as assessed by the MBI-ES. Specifically, this study identified and disaggregated the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout by the following independent variables:

1. Gender, a categorical variable
2. Current age, a continuous variable
3. Teaching experience, a continuous variable, but for the purposes of this study, the number of years of experience were grouped into three categories to control for a small number of scores falling outside of the normal grouping. The groups are 0-3, 4-9, and 10 and above
4. Teaching experience at the current school, a categorical variable
5. Race/Ethnicity, a categorical variable
6. Mentored as a new teacher, a categorical variable

Teacher responses to open-ended questions regarding what they perceived as stress inducing were analyzed and categorized thematically.

### **Null Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- H1:** There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.
- H2:** There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher characteristics when compared by a) gender, b) age, c) teaching experience, d) teaching experience at the current school, e) race/ethnicity, and f) mentoring.
- H3:** There is no relationship between burnout and teacher characteristics when compared by a) gender, b) age, c) teaching experience, and d) teaching experience at the current school, e) race/ethnicity, and f) mentoring.
- H4:** There is no relationship among the perceived stressors of participants and burnout.

**H5:** There is no relationship among the perceived stressors of participants and emotional intelligence.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The results of this study are presented following each research question.

**Research Question 1) Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?** The findings showed that there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout. Results of the analysis of the Spearman Rho test results are presented in table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Spearman Correlations for Emotional Intelligence and Burnout (n=94)

	Spearman Correlation Coefficients		
	Prob >  r  under H0: Rho=0		
	Number of Observations		
	BURNOUT		
	Depersonalization	Emotional Exhaustion	Personal Accomplishment
TOTAL EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE	-0.01601 0.8783	0.07977 0.4447	0.20161 0.0513
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCING (Subscore 1)	-0.06659 0.5237	0.05565 0.5942	0.19913 0.0543
Perceiving Emotions (Sect.1)	-0.10533 0.3123	0.01536 0.8832	0.18116 0.0806
Using Emotions (Sect.2)	0.00135 0.9897	0.05216 0.6176	0.19315 0.0621
EMOTIONAL REASONING (Subscore 2)	0.06080 0.5605	0.04751 0.6493	0.11531 0.2684
Understanding Emotions (Sect.1)	0.02698 0.7963	0.07843 0.4524	0.06436 0.5377
Managing Emotions (Sect.2)	0.07337 0.4822	-0.02603 0.8034	0.15118 0.1458

MSCEIT scores are normed standard scores with a Mean=100 (SD = 15). In general, enhanced emotional intelligence scores are 115 or above, scores between 85

and 115 indicate moderate or average emotional intelligence, and scores below 85 suggest that emotional intelligence needs development.

Based on the EI scores of the participants, four could be categorized as having high EI, 59 had average EI, and 33 had low EI. The mean of total EI was 87.043 with a standard deviation of 12.592. Scores ranged from 54.090 to 107.261. The two categories that comprise total EI, emotional experiencing and emotional reasoning, had means of 93.412 and 84.847 respectively. Table 4-2 includes descriptive statistics for EI and its categories and subcategories.

Table 4-2. Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Intelligence

	M	SD	N	Min	Max
Total EI	87.043	12.592	96	54.090	107.261
Experiencing	93.412	13.391	96	56.988	120.621
Perceiving- subcat.1	94.140	12.528	96	44.672	114.854
Using- subcat.2	92.311	13.290	96	55.829	116.802
Reasoning	84.847	10.539	96	37.318	100.749
Understanding- subcat.1	87.877	10.502	96	51.514	113.177
Managing- Subcat.2	86.443	11.399	96	49.811	107.897

The Maslach Burnout Inventory scores are comprised of the scores of three categories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. For emotional exhaustion, a score of 27 or higher indicated high levels of emotional fatigue. Scores of 17-26 revealed moderate emotional exhaustion, and 0-16 indicated a low risk. Teachers experiencing a high level of depersonalization had scores of 13 or greater, moderate scores were 7-12, and low risk scores were in the 0-6 range. A score of 32 or less indicated a low degree of personal accomplishment; a score of 32-38 suggested moderate feelings of personal accomplishment, and scores of 39 and higher revealed high personal accomplishment. While high scores in emotional exhaustion and

depersonalization contribute to an individual's burnout levels, low scores in personal accomplishment do the same. The study participants were relatively evenly distributed in the subscale of emotional exhaustion; 32 showed high emotional exhaustion, 34 had moderate levels, and 28 had low levels. Depersonalization levels varied greatly as eight participants had high-risk levels, 10 were at moderate risk levels, and 76 demonstrated low risk levels. Personal accomplishment scores showed that nine participants scored low (revealing low levels of personal accomplishment), 11 were in the moderate category, while 74 had high scores, indicating high levels of personal accomplishment.

The mean score for depersonalization was 5.425. Scores ranged from 0 to 21. The mean score for emotional exhaustion was 23.297 with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 49. Personal accomplishment had a mean of 39.819 and a range of 24 to 48. Table 4-3 includes descriptive statistics for the three subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory taken by participants.

Table 4-3. Descriptive Statistics for Burnout

	Mean	SD	N	Min	Max
Depersonalization	5.425	5.091	94	0	21
Emotional Exhaustion	23.297	10.815	94	0	49
Personal Accomplishment	39.819	5.591	94	24	48

**Research Question 2) Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher characteristics?** The relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher characteristics was significant in regards to two different teacher characteristics and one category and one sub-category of emotional intelligence, Chi-Square=5.22,  $p < .05$ , so the null hypothesis must be rejected. In terms of the teacher characteristic gender, males ( $n=5$ ) scored higher than females ( $n=91$ ) in the EI sub-category of perceiving

emotions. Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test are presented in Table 4-3. There was also a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the teacher characteristic of Race/ethnicity. Table 4-4 shows that Whites (n=84) scored higher on the experiential EI category of the MSCEIT, meaning that they were able to both perceive and utilize emotions more often than African-Americans (n=6) and Hispanics (n=6), Chi-Square = 7.11,  $p < .05$ .

The mean EI score for males was 105.30 (SD = 8.086) the mean score for females was 93.529 (SD = 12.470). Females' scores ranged from 45 to 115, while males compared scores ranged from 92 to 112 as seen in Table 4-5.

Regarding differences in race/ethnicity, the mean score for whites and total emotional intelligence is 88.34 (SD = 11.68). The mean score for whites in the subcategory of EI, experiencing emotions, was 94.89. For EI and reasoning it was 85.51 with standard deviations of 12.61 and 10.22 respectively. (Tables 4-6 and 4-7)

**Research Question 3) Is there a relationship between burnout and teacher characteristics?** Teachers with 16 years or more of experience, had significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment (one of the burnout subscales) when compared to those participants who had been teaching fewer than 16 years (Chi-Square=11.44,  $p < .05$ ). The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4-8. There were no other significant relationships between MBI subscales and gender, race/ethnicity or age.

**Research Question 4) Is there a relationship among the perceived stressors and burnout?**

The relationship between emotional exhaustion (one subscale of burnout) and the participant-generated stressors was significant ( $\rho = .294$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The more stressors

Table 4-4. Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Characteristics

Teacher Char.	Total EI		Cat.1: Experiencing EI		Sub.Cat.1: Perceiving EI		Sub.Cat.2: Using EI		Cat. 2: Reasoning With EI		Sub.Cat.1: Understanding EI		Sub. Cat.2: Managing EI	
	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value
Gender	0.325	0.569	0.305	0.5807	5.216	0.022*	0.446	0.504	0.343	0.350	0.638	0.645	0.280	0.287
Race/ Ethnicity	4.696	0.096	7.113	0.0285*	5.595	0.061	3.277	0.194	2.70	0.259	3.531	0.171	1.853	0.396
Tenure	1.302	0.729	2.377	0.4980	4.765	0.190	0.526	0.913	2.059	0.560	2.666	0.446	2.844	0.416
Tenure at same School	2.430	0.488	3.323	0.3444	2.261	0.520	3.239	0.356	1.649	0.648	3.438	0.328	2.581	0.460
Mentoring	0.003	0.959	0.001	0.9931	0.417	0.519	0.166	0.684	0.211	0.646	0.602	0.438	0.006	0.938
	Corr. Coeff.	p- value	Corr. Coeff.	p- value	Corr. Coeff.	p- value	Corr. Coeff.	p- value	Corr. Coeff.	p- value	Corr. Coeff.	p- value	Corr. Coeff.	p- value
Age	0.096	0.352	0.090	0.385	0.047	0.646	0.089	0.387	0.079	0.442	0.139	0.177	0.033	0.751

\* denotes significant at  $p \leq .05$  level

Table 4-5. Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Intelligence (Perceiving) and Gender

	Mean	SD	N	Min	Max
Males	105.30	8.086	5	91.621	112.10
Females	93.529	12.470	91	44.673	114.90

Table 4-6. Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Intelligence (Experiencing) and Race/Ethnicity

	Mean	SD	N	Min	Max
White	94.89	12.610	84	63.43	120.62
Black	77.87	13.711	6	56.99	101.11
Hispanic	88.21	12.642	6	70.18	105.73

Table 4-7. Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Intelligence (Reasoning) and Race/Ethnicity

	Mean	SD	N	Min	Max
White	85.51	10.22	84	37.32	100.75
Black	79.17	15.84	6	63.24	98.79
Hispanic	81.27	8.08	6	69.43	94.24

a participant listed, the more emotionally exhausted he or she was (Table 4-8). The mean for the stressors was 1.396 (SD = 1.209). The range for the number of stressors listed by participants was zero to four. There was no relationship between the areas or type of stressor(s) and overall burnout.

Table 4-8. Chi-Square and Spearman Analysis between Burnout and Teacher Characteristics

Teacher Characteristics	Depersonalization		Emotional Exhaustion		Personal Accomplishment	
	Chi-Square	p-value	Chi-Square.	p-value	Chi-Square	p-value
Gender	1.859	0.179	0.385	0.392	0.993	1.0
Race/ Ethnicity	4.250	0.119	2.577	0.276	0.571	0.752
Tenure	5.021	0.170	1.556	0.669	11.444	0.010*
Tenure at same school	0.918	0.821	4.500	0.212	7.717	0.052
Mentoring	0.661	0.416	0.235	0.628	1.115	0.291
	Corr. coef.	p-value	Corr.coef.	p-value	Corr.coef.	p-value
Age	0.115	0.274	-0.051	-0.621	0.086	0.409

\*denotes significant at  $p \leq .05$  level

Table 4-9. Spearman Correlations for Teacher Reported Stressors and Burnout

Burnout Categories	Sum of Stressors	
	Corr. coef.	p-value
Depersonalization	0.032	0.757
Emotional Exhaustion	0.294	0.004*
Personal Accomplishment	0.007	0.946

\*denotes significant at  $p \leq .05$  level

Teachers were given the opportunity to identify work stressors. Specifically, teachers were asked, "Please list what you perceive as causing you the most stress while at work." Ninety-four percent (n=90) of the teachers provided a comment, resulting in a total of 166 comments.

Seventy-seven or 46% of the teachers' comments pertained to a lack of resources, including comments about increasing amounts of paperwork with less time to complete it, a lack of equipment and needed training, and a lack of materials. Thirty-one comments or 19% mentioned instructional disruptions as stressful. These disruptions

were comprised of instructional interruptions due to off-task or apathetic behavior by students and by outside disruptions that negatively impacted classroom instruction. Pressures from the state, district, and required testing also were cited, resulting in 36 (22%) of the comments. Many comments referred to low teacher morale (n=22), which pertained to low pay, a lack of parent interest, and feelings that other teachers were not contributing to student achievement efforts (Figure 4-1 and Table 4-10).

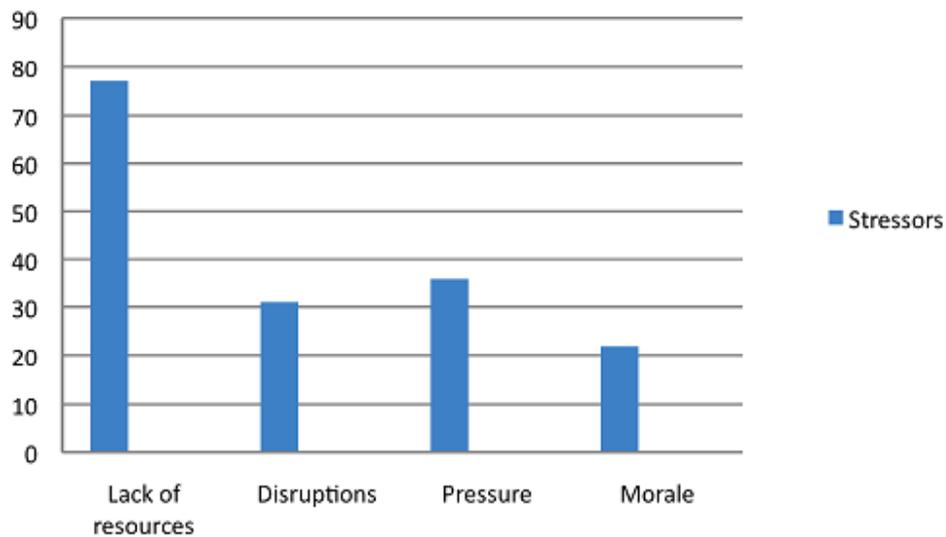


Figure 4-1. Participant-Generated Stressors

Table 4-10 Frequency of Participant Stressors

Individual Stressors	Lack of Resources	Disruptions	Pressure	Morale
Student apathy/disruptions	0	27	0	0
Paperwork overload	47	0	0	0
Not enough time for anything	27	0	0	0
Testing pressure	0	0	6	0
Pressure from state	0	0	13	0
Low morale/respect	0	0	0	2
Low pay	0	0	0	3
District interference/pressure	0	0	17	0
Lacking materials/training/equipment	3	0	0	0
Parental issues/lack of interest	0	0	0	15
Co-worker issues	0	0	0	2
Instructional disruptions	0	4	0	0
Totals	77	31	36	22

**Research Question 5) Is there a relationship among the perceived stressors and emotional intelligence?** There was a significant relationship between perceived stressors and total EI and perceived stressors and the EI subcategory, using emotions. The more stressors a participant listed, the lower that participant's resulting total EI scores ( $Rho=.216$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). Also, the more stressors listed, the lower participants' abilities to use emotions to do certain tasks ( $Rho.234$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (Table 4-11).

Table 4-11. Relationship between Number of Teacher-reported Stressors and EI

EI Categories	Sum of Stressors	
	Corr. Coef.	p-value
Total EI	-0.2166	0.0340*
Experiencing	-0.1993	0.0516
Sub.cat.:Using	-0.2343	0.0215*
Sub.cat.: Perceiving	-0.0784	0.4476
Reasoning	-0.1560	0.1290
Sub.cat.:Understanding	-0.1291	0.2099
Sub.cat.:Managing	-0.1679	0.1020

\*denotes significant at  $p \leq .05$  level

## CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings regarding to what extent EI is related to occupational burnout in a group of elementary teachers, implications of the findings, and recommendations for further research. The MSCEIT and the Maslach Burnout survey were given to 96 teachers from four elementary schools in a rural Florida school district. Participants' EI and burnout results were examined and compared by various demographic factors (gender, age, years of teaching experience, years of teaching experience at the current school, race/ethnicity, and mentoring participation) to determine if any relationship existed. Teachers were also asked to list work-related stressors. Stressors were categorized and compared with burnout and emotional intelligence to determine if there were significant relationships.

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **Emotional Intelligence and Burnout**

Although a third of this study's participants had low EI scores (<85) and more than a third indicated high levels of emotional exhaustion (scores >27), there was no correlation between participant's emotional intelligence and to what degree they reported burnout. This could be due to what the majority of the participants viewed as their biggest stressor: a lack of resources (n=77). The stressors (too much paperwork, and a lack of time, materials, training, or equipment) that comprise this group do not revolve around person-to-person contact or interactions, so it is unlikely that having lower EI was related to their levels of burnout.

## **Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Characteristics**

The results showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and one subcategory of emotional intelligence, perceiving emotions. Males (n=5) perceived emotions more accurately than females in this study (n=91). This finding may be due to an increased need to accurately perceive emotions, resulting from their status at their current school. Four of the five male participants were new to their school (0-3 years). Thus, they could be making extra efforts to accurately and effectively communicate and interact with students, parents, and staff members to ensure their retention and tenure.

It is also worth noting that four of the five male participants taught at a pre-kindergarten through 2nd grade school, so teachers at this school might develop stronger skills relating to perception and communication out of necessity to understand and be understood by very young students. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that teachers of very young children, specifically lower elementary and kindergarten, had higher levels of self-efficacy for classroom management and student engagement.

The sample sizes for males, African-American, and Hispanics were disproportionately small in regard to the overall number of participants sampled. Because large samples were not available and because the homogeneity and normal sample distribution could not be assumed in this study, non-parametric tests were used. Non-parametric statistical tests are appropriately used in these circumstances.

## **Burnout and Teacher Characteristics**

Teachers with more overall teaching experience had significantly higher scores in regards to their feelings of personal accomplishment when compared to teachers with fewer years of experience. This is in line with several studies that support the idea of increased self-efficacy or accomplishment among career teachers (those with four or

more years of experience) over novice teachers (those with three or fewer years of experience (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Meister & Melnick, 2003). Teacher confidence and resiliency increase with experience, and teacher growth and competence can best be achieved with successful and authentic mastery experiences (Yost, 2006).

### **Perceived Stressors and Burnout**

There was also a significant relationship between the number of perceived stressors participants listed and their level of emotional exhaustion, one of the burnout subscales. Ninety-four percent of participants listed at least one stressor negatively affecting their efforts. Sixty percent of all participants listed two or more stressors, and of those, seventeen percent listed three or more stressors. In addition to the stressors that the teachers offered on the demographic questionnaire, there could be other factors that contribute to stress, such as organizational issues or concerns related to the school culture.

**Organizational factors contributing to burnout.** Schools should be accountable for their students' academic improvement and growth. The state and federal approach to accountability is mandated student testing and the implementation of progress monitoring. These ever-intensifying state and federal accountability efforts aimed at improving student achievement could be among the driving forces behind the large number of stressors, such as Response to Intervention (involving significant documentation and planning for those students not performing at grade level), No Child Left Behind (requiring regular/documented follow up with parents of below grade-level students, tutoring students who attend Title I schools and paperwork required for school choice transfer options), and the implementation of the next generation Sunshine State

Standards (that must now be aligned with the achievement standards of other states). These changes typically increase teachers' paperwork and take additional time and resources to implement at each school site. Tight deadlines for implementation and a top-down approach to new initiatives and professional development can create feelings of helplessness and resentment among teachers (Calabrese, 2006). Linn (2001) states that unintended negative results from accountability mandates sometimes overshadow positive ones. Studies in North Carolina, Texas, Ohio, Kentucky and Maryland have pointed out that accountability has increased teacher stress (McNeil, 2000; Jones et al., 1999; Abrams et al., 2003). Specifically, 85% of Texas teachers surveyed by Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris (2001) agreed with the statement, "some of the best teachers are leaving the field because of TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills)" (p.485). Schools that emphasize incentives and opportunities for teacher learning and inquiry, teacher capacity for leadership in innovation, a flexible school structure, a responsive and supportive administration, regulatory flexibility, and sufficient time and resources, truly impact student learning by continuously improving and adjusting the pedagogical and organizational structures used (Ancess, 2000).

**Burnout and school culture.** A healthy school culture is one that is inviting, welcoming of change, and cooperative in nature, with leadership that supports and is committed to sustaining deep learning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Burned out or overly stressed teachers can be cancerous to a healthy school's culture and result in teachers displaying helplessness, cynicism, discouragement, and resistance to change or innovation (Neves de Jesus & Lens, 2005). The resulting teacher attrition can disrupt a program's continuity and planning, decrease student learning, and signal larger

systemic problems in the school community (Ingersoll, 2003). Out of the 90 study participants who provided stressors they experienced at their school, 16 participants listed 3 or more stressors. These participants were teachers from two of this study's school -- 9 from one school, and 7 from another, none from the other two participating schools. This could indicate that two schools may have school culture issues that (if addressed) could help lower the stress that these teachers are experiencing.

### **Perceived Stressors and Emotional Intelligence**

Two areas of emotional intelligence were significantly related to the high number of teacher-generated stressors: a participant's ability to use emotions (a sub-category of EI, under experiencing emotions), and a participant's overall emotional intelligence. This makes sense, since the more stressors a teacher may have, the less confident they may feel that in their ability to cope emotionally. This can start a downward cyclical pattern, since how well teachers can or cannot emotionally handle issues or perceived problems may affect their teaching abilities. According to Falout (2010), using emotions to overcome adversity can improve the moods and thinking of everyone involved in workplace situations and can be very beneficial in bonding with colleagues and establishing one's professional reputation -- negatively using emotions can have the opposite effect.

### **Recommendations for the Field**

While this study found no relationship between teacher burnout and emotional intelligence, there were significant findings. For example, there was a significant relationships between teachers with more overall teaching experience and emotional exhaustion (a sub-category of burnout); gender and emotional intelligence (male participants perceived emotions more accurately than female participants); race and

emotional intelligence (white participants perceived and utilized emotions more often than African-American and Hispanic participants); participant-generated stressors and burnout (the more stressors participants listed, the higher their emotional exhaustion scores); and participant-generated stressors and emotional intelligence (the more stressors a participant listed, the lower that participant's ability to use emotions and overall emotional intelligence). These areas of significance indicate that teachers could benefit from knowledge and training in emotional intelligence development and burnout prevention through personal and professional improvement that might mitigate teacher attrition.

### **Retaining Teachers by Developing Emotional Intelligence**

EI could be developed as one method of mitigating teacher burnout and attrition. The high cost of teacher attrition warrants additional study of the factors that may relate to the success and retention of teachers. Many teachers are under a great deal of stress, and may lack the emotional intelligence and/or knowledge needed to improve their situation. Out of the 96 study participants, 4 had high EI, 59 had average EI scores, and 33 had low EI. This finding suggests that training in emotional intelligence may be beneficial since increased EI can improve coping with environmental and social demands, improving individuals' life experiences and functioning (Cobb & Mayer, 2000; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). Theories of emotional intelligence, and their related use, could provide a framework for future training to assist with teacher stress and burnout.

**Emotional intelligence training.** Emotional intelligence may be improved by experience and learning and could potentially help individuals use better strategies for effective emotional regulation (Elfenbein, 2006). Individuals who have high EI scores tend to excel when working with the public, so given the high face-to-face contact

educators experience, this could be helpful (Rice, 1999). Also, given the cumulative effects of stress, this training could be highly effective if provided early on in a teacher's career (Clarke, 2005). Several companies, such as EI Skills Group, Six Seconds, and the British Academy of Advanced Training (BAAT), currently offer training to schools or businesses that are interested in increasing their organization's EI. Training takes many forms. However typically it involves individual EI assessments, followed by individual or small group development or interventions based upon the assessments, then group or team training once individual areas are identified, and finally action plans that are created for future growth and training as well as integration of new group members. Costs to a district for training could vary greatly depending on the type of training used. To send a teacher for a three day "train the trainer" with EI Skills Group (created by Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso), would be approximately \$2,595.00, to have expert EI trainers come to a school or district site could be upwards of \$15,000.00 (Emotionaliq.com, 2010).

**Emotional intelligence testing.** Testing for EI would also not be unheard of, as 39% of North American firms already use EI tests as one of many indicators of an individual's indicated strengths and mindsets (Thompson, 2004). Applebee's International Corporation, Albertson's grocery chain, Neiman Marcus, Target, and many white collar executive recruiting companies now give personality assessments and inventories to prospective employees (Van Houten, 1998; Cha, 2005). Any kind of test other than skill-based could be considered unnecessary or possibly discriminatory, but, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2005 census, in California, 1 out of 5 workplace deaths was caused by worker-on-worker assaults or self-inflicted injuries.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) also provides guidance and regulation to prevent hiring practices and tests that are unlawfully discriminatory.

Besides red-flagging any potential candidates with possible aggressive or anti-social tendencies, they can also reveal those who may have leadership potential (Hart & Sheldon, 2007).

**Emotional Intelligence and school leadership.** George (2006) reported that the ability to modulate emotions is a distinguishing characteristic of effective leaders. Professional, competent educational leaders and teachers who can also effectively empathize and communicate with each other and stakeholders are needed in today's schools. According to Ashkanasy and Dasborough (2003), professional development that teaches about emotions and emotional intelligence was positively associated with team performance in a leadership development course. Emotional intelligence was found to be important in teacher mentoring, a key component of a beginning teacher's training. Kram and Cherniss (2001) found that emotional intelligence was important to mentoring relationships because those relationships involve issues of trust, care and concern. Yet there is tension between autonomy and connection and differences in status and power. Schools that experience success rely upon teamwork, collaboration, and good interpersonal relationships which also foster parental involvement, another key factor in educational success. Parents want to feel welcome, and emotional intelligence creates optimism, confidence, friendliness, and energy in individuals (Saarni, 2001).

### **Retaining Teachers by Preventing Burnout**

Teacher stress may be caused by an imbalance between demands at school and the resources available to help teachers cope with these demands (Esteve, 2000).

Over two-thirds of the study's participants had moderate to high levels of emotional exhaustion, and 94% (n= 90) of the teachers took the time (after a lengthy EI test and burnout survey) to write down stressors they were currently experiencing. Fifty-eight teachers described two or more different stressors, and of these, sixteen listed three or more stressors. Today's teachers are being asked to do more with less—less time, and fewer resources. This is not a new phenomenon, as stress has been studied and steps taken (usually without success) in an attempt to stem teacher stress and burnout (Hughes, 2001). Now, EI gives educators a new lens through which to examine stress, efficacy, and what should work to lessen educators' stress.

**Self-efficacy in burnout prevention.** Self-efficacy and the ability to regard daily events with perspective can serve as “anxiety-buffers” (Greenburg, 1999). Kyriacou (2001) offers several suggestions on how schools can help mitigate stress before it becomes burnout (based upon the 1998 Education Service Advisory Committee Report): consult with teachers on matters which directly impact their classroom, such as curriculum planning; ensure that adequate facilities and instructional resources are available; avoid role ambiguity and conflict by providing clear job expectations; maintain open lines of communication between administrators and teachers to give each other regular support and performance feedback; help teachers and other personnel fully develop a professional identity, which is aided by professional development activities, networking, and mentoring. Developing efficacy early in a teacher's development is essential because, once established, efficacy beliefs are resistant to change. Given that teacher efficacy is associated with student achievement and motivation, adoption of

innovations, and classroom management strategies, self-efficacy should be examined as a preventative measure to combat teacher burnout (Hoy, 2005).

**Mentoring in burnout prevention.** Sixty-nine of the ninety-six participants had been mentored as a new teacher, twenty-five did not have a mentor, and twelve did not provide an answer to the question. Given the large number of teachers mentored in the study, it would seem likely that mentoring would have buffered the effects of burnout or been correlated to increased EI, but this was not the case. While mentoring can be a preventative and healing force in terms of burnout, not all mentoring programs are effectively established and maintained. When not strategically selected, mentors can perpetuate stagnant educational methods and approaches, undermine teacher development, and stifle reform efforts (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Kardos & Johnson, 2008). There is no district-wide mentoring program in this study's school district; rather, mentor selection, matching, training, and follow-up is left to the individual schools. The degree to which the mentors and new teachers are meaningfully engaged may have a significant impact on a program's success and longevity and can be an effective means of combating teacher stress and burnout. Both the mentor and the new teacher can benefit from effective mentoring, resulting in improved professional competency; reflective practice; professional renewal; psychological benefits such as enhanced self-esteem; collaboration and collegiality; contributions to teacher leadership; and pedagogical inquiry/teacher research (Huling & Resta, 2001). Effective, purposeful mentoring programs distinguish themselves from haphazard support by: having a rigorous mentoring selection; providing on-going professional development and support for mentors; authorized time for mentor-teacher interactions rather than occasional

meetings; intensive and specific guidance moving teaching practices forward rather than nonspecific coaching; standards and data-based conversations rather than casual feedback; clear alignment and collaboration with administrators and stake holders rather than operating in isolation (New Teacher Center, 2008). Two studies at New Teacher Center tracked teachers six years after they had received support from the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project as beginning teachers. In both cohorts, 88% were still teaching after six years (Strong, 2005). Mentoring may also be a cost-effective way to improve teacher retention because there is a return of \$1.66 for every dollar invested after five years when the costs and benefits are summed up (New Teacher Center, 2008).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Very few studies have explored teacher burnout and EI. Although the findings were limited by the small size and demographics, a larger study, involving more than one school district, has the potential to yield additional information that would benefit an understanding of the relationship between burnout and emotional intelligence among elementary teachers.

Future studies exploring how emotion affects human insight and behavior could also be of help in the field of education, as they could examine teacher burnout and stress, which negatively impacts teachers, students, parents, and other professionals. The most important factor in student achievement is the classroom teacher, so studies that can explore ways to improve teacher satisfaction and motivation should be pursued (Jarvis, 2002).

Effective mentoring has been studied, but more information pertaining to the emotional lessons learned and potential for emotional mentor/mentoree growth could be explored further. Mentoring with emotional intelligence components could improve not

only the mentoring experience for both teachers but also improve the likelihood that the new teacher would then become a mentor (Chun, Litzky, Sosik, Bechtold, & Godshalk, 2010). The benefits of emotional intelligence in mentoring relationships, such as having the ability to set a positive tone for interactions, motivate the other party to seek agreement, and cope with negative emotions without getting overwhelmed by them, could be examined.

### **Conclusions**

This quantitative exploratory study provided an examination of the relationships between emotional intelligence and burnout, and various demographic factors of the participants. There was no relationship between EI and burnout among these participants. However, there was a significant relationship between EI and gender, and EI and race/ethnicity. Two areas of emotional intelligence were also significantly related to the high number of teacher-generated stressors: a participant's ability to use emotions, and a participant's overall emotional intelligence. In terms of burnout, those teachers with 16 or more years of experience had significantly higher feelings of personal accomplishment. Also, the more stressors teachers listed, the higher his/her emotional exhaustion scores.

This study contributes to the field of educational leadership, specifically to those involved with teacher training and mentoring, and to individual school administrators and teachers by highlighting the relationship between teacher characteristics and EI and burnout. By extension, the implication is that there may be benefits to improving emotional intelligence such as decreasing teacher stress which contributes to teacher attrition. Negative school cultures and the isolationist practice of teaching do not support a decrease in teacher burnout or the advancement of EI. However, the results suggest

that EI is an individual component of change that can be developed with training, and that feelings of efficacy and personal accomplishment can be celebrated and recognized to improve EI, specifically among beginning teachers and in conjunction with effective mentoring. The emotional intelligence of teachers is a new field of study, and this study adds to the body of research led by the earlier efforts and studies of Mayer, Salovey and Caruso. Although teacher stress is not a new phenomenon, the growing number of teachers choosing to leave the field is costly and detrimental to our schools. There are a plethora of studies and efforts currently aimed at improving accountability and increasing student achievement, but who will be left to implement our best laid plans once all of the experienced and emotionally competent and compassionate teachers have left the profession?

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Nancy Thornqvist received her bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of North Carolina in 1992. She received her teaching certification from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1994. She taught in Chatham County, North Carolina, for two years while also earning her master's degree in education administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1996. Nancy was an assistant principal in Chatham County, North Carolina for two years, before moving to Gainesville, Florida. She stayed at home with her two children and became a part-time doctoral student at the University of Florida in 2002. Nancy has most recently worked as a Title I Coordinator for Levy County Schools (Florida), and is currently the Director of Instruction for Alachua Academics, a Supplemental Educational Services company, currently contracting with Levy County Schools.