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SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS: AN EVALUATION OF STRESS, COPING STRATEGIES, AND THE IMPACT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Dr. Chris Mathews, and my daughters, Ellen, Becca, and Natalie Mathews. You have all sustained me on this difficult journey and cheered me to success. I love you with all my heart. This work is for you.

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Abstract

Special education teachers face a variety job-related demands and challenges which may induce stress. Stress is identified as a significant predictor for negative outcomes for special education teachers including poor teacher performance, negative student outcomes, negative personal consequences, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and teacher attrition. A survey of 854 special education teachers in Oklahoma reported job-related stressors, coping strategies, and level and importance of administrative support. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the frequency in which teachers reported job-related stressors, coping strategies, and level and importance of administrative support. Special education teachers rated their overall job-related stress on a Likert-type scale with 0 – *no stress* and 9 – *highest level of stress* (M = 6.42, SD = 1.91), which indicated elevated stress levels. Survey respondents reported job stressors, coping strategies, and extent and importance of administrative support on a Likert-type scale with 0 – *none*, 5 – *greatest extent*. Results indicated: top job-related stressors were "excessive workload" (M = 3.77) and "required paperwork" (M = 3.75); top coping strategies were "support from family, friends, and colleagues" (M = 3.41) and "relaxing after school hours" (M = 2.88); top extent of administrative support were "provides materials and resources needed to do my job" (M = 4.12) and "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions" (M = 3.95); top importance of administrative support were "provides materials and resources needed to do my job" (M = 4.67) and "shows genuine concern for my program and students" (M = 4.66). A 10-factor theoretical model was proposed and investigated using a confirmatory factor analysis. The resulting fit indicated: CFI (0.991), RMSEA (0.055), and SRMR (0.053). Discussion of results, limitations, and implications is provided.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Special education teachers face a variety of demands and challenges on the job which increases the likelihood of stress (Wheeler & LaRocco, 2009). Evidence suggests stress is correlated with a decrease in job performance for special education teachers by reducing teaching quality and student engagement (Wong, Ruble, Yu, & McGrew, 2017). Special education teachers experience a multitude of negative personal consequences from excessive stress including depletion, fatigue, decreased confidence, and even increased health problems (Embich, 2001; Matheny, Gfroerer, & Harris, 2000; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). It is crucial to recognize the malleable factors that impact stress (i.e., either increase or reduce) for special education teachers. In doing so, experts in the field can design systems and allocate job responsibilities that reduce stress, and provide support in building effective coping skills for the overall well-being of special education teachers and the success of their students. Special education teachers who prioritize coping strategies, such as self-care, have increased retention rates and improved Individualized Education Program (IEP) goal attainment for their students with disabilities (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014; Irvin, Hume, Boyd, McBee, & Odom, 2013; Ruble & McGrew, 2013). Once job-related stressors and appropriate coping strategies are identified, administrators are empowered to best support their special education teachers and thereby, increase positive outcomes for both teachers and students.

Statement of the Problem

For decades, stress has been identified as a major predictor for negative outcomes for special education teachers (Farber, 1984; Zabel & Zabel, 1983). Yet job-related stress continues to be a significant contributing factor to poor teacher performance, negative student outcomes, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and ultimately, teacher attrition (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Due to special education teacher attrition, school district leadership unfortunately must turn their focus on teacher recruitment and induction, often being put in the position to hire unqualified personnel (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). According to Billingsley (2004), "One of the most important challenges in the field of special education is developing a qualified workforce and creating work environments that sustain special educators' involvement and commitment" (p. 39). The challenges associated with working conditions and teacher attrition have been a source of concern for scholars for several decades (e.g., Billingsly, 2004); however, they continue to be significant problem areas in the field of special education (Bettini et al., 2016; Bettini et al., 2020). The work environment of special education teachers plays an important role in job satisfaction and retention (Billingsley, 2004), yet teachers consistently report highly stressful working conditions (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). When stress exceeds the special education teachers' available resources and ability to adequately cope, it leads to burnout and teacher attrition (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). It is detrimental to the school systems and students with disabilities when special education teachers leave the profession due to chronic job-related stress (Wong et al., 2017). Retaining special education teachers is more difficult because the duties involved in their jobs are more stressful than duties of general education teachers (Bettini et al., 2017c). Special

education teachers who expressed the highest intent to leave the profession were those with higher levels of education because they have better career alternatives; those with minimal experience because they have less invested in their careers, and are, therefore, more mobile; and those from minority groups since teachers of color are more likely to teach in urban settings where teaching conditions are often more stressful (Cross & Billingsley, 1994).

Special education teachers are more likely to leave the field of education than their general education teacher counterparts. The attrition rate for special education teachers is 17.1%. (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014), which is 46% higher than attrition of elementary school teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Administrators in school systems are faced with a significant problem of retaining highly qualified special education teachers in the classroom because special education teachers are unsatisfied with their work and often have preconceived intentions to leave their positions (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Conroy, Alter, Boyd, & Bettini, 2014). The special education teacher shortage is compounded by a higher level of attrition in special education teachers who are not highly qualified and certified, and a shortage of candidates in pre-service programs (McLeskey, Tyler, Saunders Flippin, 2004; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). Administrators will have a higher rate of retention if they can employ special education teachers who are highly qualified and experienced, however, due to high levels of stress in the job, these types of teachers are particularly difficult to recruit and hire (Billingsley, 2004). This study aims to determine the stress-related factors special education teachers experience as a direct result of their job and how they cope with these job stressors. This information can help administrators improve working

conditions for special education teachers and increase special education teacher retention rates.

Significance of the Study

The work of a special education teacher is stressful (Wheeler & La Rocco, 2009). Special education teachers often go to work each day facing difficult situations and unrealistic expectations which can result in an unhealthy amount of stress (Rothstein, 2010). The stressors they encounter come in a wide variety of demands and circumstances including overwhelming workloads, student behavior, and inadequate working conditions (Bettini et al., 2017c). Stress negatively affects teacher performance by diminishing teaching quality and student engagement (Wong et al., 2017).

Special education teachers tend to manage stressful situations in a variety of ways by using either active or palliative coping strategies (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). When these coping strategies are inadequate to manage the stress, special education teachers experience emotional exhaustion, then ultimately burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). This has led to approximately 17% of special education teachers leaving the field annually (Goldring et al., 2014), which negatively impacts the academic and behavioral progress of students with disabilities (Billingsley, 2004). Up to 50% of special education teachers surveyed had intentions to leave their jobs to escape job-related demands (Kaff, 2004). These job-related demands are often variables which can be influenced by administrators (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda, 2009). If administrators provide adequate support by addressing job-related stressors and provide coping strategies to special education teachers, stress levels can be decreased (Cancio et al., 2018). Administrators and special education teachers can work together to minimize the

impact of stress to improve retention rates of highly qualified and experienced educators. The long-term implications are that reducing stress will produce positive outcomes for both special education teachers and students with disabilities.

Research Purpose

This study investigated how job-related stress impacts special education teachers. This was determined by identifying job stressors, coping strategies, and the level and importance of administrative support on special education teacher stress. These factors are vital to understand because excessive job-related stress can lead to special education teacher attrition. The problem of attrition is compounded when experienced teachers leave their jobs, because the knowledge and skills of highly qualified special education teachers are extremely difficult to replace. The purpose of this study was to expand upon current literature by addressing three distinct areas that impact overall special education teacher stress: job stressors, coping strategies, and administrative support.

First, this study aimed to evaluate how special education teachers experience stress in their work environment. This was determined as special education teachers rated their overall level of stress and identified the job-related stress factors they experienced at work. Special education teachers then identified how this stress manifested itself in their lives either physically or emotionally. According to Bettini et al. (2017c), the demanding nature of a special education teacher's job is more difficult and stressful than that of general education teachers; therefore, it was important to determine the job-related stressors which are unique to special education teachers.

Next, the study investigated active and palliative coping strategies special education teachers use to manage stress. Special education teachers identified the coping

strategies in which they currently and independently practice to address their own stress. In a recent literature review of teacher attrition and retention by Billingsley & Bettini (2019), it is documented that while the relationship between stress and teacher attrition has been sufficiently studied (Billingsley, 2004), coping strategies have been mostly overlooked.

This study also evaluated the extent and importance of administrative support on special education teacher stress. Special education teachers identified the level of support they received from their administrators along with how important that support was to them. This current study identified the areas of administrative support which aid special education teachers in reducing stress. Teachers depend on their administrators to help them manage their jobs and cope with the stress caused by the excessive demands of the job.

Finally, this study aimed to investigate a proposed theoretical model of 10 latent factors (i.e., workload manageability, student behavior, working conditions, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions). The purpose was to determine if the items on the survey measured the latent factors included in the theoretical model.

Three independent study surveys conducted by Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns (2013), Cancio et al. (2018), and Paquette and Rieg (2016) on either special education teacher stress, coping strategies, and administrative support were combined and adapted to collect data on the types of stress special education teachers are experiencing, along with coping strategies they find useful in managing the stress. Specific areas of stress

explored included issues with workload manageability, working conditions, and student behavior. Active and palliative coping strategies were identified along with an exploration of special education teachers' perceptions of administrative support which could potentially reduce job-related stress. Results from the adapted scale provided insight into the study aims.

Reducing stress can improve teacher wellness, working conditions, attrition rates, and student outcomes (Ansley, Houchins, & Varjas, 2016). In order to retain qualified and experienced special education teachers in the classroom, it is imperative to understand how stress impacts teachers and identify key areas administrators can address to increase positive outcomes. A broad investigation of special education teachers in Oklahoma investigated two research questions.

Research Questions

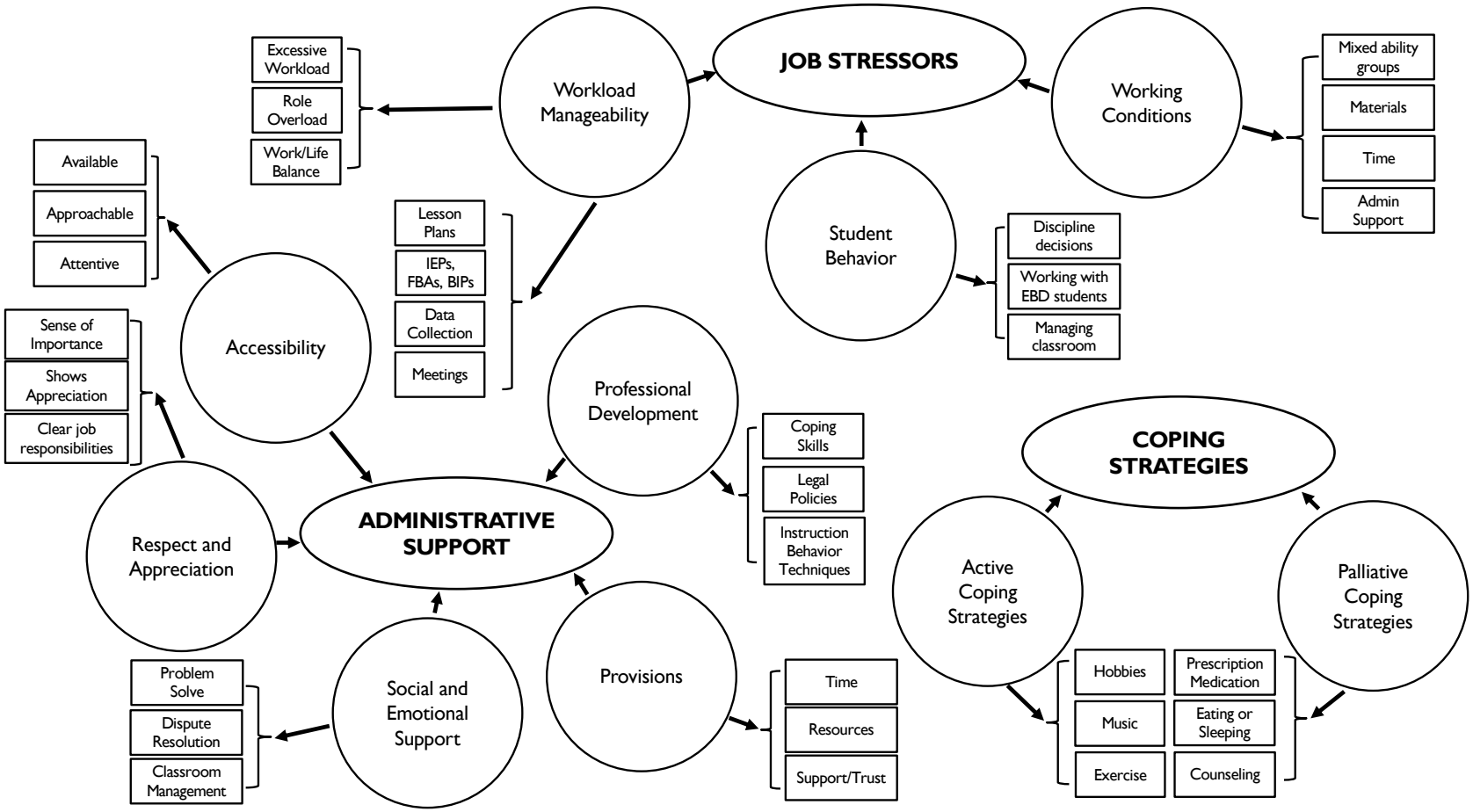
To address gaps in literature, a survey of special education teachers in Oklahoma explored the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate:
    a. the stress-related factors they experience as a direct result of their job?
    b. the physical and emotional manifestations of job-related stress?
    c. the active and palliative coping strategies they employ to reduce job-related stress?
    d. the extent of support they receive from special education administrators?
    e. the perceived level of importance of administrative support?
2. Do survey items measure the 10 latent factors (i.e., workload manageability, working conditions, student behavior, active coping strategies, palliative coping

strategies, accessibility, social and emotional support, respect and appreciation, provisions, and professional development) in the proposed theoretical model? (Figure 1)?

Figure 1

Theoretical Model



Research Hypotheses

In agreement with the existing literature, several hypotheses were formed regarding the research questions.

Hypothesis 1. Special education teachers will identify situational stressors they experience at work. It was hypothesized that the findings from the current study would align with research literature which identified job-related stressors associated with workload manageability, working conditions, and student behavior (Bettini et al., 2017c; Cancio et al., 2013; Kaff, 2004).

Hypothesis 2. Special education teachers will rate how job-related stress manifests itself in them personally. It was hypothesized that the findings from the current study would align with research literature which identified physical and/or emotional manifestations of stress (Hakanen et al., 2006; Matheny et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 3. Coping strategies will fall into two categories: active and palliative (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Active strategies are used to eliminate stress before it starts (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Palliative strategies are used primarily to avoid the effects of stress and have been shown to be ineffective in stress reduction (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005; Cancio et al., 2018; Carton & Fruchart, 2014). It was hypothesized special education teachers often implemented palliative coping strategies due to highly stressful situations they encountered regularly in their jobs.

Hypothesis 4. Special education teachers will report the extent of support they received from their administrator and how important each type of support is to them and their job. Administrators play an active role in reducing special education teacher stress and promoting teacher retention (Albrecht et al. 2009; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). In

similar studies, support from administrators has been found to decrease stress and attrition, and offset the negative effects of stress caused by unmanageable workloads (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; Cancio et al., 2013). It was hypothesized special education teachers would report a difference in their perceived level of support and the importance of support they received from their administrators.

Hypothesis 5. Survey items were selected from existing surveys, current research literature, and the author's experience as a special education professional. It was hypothesized that survey items measured workload manageability, student behavior, working conditions, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are provided for frequently used terms in this study. These terms are described in more detail in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

- *Administrative Support* - The level of involvement and effort school administrators (i.e., Principal, Assistant Principal, Director of Special Services, or Superintendent) put forth to decrease job-related stressors for special education teachers. Sufficient support from school administrators leads to positive outcomes (Prather-Jones, 2011), while inadequate support leads to negative outcomes (Kaff, 2004).
- *Active Coping Strategies* - Proactive coping strategies used to eliminate stress before it starts, thereby relieving the pain by understanding the cause (Carton & Fruchart, 2014).

- *Burnout* – Stress that exceeds a special education teacher's resources and abilities to cope in the workplace. Burnout leads to feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and unaccomplishment (Brunsting et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2001).
- *Coping Strategies* - Tools special education teachers use to manage the daily pressures of their jobs. These strategies come in two categories: active and palliative (Carton & Fruchart, 2014).
- *Emotions* – The accepted definition of emotions used in this study is "socially constructed, personally enacted ways of being that emerge from conscious and/or unconscious judgments regarding perceived successes at attaining goals or maintaining standards or beliefs during transactions as part of social-historical contexts" (Schutz, Hong, Cross, and Osbon, 2006, p. 344). Stress is an achievement emotion related to the success or failure of an activity (Pekrun, 2006)
- *Job-Related Stress* - Feelings of stress which are associated with the necessary tasks of a special education teacher's job. It is a significant factor associated with poor teacher performance, negative student outcomes, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and ultimately, teacher attrition (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).
- *Job Stressors* - Work-related tasks, responsibilities, and pressures which cause stress for special education teachers.
- *Non-Teaching Responsibilities* - Tasks beyond typical classroom teaching responsibilities which can lead to chronic and persistent stress (Ansley et al., 2016; Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). This can include job responsibilities such as meetings, paperwork, and supervising paraprofessionals.

- *Palliative Coping Strategies* - Reactive strategies used to avoid the effects of stress after it starts, thereby relieving the pain without dealing with the cause (Carton & Fruchart, 2014).
- *Role Ambiguity* – Job responsibilities which are not well defined by supervisors leave special education teachers with unclear expectations (Brunsting et al., 2014). Role ambiguity can include a misunderstanding about job responsibilities, teaching methods, status, and accountability (Embich, 2001).
- *Role Conflict* – Competing demands and limited resources which prohibit special education teachers from accomplishing the necessary work associated with their job responsibilities (Brunsting et al., 2014).
- *Role Overload* - Excessive and varied responsibilities which special education teachers must accomplish, often simultaneously. These responsibilities include tasks such as direct instruction in multiple subjects and grade levels, assessments, paperwork, and managing behavior (Sindelar, Brownell, Billingsley, 2010; Williams & Dikes, 2015).
- *Required Paperwork* – Mandatory documentation required by local education agencies and/or state agencies for special education compliance. Required paperwork associated with a special education teacher's job includes documents such as Individualized Education Programs, Functional Behavior Analyses, Behavior Intervention Plans, lesson plans, and data collection. Special education teachers often feel overwhelmed and exhausted by the excessive paperwork which is labor intensive, time consuming and has limited perceived value (Kaff, 2004; Mehrenberg, 2013).

- *Stress* - The accepted definition of stress used in this study is "an unpleasant emotional experience associated with elements of fear, dread, anxiety, irritation, annoyance, anger, sadness, grief, and depression" (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986, p. 618)
- *Student Behavior* – Special education teachers often experience moments of high stress associated with challenging student behavior, classroom management, discipline decisions, and working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders (Chaplain, 2008; Paquette & Rieg, 2016). Managing challenging student behavior can often lead to special education teachers feeling overwhelmed and with a sense of failure when interventions do not produce expected outcomes (Kunkulol, Karia, Patel, & David, 2013).
- *Teaching Responsibilities* - Special education teachers have a variety of teaching responsibilities based on their student caseload. This includes expectations to meet the needs of a wide range of students with disabilities (Billingsley, 2004). Teaching responsibilities include direct instruction, co-teaching, and monitoring students with an IEP. It is also the special education teacher's responsibility to monitor accommodations and modifications, plus provide guidance for general education teachers.
- *Unrealistic Expectations* – The expectations for a special education teacher are complex and often unpredictable. Unrealistic and overwhelming workloads contribute to excessive stress levels for special education teachers (Austin et al., 2005). These expectations can produce negative outcomes and problems with

overall wellness, mental health, job performance, attrition, and student outcomes (Ansley et al., 2016; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010).

- *Working Conditions* – The physical features and organizational structure of a work environment. These conditions predict the effectiveness of teachers, staff, administration, and students (Ladd, 2009).
- *Workload Manageability* - A teacher's perception of his or her ability to adequately accomplish the necessary tasks within the time allotted for the job (Bettini et al., 2017c).

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Teaching and learning involve complex emotions (Schutz & Lanehart, 2002). Schutz et al. (2006) define emotions as "socially constructed, personally enacted ways of being that emerge from conscious and/or unconscious judgments regarding perceived successes at attaining goals or maintaining standards or beliefs during transactions as part of social-historical contexts" (p. 344). Schutz et al. (2006) describe these goals, standards, and beliefs as a guide for teachers' thoughts and activities in the educational environment which serve as judgment points for determining their level of success. External demands and assessment of achievement from administrators, colleagues, parents, and students bring about a wide variety of emotions within the school setting (Cross & Hong, 2012). According to Sutton and Wheatley (2003), these emotional demands include the dichotomy of positive emotions (e.g., joy, pride, and excitement) and negative emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, and stress). In order to successfully deliver instruction, teachers must adequately manage the fluid emotions present in the learning environment (Lee & Yin, 2011). Stress is considered an achievement emotion related to the success and failure of an activity (Pekrun, 2006). Achievement emotions impact cognition, motivation, and regulation in addition to well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction (Pekrun, 2006). Therefore, when special education teachers experience demands at work, the emotion of stress they experience is correlated with their perception of attaining goals and maintaining standards for their job (Schutz et al., 2006).

Teaching in the field of special education is a challenging endeavor (Wheeler & LaRocco, 2009), and stress has long been determined to be directly related to special

education teachers' intention to leave the profession (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Miller et al., 1999; Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, & Blake, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). When comparing occupational stress across 25 diverse professions on three stress related variables (i.e., psychological well-being, physical health, and job satisfaction), teaching was identified in the top six most stressful occupations (Johnson et al., 2005). Special education teachers experience higher levels of stress than general education teachers (Lazuras, 2006). A long-standing definition for stress from the field is "an unpleasant emotional experience associated with elements of fear, dread, anxiety, irritation, annoyance, anger, sadness, grief, and depression" (Motowidlo et al., 1986, p. 618). In a study by Cancio, et al. (2018), the two highest indicators of special education teacher stress were work-related fatigue and carrying school problems home.

Stress in the workplace negatively impacts the performance of special education teachers (Cancio et al., 2018). Wong and colleagues (2017) examined the effects of teacher stress on students and found increased teacher stress reduced teaching quality and student engagement. Other negative consequences of teacher stress included: (a) feelings of depletion, fatigue, and over-extension (Embich, 2001); (b) decreased confidence in their ability to perform their job (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997); (c) neglect of responsibilities (George, George, Gersten & Grosenick, 1995); (d) loss of motivation; and (e) increased health problems resulting in a higher occurrence of sick leave (Matheny et al., 2000). The phenomenon of work-related stress includes the negative or painful emotions (e.g., tension, anger, and depression) that are a direct result of the work of a teacher (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977). Since stress is as an immediate reaction to specific

adverse or demanding events, stress that occurs on the job negatively influences teaching quality (Wong et al., 2017).

Special Education Teacher Shortages and Attrition

Teachers have the most significant school-based influence on the long-term academic success of students (Master, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2014). This is especially true for special education teachers who work with students with disabilities (Rothstein, 2010). Because of the strong influence of special education teachers on student outcomes, it is of the utmost importance to have an adequate supply of highly qualified special education teachers (Boe, 2014; Conroy, et al., 2014). Regardless of the efforts to increase this supply over the years (i.e., teacher preparation programs and professional development), a chronic shortage of special education teachers still exists (Boe, 2014). Losing teachers from the profession is even more troubling when compounded with the shortage of qualified and experienced special education teachers because they are so difficult to replace (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Special education teacher shortages, affected by the low supply of qualified graduates and alarming attrition rates, can be attributed to stress (Bergert & Burnette, 2001). Pre-service teacher candidates should receive instruction during their teacher preparation programs in stress management to reduce burnout and proactively combat the chronic shortage problem (Cancio et al., 2018).

Boe & Cook (2006) indicated approximately 13% of special education teachers leave the classroom each year; however, this attrition rate had risen to 17.1% only eight years later. (Goldring et al., 2014). Due to teacher attrition, schools are forced to fill special education teaching positions with under-qualified personnel. A report by Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2007) indicates a decline in special education teachers with

degrees in special education between 1999-2000 and 2003-04. This decline is likely attributed to special education teachers entering the field through an alternative teaching route (Boe et al., 2007). Up to 10% of special education teachers in public schools are lacking the necessary certification (Bettini, Cheyney, Wang, & Leko, 2015; Boe & Cook, 2006), and, in a study in 2003-2004, more than 55% of special education teachers in the first five years of teaching did not hold a degree in special education (Boe et al., 2007). Teachers that are under-prepared to work with students with disabilities are often overwhelmed and tend to leave their jobs after short periods of time due to job demands and stress (Adera & Bullock, 2010). Teacher turnover in special education has a negative impact on students with disabilities because under-qualified teachers lack the necessary educational background, training, and specialized skill sets when they enter their jobs (Williams & Dikes, 2015). The combination of under-qualified personnel and high attrition rates continually diminishes the likelihood of positive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities and causes great concern (Bettini et al., 2020; Leko & Smith, 2010; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). One aspect identified through literature to significantly contribute to teacher attrition is stress leading to an inconsistent workforce, potentially lesser qualified teachers, and negative outcomes for students with disabilities (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008; Wong et al., 2017).

Stress in the workplace is prevalent at alarmingly high levels for special education teachers, leading nearly 50% of surveyed teachers to express intentions to leave their occupation to escape the demands of the job (Kaff, 2004). In a similar study by Morvant et al. (1995) as many as 80% of the urban special education teachers who intended to

leave the field reported the source of the problem as experiencing high levels of stress on a weekly or daily basis (Morvant et al., 1995). In 2012-13, the attrition rate for special education teachers was 46% higher than attrition of elementary school general education teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Early career special education teachers are more likely to leave the field than veteran special educators (Billingsley, 2004). In a study of attrition in Illinois from 1987-2001, 75% of special educators within the first five years of teaching exited their jobs to either leave the profession or transition to a different special education position (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011).

A critical shortage of special education teachers exists in every geographic region in the United States (McLeskey et al., 2004) with approximately 98% of the nation's school districts reporting a shortage of special education teachers (Fideler, Foster, & Schwartz, 2000). Trends in special education teacher shortages have fluctuated over time; however, they can consistently be attributed to the increasing identification of students with disabilities (Zabel & Zabel, 2001) coupled with a disproportionately smaller increase of qualified special education teachers (McLeskey et al., 2004). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020a), the increase of identified students with disabilities has risen from 13% of the total student enrollment in 2000-01 to 14% in 2017-18. Reporting from 2006-2016 indicated special education teachers were responsible for more students than a general education teacher with a 1:17 teacher-to-student ratio as compared to a 1:16 ratio for general education teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). This is significant due to the increased workload per student for special education teachers.

Burnout in Special Education Teachers

In many cases, chronic and persistent stress for special education teachers leads to burnout (Wong et al., 2017). Burnout occurs at the intersection of prolonged stress, personality traits, and coping skills (Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout is most likely to occur when job-related stress surpasses a teacher's resources and ability to cope with the situation (Hakanen et al., 2006; Mashlach et al., 2001). Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) describe burnout as not only exhaustion, but cynicism and reduced job performance. All teachers respond differently to stress; while some manage under the pressure, others will experience burnout over time (Brunsting, et al., 2014; Farber, 2000). Special education teachers need to be aware of the ill-effects of burnout to their career, health, and students (Brunsting et al., 2014). Teachers who experience burnout and remain in their current teaching positions are at risk for negative personal and student outcomes (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Multiple factors are associated with job stress for special education teachers that can lead to burnout, including lack of administrative support, excessive paperwork, challenging student behavior, and role overload (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Special Education Teacher Job Stressors

There are multiple components that impact special education teacher stress. A theoretical model was formulated to incorporate the major researched areas of the sources of stress. These job stressors are divided into three main categories: workload manageability, student behavior, and working conditions. Workload manageability includes unrealistic expectations of special education teachers, managing required paperwork, and the complexities of non-teaching responsibilities. The second category,

student behavior, addresses stress caused by student behavior including areas of classroom management, discipline decisions, and working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). The last category is working conditions. The areas that impact working conditions include teaching responsibilities and inadequate resources.

Workload manageability. Special education teachers have highly demanding and diverse job responsibilities which must be managed on a daily basis (Ansley et al., 2016; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). Workload (e.g., required job tasks such as managing caseloads, planning, paperwork, and meetings) is a significant contributor to feelings of emotional exhaustion. When special education teachers experience stress, they have a declining sense of accomplishment due to the work associated with trivial, demanding, and non-essential tasks (Embich, 2001; Zabel & Zabel, 1982). Workload manageability is a teacher's perception of his or her ability to adequately accomplish these necessary tasks within the time allotted for the job (Bettini et al., 2017c). Work overload occurs when there are excessive and varied responsibilities which must be accomplished, such as direct instruction in multiple subjects and grade levels, assessments, paperwork, and managing behavior (Sindelar et al., 2010; Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Special education teachers face unrealistic expectations when they encounter role overload, role ambiguity, and difficulty maintaining a healthy work/life balance. Unrealistic and overwhelming workloads are the most significant factor that contributes to high stress for special education teachers (Austin et al., 2005). The high job demands of a special education teacher can lead to problems with overall wellness, mental health, job performance, attrition, and poor student outcomes (Ansley et al., 2016; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). While all teachers have to manage a significant workload, special

education teachers reported a higher level of stress associated with their workload than general education teachers (Bettini et al., 2017c). According to Dean (2000), more than 40% of special education teachers report significant and serious symptoms of stress due to their unrealistic workload, which led to chronic absences from work (Dean, 2000).

Role ambiguity and conflict. Role ambiguity and role conflict have been identified as two significant types of role-related stressors for special education teachers (Brunsting et al., 2014; Garwood, Werts, Varghese, & Gosey, 2018). Role ambiguity occurs when a job is not well defined and the special education teacher is not sure of his or her role (Brunsting et al., 2014). Role ambiguity includes confusion about job responsibilities, teaching methods, status, and accountability (Embich, 2001). Role conflict occurs when work cannot get accomplished because there are competing demands and limited resources (Brunsting et al., 2014). These differing expectations, goals, and directives make it challenging for special education teachers to have clarity in their roles (Billingsley, 2004). Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment are common outcomes for special education teachers who experience stress due to role ambiguity and role conflict (Reetz, 1987). Role confusion along with role ambiguity and conflict, tend to overwhelm and frustrate special education teachers, which can lead to attrition (Billingsley, 2004). Special education teachers need to identify uncertainties in their roles and seek clarity in conflicts that occur within their position (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Special education teacher job duties have evolved and expanded over time (e.g., inclusive education and team teaching) creating a sense of role conflict in which special education teachers are engaging in tasks that are very different from their expectations or

training (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). The instructional, curricular, and clerical expectations that are placed upon special education teachers are larger and more ambiguous than those of general education teachers (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). This makes the job of a special education teacher more complex and overwhelming. Nearly one-third of special education teachers reported high levels of stress from conflicting goals, expectations, and directives (Morvant, 1995). Teachers need clarity when their positions and responsibilities are not explicitly defined (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Role overload. The phenomenon of role overload occurs when the responsibilities and expectations of a special education teacher outweigh the teacher's available time, abilities, or limitations (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Special education teachers' roles quickly become overloaded when their jobs become too diverse (Kaff, 2004). Job satisfaction decreases when teacher roles are overloaded and teachers feel like their ability to be effective is compromised (Billingsley, 2004; Gersten et al., 2001). Billingsley (2004) indicates overload often occurs for special education teachers in regards to role problems, paperwork, plus student and caseload issues. Jobs become more stressful when special education teachers are expected to perform duties beyond their capacity, often tasks for which they are unprepared or which cannot be completed within typical working hours (Garwood, et al., 2018). They struggle with feelings of inadequacy when other teachers expect them to be an expert in too many areas particularly when they are required to manage resource, inclusive, and consultative service delivery options simultaneously (Kaff, 2004). When special education teachers experience feelings associated with the lack of perceived success, it can lead to high levels of stress and negative outcomes for both the teacher and students (Johnson, 1990).

One aspect of role overload for special education teachers is managing large or diverse caseloads (Billingsly, 2004). Large student caseloads have a significant impact on stress for special education teachers due to the wide range of academic needs, complex scheduling, challenging student behavior, and collaboration and consultation with classroom teachers (Morvant et al., 1995). These overwhelming caseloads are reported to make special education teachers feel less effective (Bettini, Park, Benedict, Kimerling, & Leite, 2016). In a study on teacher attrition, 33% of special education teachers indicated they left the profession due to a class size or caseload that was too large (Billingsley, Pyecha, Smith-Davis, Murray, & Hendricks, 1995). Special education teachers also struggle with diversity in caseloads. Teachers were reported to be 42% more likely to leave their profession if they taught a caseload of students with four or more primary disabilities in their caseload (Carlson & Billingsley, 2001). However, if a teacher's caseload consists of more homogenous student groups, it is reportedly more manageable and teacher retention is increased (Bettini et al., 2020). Administrators who provide more manageable caseloads could see an increase in teacher retention (Bettini, 2017c).

Required paperwork. Stress associated with requirements not related to teaching, such as paperwork and meetings, is a commonly reported problem (Zabel & Zabel, 2001). If teachers have adequate time allotted for paperwork, they have increased job satisfaction (Albrecht et al., 2009). However, in a study conducted by Kaff (2004), 40% of surveyed special education teachers indicated the feeling of being overwhelmed and exhausted by the required paperwork associated with their jobs including individualized education programs, functional behavior analyses, behavior intervention plans, lesson plans, and data collection. Special education teachers have a negative perception of

required paperwork because it is labor intensive, time consuming, and has limited perceived value (Mehrenberg, 2013). Suter and Giangreco (2009) report special education teachers spend an average of five hours per week on paperwork. This leads special education teachers to be greatly concerned that their students are cheated because paperwork often has to take priority over teaching responsibilities (Kaff, 2004).

Non-teaching responsibilities. There are a multitude of regular tasks associated with the job of a special education teacher that are not related to teaching. Often, for special education teachers, this includes tasks beyond classroom teaching responsibilities which can lead to chronic and persistent stress (Ansley et al., 2016; Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). This phenomenon creates frustration for special education teachers when non-teaching assignments take priority over teaching (Mehrenberg, 2013). Non-teaching responsibilities include parent communication, meetings, supervising paraprofessionals, and collaboration.

Meetings and parent communication. A central job responsibility of a special education teacher is the coordination and composition of each student's multifaceted individualized plan. A foundational component of the IEP process is the special education teacher's clear understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the ability to interpret these foundational tenets to parents and families (Mandic, Rudd, Hehir, & Acevedo-Garcia, 2012). To ensure compliance with federal law, special education teachers must fully adhere to the six principles: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, individualized and appropriate education, least restrictive environment, procedural due process, and parent participation (Turnbull, Stowe, & Huerta, 2007). When teachers are not fully informed of these principles and/or

inaccurately convey them to families, there is an increase of parents who file due process complaints with the state department of education (Zirkel & Gischlar, 2008). According to the 41st Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (2019), in 2016-17 a total of 18,490 due process complaints were filed through the dispute resolution process. Stress for special education teachers associated with the IEP process is compounded due to the many legal ramifications of non-compliance.

Many times, parents feel unsupported and uninvolved in the IEP process because special education teachers often prepare documents in advance leaving parents feel like they do not have a voice in the outcomes of meetings (Stoner et al., 2005). Special education teachers experience considerable time restraints when compiling data, scheduling meetings, drafting documents, and conducting meetings which make special education teachers appear rushed to parents (Stoner et al., 2005). Communication with parents is a vital part of student achievement; however, it can be very demanding and stressful for special education teachers (McGrath, Houghton, & Reid, 1989). Special education teachers have elevated stress when they deal with parents who are verbally and emotionally abusive (Dean, 2000).

Supervising paraprofessionals. Because of their diverse responsibilities and heavy workload, special education teachers have become managers of paraprofessionals to have assistance completing their many demands (Putnam, 1993). Paraprofessionals play a vital role in distributing the excessive workload of special education teachers by completing diverse tasks such as monitoring in academic settings, material preparation, behavior management, data collection, and instructional activities (Sharma & Salend,

2016; Mueller, 1997). Since these job tasks are so critical to student outcomes, it is imperative that special education teachers closely supervise the work of paraprofessionals. Even though training and supervising paraprofessionals have become part of the responsibilities of a special education teacher, few training opportunities exist in pre-service or in-service settings to prepare teachers for this role (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001).

While the additional assistance from paraprofessionals relieves some of the workload, it also creates a new level of skill sets that special education teachers are expected to perform (Wallace et al., 2001). Supervising more paraprofessionals predicts higher stress levels, emotional exhaustion, and reduces the likelihood of retention (Bettini et al., 2020). This additional role and responsibility compounds stress for special education teachers.

Collaboration. Special education teachers thrive when they engage in supportive, reciprocal relationships with their colleagues (Bettini et al., 2015). Cooperative relationships with other teachers and service providers serve as an encouragement and can even increase teacher retention (Gersten et al., 2001). A team approach where special education teachers, general education teachers, related service providers and administrators work together to provide services to students leads to feelings of support and job satisfaction (Berry, 2012). Special education teachers are required to coordinate and maintain a focused collaborative relationship with more educational professionals than any other teacher in the public school system. Some of the collaborative relationships include (a) multiple general education teachers, (b) paraprofessionals, (c) other special education teachers, (d) school counselors, (e) principals, (f) school

psychologists, (g) occupational therapists, (h) physical therapists, (i) speech language pathologists, (j) nurses, (k) nutrition managers, (l) reading and/or math specialists, and (m) English Language Learner coordinators.

However, due to a high workload, special education teachers tend to isolate themselves and lack social support from their coworkers (Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Maslach et al., 2001). Collaborative relationships reduce stress, clarify roles, and provide professional support which leads to greater job satisfaction (Billingsley, 2004). A supportive social context can have positive outcomes including decreased stress, job satisfaction, and intention to stay (Bettini et al., 2017b; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Supportive interpersonal relationships among special education and general education teachers can even increase teacher retention rates (Garwood et al., 2018). In a study by Prather-Jones (2011), meaningful and supportive relationships with general education teachers are an important component to remaining in the field of special education.

Managing student behavior. Classroom management and discipline have long been sources of stress for teachers (Chaplain, 2008; Paquette & Rieg, 2016). In a survey of pre-service teachers, 78% of teachers stated they were stressed by classroom management and discipline. When working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders, 65% of special education teachers were stressed some or most of the time (Paquette & Rieg, 2016). Teachers report abusive students as also being a significant source of stress (Dean, 2000). Stressors associated with student behavior have been determined as the primary antecedent to teacher burnout and intention to leave the profession (Chang, 2009). Special education teachers are often overwhelmed and feel

incapable of dealing with multiple students with behavioral problems simultaneously (Kunkulol et al., 2013).

Working conditions. Positive working conditions increase the likelihood of teacher job satisfaction and increased motivation to produce high quality instruction (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). When special education teachers perceive their jobs as low stress, there is an increase in positive outcomes including effective teaching, student achievement, and job satisfaction (Cancio et al., 2018). Bettini and colleagues (2017a) identified six working conditions which lead to improved outcomes: school culture, instructional support, instructional materials, instructional grouping, time for instruction, and time for planning.

However, working conditions, such as low salary, poor school climate, and lack of administrative support contribute to high levels of stress in the workplace (Billingsley, 2004). Stress continues to escalate for special education teachers who experience mistreatment from students, parents, and teachers, plus, they are expected to work outside of school hours without additional compensation (Kaff, 2004). When working conditions are unsatisfactory, problems begin to interact and overlap, which creates unmanageable stress and teacher attrition (Billingsley et al., 2017b).

Inadequate resources. According to Morvant and colleagues (1995), 69% of special education teachers reported they have inadequate time to complete their work. Vannest and Hagan-Burke (2010) investigated time management of special education teachers. Findings from their study indicated 40% of a special education teacher's day is spent in instructional activities, and 12% of each day was spent solely completing paperwork. Special education teachers identified excessive workloads along with time

management problems in the top sources of job stressors (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Paquette & Rieg, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). In a survey conducted by Paquette and Rieg (2016), 83% of teachers were stressed by their workload, while 85% were stressed by time management issues. As a consequence of high workloads, special education teachers are forced to neglect responsibilities due to either a lack of time or difficulty managing time (George et al., 1995). One of the key responsibilities special education teachers often must overlook is teaching, frequently delegating to paraprofessionals out of necessity (Kaff, 2004).

Funding special education. Free appropriate public education (FAPE) extends an education free of cost to all students with a disability, releasing their parents of the financial burden for educating their child. Financial responsibility for providing the special education and related services outlined in the IEP to the student with a disability rests on the local education agency. Services and supports may not be denied because of the financial burden to the school district (Yell, 2016). According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2018), Congress made a commitment to fund up to an additional 40% of the average per pupil expenditure (APPE) for each student with a disability to cover the additional costs of special education, yet they have never met that goal. The additional 40% goal was determined based on the assumption that the cost of a specialized education for students with disabilities was on average double that of a non-disabled student (National Education Association, 2018). When the federal government does not fully fund special education programs, state agencies and local districts are forced to cover the additional expenses incurred from educating students with disabilities (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2018).

According to the National Education Association (2018), IDEA has never been fully funded, plus there has been a consistent decline in the percentage of APPE designated for special education students since 2009. In fiscal year 2009, public schools received an additional 17.2% of the APPE for each eligible special education student, however, that percentage has slowly declined to 14.6% in fiscal year 2017. When the federal government and local education agencies fail to fully fund special education, the burden for providing appropriate materials is often left to special education teachers. Many teachers use personal funds to meet the needs of their students when the local education agency has limited financial resources.

Teaching responsibilities. Special education teachers are expected to meet the needs of a wide range of students with disabilities (Billingsley, 2004), which requires extensive planning responsibilities (Bettini et al., 2017b). This problem is compounded by the lack of sufficient time allotted during the school day for planning lessons (Albrecht et al., 2009). Inadequate planning time adds to special education teacher stress and increases the likelihood many teachers will leave the profession (Bettini et al., 2017b). Almost half (43%) of the teachers surveyed wanted more time to plan, consult, and collaborate with the general education teachers (Kaff, 2004). Adequate planning time is directly related to career intentions for special education teachers (Albrecht et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2017b), along with the continual demands of high stakes assessments, which result in increased scrutiny and criticism of their job performance (Lambert & McCarthy, 2006).

Manifestations of Stress

Physical. High job demands can lead to problems in the overall wellness of special education teachers (Ansley et al., 2016; Waltz, 2016), including negative impacts on the body from stressful events (Brackenreed, 2011). Special education teachers are often physically fatigued and struggle to find sufficient coping resources to deal with their stress (Matheny et al., 2000). Excessive workload, increased behavioral problems, and large class sizes have also been shown to cause adverse physical symptoms in special education teachers (Kunkulol et al., 2013). The symptoms include difficulties with blood pressure, cholesterol, and muscle tension which can lead to significant health problems (Brackenreed, 2011). On average teachers report a higher rate of sick day absences than other professions in the public sector (Dean, 2000). The physical manifestations of stress are contributors to teacher illness.

Emotional. Emotional exhaustion is a consequence of special education teacher stress (Matheny et al., 2000) and described by Hakanen and colleagues (2006) as a feeling of strain or chronic fatigue when one encounters overtaxing work. This state of feeling emotionally drained is often a component of teacher burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1984) with special education teachers showing a gradual increase of emotional exhaustion over a period of five years (Frank & McKenzie, 1993). When a special education teacher experiences long-term stress, it can lead to chronic mental health issues (Ansley et al., 2016). Overwhelming workloads are a predictor of emotional exhaustion which could, in turn, impact career intentions (Bettini et al., 2017c) and can also negatively impact students' social, emotional and academic outcomes (Brunsting et al.,

2014). Working conditions predict emotional exhaustion and the special education teacher's intent to leave the field (Albrecht et al., 2009).

Coping Strategies

Having adequate tools to manage the intensity of stressful events is important for special education teachers (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999). Stressors cannot be completely eliminated from the job of a special education teacher; therefore, it is imperative that teachers learn strategies to help them manage their daily pressures (Waltz, 2016). The process of coping describes the means by which teachers react and deal with daily challenges and problems (Parker & Martin, 2009). Coping strategies have been found to help compensate for stress, and, thereby, maintain better overall health (Billings & Moos, 1984; Ansley et al., 2016). Without adequate coping resources to deal with work-related stress, special education teachers experience decreased motivation and enthusiasm for their jobs (Matheny et al., 2000) and may even experience a lack of purpose associated with their work (Matheny et al, 2000). Special education teachers need strategies of self-care and self-advocacy to better serve students and increase the likelihood retention and success socially, emotionally, and academically (Brunsting et al., 2014). Carton and Fruchart (2014) described coping strategies in two distinct categories: active and palliative.

Active coping strategies. Active coping strategies involve (a) the elimination of the source of stress, (b) proactive strategies to avoid stress before it starts, and (c) relieving the pain of stress by understanding the cause (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Teachers have been observed searching for solutions, seeking social support, implementing time management strategies, and prioritizing work as active coping skills.

Other positive coping strategies identified include positive appraisal and planful problem solving (Chan & Hui, 1995). Austin and colleagues (2005) recommend active coping strategies, such as delegating responsibility, taking up a hobby, or participating in a relaxing activity.

Often support can be found within the school setting, but special education teachers must also prioritize self-care. In a survey conducted by Cancio et al. (2018), the top ranked coping strategy for special education teachers was seeking support from family, friends, and colleagues. Pullis (1992) identified 96% of special education teachers used talking with colleagues as an effective approach for relieving stress. Similarly, early career teachers found they coped with the stress of their jobs by engaging in relaxing activities after school and depended on their friends for social support (Paquette & Rieg, 2016). Physical activities such as exercise (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015), yoga, meditation, and deep breathing have also been reported as successful coping skills for stress reduction (Carton & Fruchart, 2014; Csaszar & Buchanan, 2015). In a study of work-related stress reduction, physical exercise and stress management skills training were both shown to decrease stress with the best results from the participants who received both physical exercise and stress management training (Eriksen et al., 2002).

Special education teachers should actively seek support from their administrators (Brunsting et al., 2014) and through involvement in professional organizations (Cancio et al., 2018). Pre-service teachers found it relieved stress of workload and time management to organize, plan, create to-do lists, and keep a daily schedule (Paquette & Rieg, 2016). Stress-management training coupled with a peer collaboration program for special

education teachers provided coping skills and improved job satisfaction (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996).

Palliative coping strategies. Palliative coping strategies involve the reduction of the effects of stress (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). These involve reactive strategies which are used to avoid the effects of stress after it starts. In essence, people attempt to relieve the pain of stress without dealing with the actual cause (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). These types of negative coping strategies are more likely to be used by teachers with high levels of stress (Austin et al., 2005). Some palliative strategies are detrimental to physical and emotional health (Chan & Hui, 1995). Examples of avoidance activities include activities such as drinking alcohol or expressing negative emotions following stressful events have been shown to be ineffective in reducing stress (Austin et al., 2005; Cancio et al., 2018) and have even been significantly correlated with high levels of emotional exhaustion and low personal achievement (Chan & Hui, 1996). In fact, some coping mechanisms, such as eating, prescription medications, alcohol, and recreational drugs, have been found to predict an increase in stress (Cancio et al., 2018; Pullis, 1992). According to Chan and Hui (1996), teachers who use palliative strategies to escape stress are more prone to burnout.

Administrative Support

Administrators can significantly influence the amount of stress special education teachers experience in the workplace. When administrators provide sufficient support to special education teachers, it can positively impact their decision to stay in special education (Prather-Jones, 2011). Similarly, lack of administrative support can lead to special education teacher attrition (Kaff, 2004). Early identification of stressors by school

administrators can help to minimize emotional exhaustion over time (Frank & McKenzie, 1993); therefore, administrators need to actively search for strategies to reduce stress on the job for special education teachers (Cancio et al., 2018).

Improve working conditions. School administrators can positively improve working conditions to decrease stress for special education teachers (Kenyeri, 2002). The areas of support special education teachers identified include time to adequately complete paperwork, clear definition of job roles, and the provision of quality mentoring (Garwood et al., 2018). Administrators must prioritize ways to relieve the workload of special education teachers, especially those that are new to the field (Bettini et al., 2017c). The highest level of support is attained when administrators monitor job satisfaction of their special education teachers so they can continually adjust working conditions to relieve stress (Cancio et al., 2018).

Support. Administrators show support to their special education teachers through acts of respect and appreciation, such as words of affirmation, professional treatment, and quality feedback on job performance (Prather-Jones, 2011). Special education teachers feel supported by their administration when they have a voice in decision-making (Prather-Jones, 2011). Administrators play a role in creating effective teachers in their districts by providing autonomy, including them in decision-making, and trusting their knowledge (Bettini et al., 2015; Bettini et al., 2017c)

Skill development. Special education teachers must receive targeted skill training to be highly qualified and meet the demands of their jobs (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004). Administrators must support skill development in their teachers to reduce stress (Bettini et al., 2017a), and one way districts could address issues of stress in the

workplace is through quality professional development (Cancio et al., 2018). Targeted training should be provided to teachers on how to manage their daily stress through professional development courses on stress awareness and self-care (Waltz, 2016). If districts do not provide adequate training on self-care and stress, teachers can often apply for outside professional development to help address these critical skills. Other skills which need to be developed include managing challenging behaviors in the classroom (Brunsting et al., 2014) to help increase special education teachers' confidence when they encounter difficult behaviors.

Social and emotional support. Special education teachers need to meaningfully participate in supportive, reciprocal relationships with their colleagues throughout the school (Bettini et al., 2015). Administrators can develop a schoolwide climate which enhances teacher relationships and support (Prather-Jones, 2011) by including special education teachers in school networks, developing schedules conducive to collaboration, and personally developing relationships with their special education teachers (Bettini et al., 2015). Teachers who work in environments that lack appropriate social interaction are prone to increased stress (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, & Eloff, 2003), because social interactions amongst peers have been found to relieve symptoms of stress (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefeld, Dua, & Stough, 2001).

Student discipline. Consistent and appropriate support from administrators in areas of student discipline is a key element to special education teachers feeling support (Prather-Jones, 2011). Special education teachers want to be more involved in the decision-making processes including assigning appropriate consequences to student misbehavior (Kaff, 2004; Prather-Jones, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

There is a need to further investigate the increasing challenges associated with the sequence of special education teacher stress, which can lead to emotional exhaustion, then ultimately, burnout. This pattern often results in special education teachers leaving the field, and, when coupled with the increasing shortage of qualified and experienced special education teachers in the classroom, it can have a highly detrimental impact on the success of special education programs across the nation. This study will expand upon the current literature in the field of special education teacher stress by leading researchers including Bettini and Cancio. Research by Bettini et al. (2020) focused on the impact of teacher stress on a special education teachers' intent to stay in the field and workload manageability. Research by Cancio et al. (2018) focused on the investigation of special education teacher stress and coping strategies, while Cancio et al. (2013) focused on administrative support for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

The purpose of this study was to investigate job-related stress for special education teachers. First, this study aimed to identify how special education teachers experienced stress in their workplace. This was determined by (a) how special education teachers rated their level of stress and identified the stress-related factors they experienced at work, (b) how this stress manifested itself in their lives, (c) the types of coping strategies they personally employed to address the stress, and (d) the extent and level of support which they received from their administrators. More specifically, it was important to determine the self-identified demonstrations of job-related stress which can negatively impact special education teachers' ability to perform required job duties. Both

active and palliative coping strategies were explored to identify ways in which stress is being addressed.

This study also aimed to investigate a proposed theoretical model of 10 latent factors (i.e., workload manageability, student behavior, working conditions, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions). The purpose was to determine if the items on the survey measured the latent factors included in the theoretical model.

A survey on special education teacher stress, coping strategies, and administrative support was adapted from Cancio et al. (2018) and Cancio et al. (2013) to collect data on the types of stress that special education teachers were experiencing, coping strategies they found useful in managing the stress, and extent and importance of administrative support.. The survey from Paquette & Rieg (2016) was adapted to collect information regarding specific job stressors. Specific areas of job-related stress were explored including issues with workload manageability, student behavior, and working conditions. The survey also explored special education teachers' perceptions of administrative support, which could potentially reduce job-related stress. Results from the adapted scale provided insight into the study aims.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Prolonged and excessive stress is known to cause negative outcomes for special education teachers and their students (Cancio et al, 2018). However, reducing stress can improve teacher wellness, working conditions, attrition rates, and student outcomes (Ansley et al. 2016). To retain qualified and experienced special education teachers in the classroom, it is imperative to understand how stress impacts teachers' intentions to remain in the field. The purpose of this study was to determine how job stressors, coping strategies, and administrative support influence special education teacher stress. To address gaps in literature, a broad investigation of special education teachers examined the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research Questions

A survey of special education teachers in Oklahoma investigated the following research questions.

1. What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate:
    a. the stress-related factors they experience as a direct result of their job?
    b. the physical and emotional manifestations of job-related stress?
    c. the active and palliative coping strategies they employ to reduce job-related stress?
    d. the extent of support they receive from special education administrators?
    e. the perceived level of importance of administrative support?
2. Do survey items measure the 10 latent factors (i.e., workload manageability, working conditions, student behavior, active coping strategies, palliative coping

strategies, accessibility, social and emotional support, respect and appreciation, provisions, and professional development) in the proposed theoretical model? (Figure 1)?

Research Hypotheses

In agreement with the existing literature, several hypotheses were formed regarding the research questions.

Hypothesis 1. Special education teachers will identify situational stressors they experience at work. It was hypothesized that the findings from the current study would align with research literature which identifies job-related stressors associated with workload manageability, working conditions, and student behavior (Bettini et al., 2017c; Cancio et al., 2013; Kaff, 2004).

Hypothesis 2. Special education teachers will rate how job-related stress manifests itself in them personally. It was hypothesized that the findings from the current study would align with research literature which identifies physical and/or emotional manifestations of stress (Hakanen et al., 2006; Matheny et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 3. Coping strategies will fall into two categories: active and palliative (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Active strategies are used to eliminate stress before it starts (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Palliative strategies are used primarily to avoid the effects of stress and have been shown to be ineffective in stress reduction (Austin et al., 2005; Cancio et al., 2018; Carton & Fruchart, 2014). It was hypothesized special education teachers often implement palliative coping strategies due to highly stressful situations they encounter regularly in their jobs.

Hypothesis 4. Special education teachers will report the extent of support they received from their administrator and how important each type of support is to them and their job. Administrators play an active role in reducing special education teacher stress and promoting teacher retention (Albrecht et al., 2009; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). In similar studies, support from administrators was found to decrease stress and attrition, and offset the negative effects of stress caused by unmanageable workloads (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; Cancio et al., 2013). It was hypothesized special education teachers would report a difference in their perceived level of support and the importance of support they receive from their administrators.

Hypothesis 5. Survey items were selected from existing surveys, current research literature, and the author's experience as a special education professional. It was hypothesized that survey items measured workload manageability, student behavior, working conditions, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions.

Survey Development

The instrument development began by adapting three existing surveys with permission from the first author from each of the original studies. A flowchart was developed to indicate how many items were used from each survey, including original items used (Appendix A). The first survey (Cancio et al., 2013) focused on administrative support for special education teachers and contained 96 items (Appendix B). The second survey (Cancio et al., 2018) focused on special education teacher stress plus coping strategies and contained 50 items (Appendix C). Since the Cancio et al. (2018) survey

was a modified version of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey, many items overlapped. The third survey (Paquette & Rieg, 2016) identified pre-service teacher job stressors and contained 28 items (Appendix D). This list was significantly modified to include job responsibilities which were specific to special education teachers. Drawing from the total of 174 survey items, along with information from the research literature and the author's personal experiences, a modified survey of 101 items was developed. The survey for the current study included the following items: 30 items from Cancio et al. (2013); 14 items from Cancio et al. (2018); 27 items that were present in both Cancio et al. (2013) and Cancio et al. (2018); 13 items from Paquette & Rieg (2016); and 17 original items created by the author of this study.

Changes were made to the original three surveys to narrow down the focus of questions, remove repetitive items, and maintain a reasonable length for the survey. It was important to ensure the final survey was at a length which encouraged participants to complete the entire survey to reduce missing data and fatigue which both impact reliability and generalization of findings. Survey items which were removed from the Cancio et al. (2013), Cancio et al. (2018), and Paquette and Rieg (2016) instruments when creating the final survey are detailed in Table 1. Each survey item was given full consideration prior to any modifications.

Table 1

Survey Items Removed from Cancio et al. (2013), Cancio et al. (2018), and Paquette & Rieg (2016)

Section Item	Reason Removed	Similar item retained in study
Cancio et al. (2013)		
Part 1: Administrative Support		
Considers my ideas	Redundant	Allows input into decisions that affect me
Treats me as one of the faculty	Redundant	Gives me a sense of importance that I make a difference
Provides standards for my performance	Redundant	Constructive and frequent feedback about my performance
During my interview was honest about school climate	Redundant	Is honest and straightforward with staff
Encourages professional growth	Redundant	Opportunities for me to attend workshops and conferences
Provides suggestions for me to improve instruction	Redundant	Constructive and frequent feedback about my performance
Identifies personnel for problems I am unable to solve	Redundant	Opportunities to learn from other special education teachers
Assists with EBD evaluations	Different construct	
Provides time for various non-teaching responsibilities	Redundant	Provides me with adequate planning time
Works with me to plan goals and objectives for my program	Different construct	
Provides resources when I become overloaded	Redundant	Provides materials and resources needed to do my job
Equally distributes resources and unpopular chores	Different construct	
What is the gender of your supervisor	Different construct	
Part 2: Job Satisfaction		
Salary and fringe benefits	Different construct	
*Importance of my position	Different construct	
*Classroom is sufficient in size	Different construct	
*Challenge in my position	Different construct	
There is a location to remove students during crisis situations	Different construct	

There is a district inclusion plan	Different construct	
Opportunity for promotion and advancement	Different construct	
Opportunity to use past training and education	Different construct	
*Job security and permanence	Different construct	
Supervisor(s)	Different construct	
Opportunity for developing new skills	Different construct	
*Pride/respect I receive for being in this profession	Different construct	
*Relationships with colleagues	Different construct	
Part 4: Views about School		
I am willing to give effort beyond what is expected	Different construct	
I talk up this school to my friends as a great school	Different construct	
I feel very little loyalty to this school	Different construct	
I find that my values and the school's values are very similar	Different construct	
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this school	Different construct	
This school really inspires the best in me	Different construct	
It would take very little change to leave this school	Different construct	
I am glad that I was assigned/work at this school	Different construct	
Often, I find it difficult to agree with this school's policies	Different construct	
I really care about this school	Different construct	
This is the best of all possible schools in which to work	Different construct	
Cancio et al. (2018)		
Part 4: Coping Strategies		
Use of recreational drugs	Redundant	Use of tobacco or alcohol
Paquette & Rieg (2016)		

Delivering the lesson	Different construct
Managing group work	Different construct
Managing seat work	Different construct
Establishing a rapport with students	Different construct
Giving appropriate feedback	Different construct
Helping students with learning difficulties	Different construct
Communicating concepts to students	Different construct
High expectations of my teaching performance	Different construct
Selecting appropriate content for my lessons	Different construct
Being observed by my university supervisor	Different construct
Being evaluated by my university supervisor	Different construct
Communicating with/relating to university supervisor	Different construct
Communicating with/relating to teachers in the school	Different construct
Being observed by my cooperating teacher	Different construct
Being evaluated by my cooperating teacher	Different construct
Communicating with my cooperating teacher	Different construct
Communicating with/relating to principal/school administrator	Different construct

Note. A total of 39 items were removed from the Cancio et al. (2013) survey. A total of 7 items were removed from the Cancio et al. (2018) survey. Six items were removed from both surveys. An * indicates the item was present in both surveys. A total of 17 items were removed from the Paquette & Rieg (2016) survey.

Modifications to Cancio et al. (2013). From part one of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey, extent and importance of administrative support, 13 items were removed and two

items were combined. Items which were considered redundant were removed in consideration of the length of the survey. Nine items were removed because they were considered redundant including (a) "considers my ideas," (b) "treats me as one of the faculty," (c) "provides standards for my performance," (d) "during my interview was honest about school climate," (e) "encourages professional growth," (f) "provides suggestions for me to improve instruction," (g) "identifies resource personnel for specific problems I am unable to solve," (h) "provides time for various non-teaching responsibilities," and (i) "provides resources when I become overloaded." Table 1 includes a column displaying a similar item retained in the study to show the construct was still measured. The four items removed because they did not align with constructs from the current study included (a) "assists with proper identification of students with EBD," (b) "works with me to plan goals and objectives for my program and students," (c) "equally distributes resources and unpopular chores," and (d) "name the gender of your supervisor." The two items which were combined included (a) "offers constructive feedback after observing my teaching" and (b) "provides frequent feedback about my performance," which was modified to "offers constructive and frequent feedback about my performance." Items in part one were measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale in the original survey; however, this was changed to a 6-point scale to increase variability in responses.

Part two of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey included items regarding job satisfaction. Since this construct was not measured in the survey, all 14 items were removed. These included (a) "salary and fringe benefits," (b) "importance of my position," (c) "classroom is sufficient in size," (d) "challenge of my position," (e) "there

is a location to remove students during crisis situations," (f) "there is a systematic district/school-wide plan to integrate students into regular education settings," (g) "regular education teachers are willing to take your students into their classroom when appropriate," (h) "opportunity for promotion and advancement," (i) "opportunity to use past training and education," (j) "job security and permanence," (k) "supervisors," (l) "opportunity for developing new skills," (m) "pride and respect I receive from family and friends for being in this profession," and (n) "relationships with colleagues."

No items were removed from part three of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey regarding feelings people experience concerning their jobs. However, the Likert-type scale was adjusted from a 5-point scale to a 6-point scale. This change removes the neutral option and increases variability of responses.

From part four of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey, views about your school, 12 items were removed because they did not measure constructs associated with the goals of the current study. These items included (a) "I am willing to provide the effort beyond what is normally expected of my position," (b) "I talk up this school to my friends as a great school to work in," (c) "I feel very little loyalty to this school," (d) "I find that my values and the school's values are very similar," (e) "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this school," (f) "this school really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance," (g) "it would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this school," (h) "I am glad that I was assigned/work at this school," (i) "often I find it difficult to agree with the school's policies," (j) "I really care about this school," (k) "for me this is the best of all possible schools in which to work," and (l) "deciding to work in this school was a definite mistake on my part."

No items were removed from part five of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey, items that describe you. However, the Likert-type scale was adjusted from a 5-point scale to a 6-point scale. This change removes the neutral option and increases variability of responses.

Modifications to Cancio et al. (2018). The Cancio et al. (2018) survey was largely a replication of the Cancio et al. (2013) survey. While a total of seven items were removed from the survey, only one item was unique to the Cancio et al. (2018) survey. In part four, coping with stress, the item removed was "use of recreational drugs." This item was removed since similar items were listed in the coping section (e.g., "use of alcohol and tobacco"). It is also believed teachers might have difficulty honestly answering this question due to the illegal nature of recreational drugs. Four items were combined in this survey. In part four of coping strategies "listening to music" and "dancing" were combined into one item (e.g., "listening to music/dancing") and "use of tobacco products" and "use of alcohol" were combined into one item (e.g., "tobacco products/alcohol").

Modifications to Paquette & Rieg (2016). The original participants of the Paquette & Rieg (2016) survey were early childhood special education student teachers; therefore, all items included on this survey were related to pre-service teacher duties and job stressors. The Likert-type scale of the original survey was 1-4; however, this was modified to a 0-5 scale to increase variability in responses. A total of 16 items were removed from the Paquette and Rieg (2016) survey. The removed items included (a) "delivering the lesson," (b) "managing group work," (c) "managing seat work," (d) "establishing a rapport with students," (e) "giving appropriate feedback," (f) "helping

students with learning difficulties," (g) "communicating concepts to students," (h) "high expectations of my teaching performance," (i) "selecting appropriate content for my lessons," (j) "being observed by my university supervisor," (k) "being evaluated by my university supervisor," (l) "communicating with/relating to my university supervisor," (m) "being observed by my cooperating teacher," (n) "being evaluated by my cooperating teacher," (o) "communicating with my cooperating teacher," and (p) "communicating with/relating to principal/school administrator." One item on the survey, "managing the class and enforcing discipline," was separated into two individual items (a) "managing the classroom" and (b) "student discipline."

Additions by the study author. The final component of the survey was the addition of 17 items created by the author of the study. These additions include 10 job stressors specific to special education teachers found in literature. The job stressors added include (a) "teaching similar ability groups," (b) "communicating with parents," (c) "excessive caseload," (d) "required paperwork (IEPs, FBAs, etc.)," (e) "data collection/documentation," (f) "meetings," (g) "supervising paraprofessionals," (h) "role overload (wear too many hats)," (i) "role confusion (no clear guidance of my responsibilities)," and (j) "lack of administrative support." Two manifestations of stress were added (a) "I have difficulty focusing on my job" and (b) "my stomach hurts when I think of returning to work after a weekend or hard day." Three coping strategies were added (a) "reading for pleasure," (b) "relaxing after school hours," and (c) "excessive sleeping." Two demographic questions were added (a) "how do you rate your overall stress as a special education teacher" and (b) "the students in my caseload have similar disabilities/educational needs, or varying disabilities/educational needs."

Theoretical Model

During the survey development process, a theoretical model was designed to ensure all areas of investigation were addressed. Items were aligned with the primary aims of the current study which was to investigate the impact of job stressors, coping strategies, and administrative support on special education teacher stress. Using current literature on special education teacher stress as a guide, each latent variable was divided into a proposed theoretical model.

Job stressors. The three main factors of job stressors were workload manageability, student behavior, and working conditions (Figure 2). Workload manageability was sub-divided into excessive workload, role overload, work/life balance, lesson plans, IEPs/FBAs/BIPs, data collection, and meetings. Student behavior was sub-divided into discipline decisions, working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders, and classroom management. Working conditions was sub-divided into materials, time, administrative support, and teaching mixed ability groups.

Coping strategies. The two main factors of coping strategies were active coping strategies and palliative coping strategies (Figure 3). Active coping strategies was sub-divided into hobbies, music, and exercise. Palliative coping strategies were further divided into prescription medication, excessive eating/sleeping, and counseling.

Administrative support. The five main factors of administrative support were accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions (Figure 4). Accessibility was sub-divided into available, approachable, and attentive. Respect and appreciation was sub-divided into sense of importance, shows appreciation, and clear job responsibilities. Social and emotional

support was sub-divided into problem solve, dispute resolution, and classroom management. Professional development was sub-divided into coping skills, legal policies, and instruction in behavior techniques. Provisions was sub-divided into time, resources and support/trust.

A sixth factor, autonomy, was originally included in the theoretical model. However, it was later removed when the confirmatory factor analysis indicated the survey items should be loaded onto other factors or removed. The factors from this original category were remapped to provisions.

Figure 2

Job Stressors Model

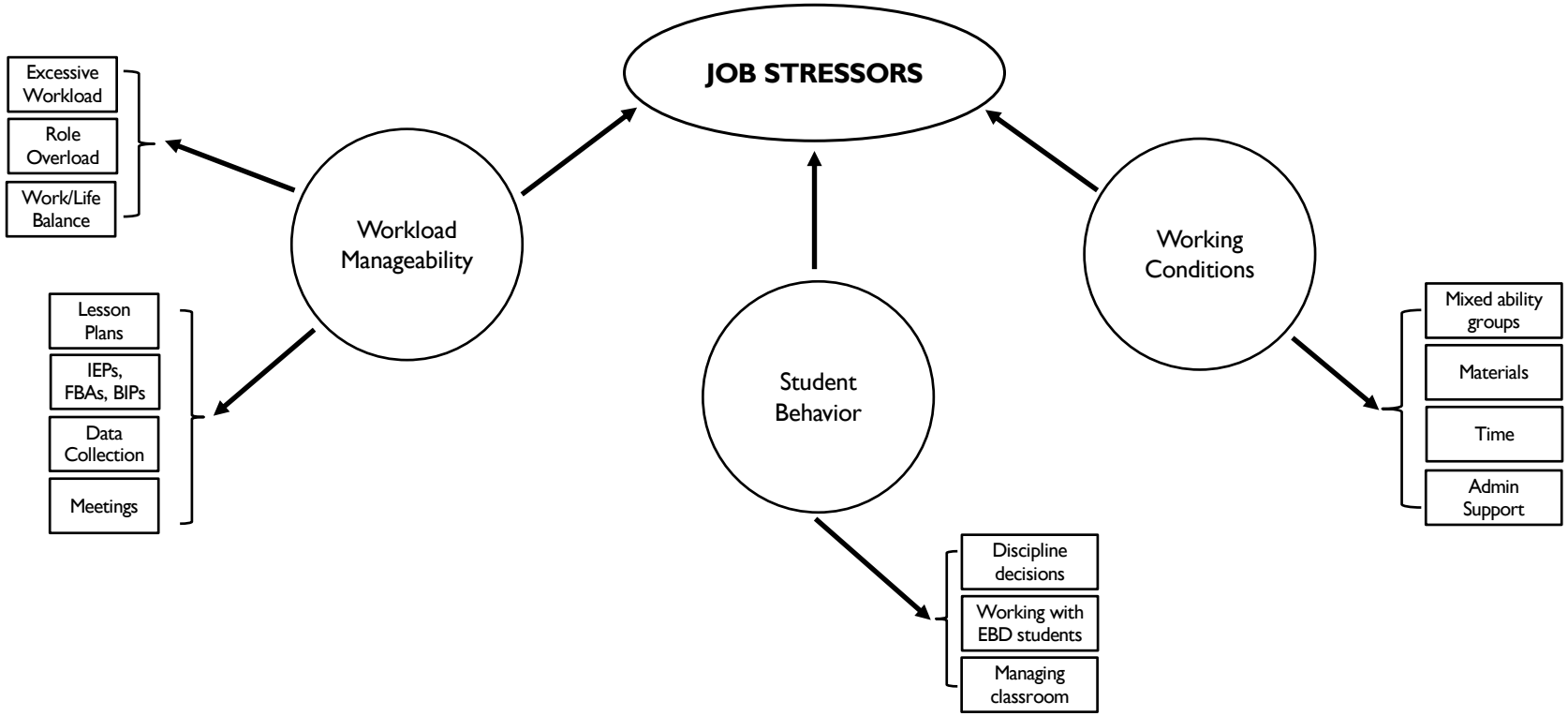


Figure 3

Coping Strategies Model

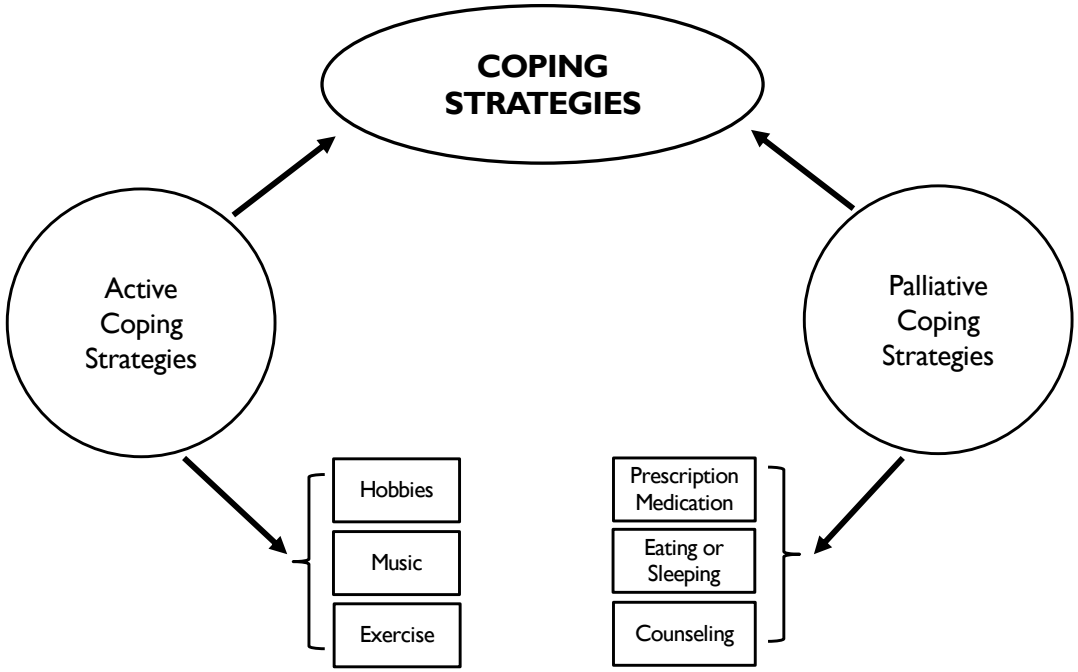
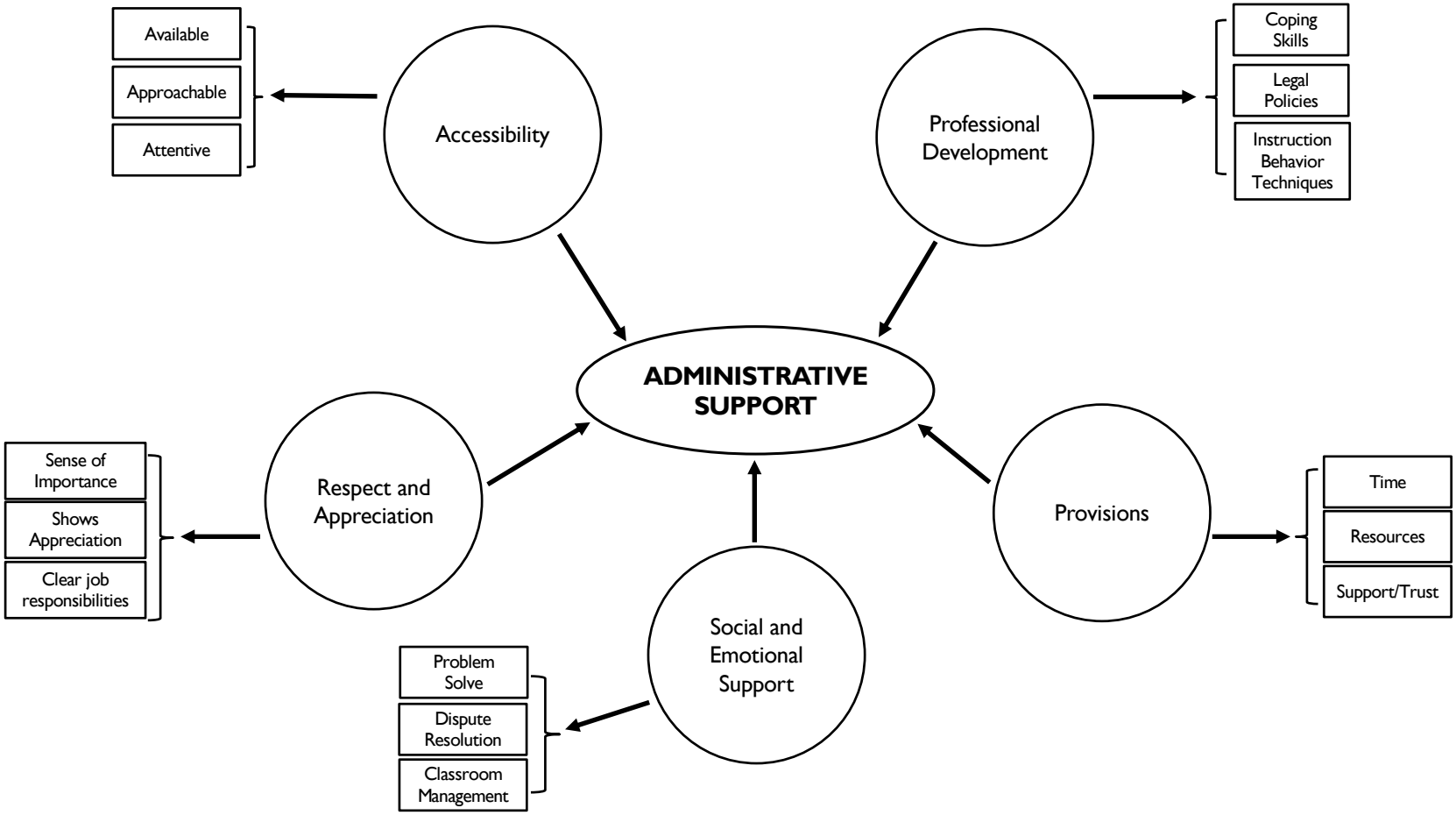


Figure 4

Administrative Support Model



Pilot Test

Although two of the original surveys were pilot tested and revised based on feedback (Cancio et al., 2013; Cancio et al., 2018), a new pilot test was deemed necessary due to the transformed nature of the new questionnaire. The adapted survey of 101 items was pilot tested with a small group of six special education teachers who were representative of the respondents in the study (Martella, Nelson, Morgan & Marchand-Martella, 2013). This sample of teachers was obtained through personal connections with the researcher. Sample participants received an email with the survey link in Qualtrics© including directions to take the survey and record the amount of time it takes to complete it. They were asked to set a stopwatch upon beginning the survey, take it at a typical pace, and record the elapsed time. Once they emailed me their recorded time, a subsequent email requested feedback on the following questions: Did the survey feel too long? Was the format (matrix) difficult to take or frustrating? Did any items or sections seem confusing? Sample participants responded to the questions, gave feedback on the items and length of the survey, and suggested improvements. All feedback from the sample participants were considered, and changes were suggested to improve the survey experience, including clarifying directions, describing rating scales, and improving the format. As a result, modifications were made to the survey and the finalized questionnaire was ready for distribution. This process increased the likelihood of obtaining reliable and valid data from the instrument. The final questionnaire contained 101 items divided into five sections (Appendix E). These five sections were designed to probe special education teachers to reflect on their work experiences in regards to (a) job

stressors, (b) manifestations of stress, (c) coping strategies, (d) administrative support, and (e) demographic information.

Survey Content

Section one. The first section of the survey asked special education teachers to consider 23 various aspects of job stressors (e.g., "teaching mixed ability groups," "helping students with emotional/behavior problems," and "required paperwork"). Participants were asked to indicate how often they experience stress based on a 6-point forced Likert-type scale ranging from zero (never) to five (all of the time). A 6-point scale was chosen to eliminate neutral responses in this section.

Section two. The second section focused on 15 manifestations of stress and the extent to which it impacts the work and life of special education teachers (e.g., "I have frequent headaches," "I do not sleep well," and "the amount of work I have to get done interferes with how well it gets done"). In this section, participants indicated the extent to which the items described their stress based on the 0-5 Likert-type scale ranging from zero (never) to five (always).

Section three. Section three of the survey contained a list of 16 coping strategy categories (e.g., "writing/journaling," "outdoor activities/gardening," "involvement in a professional organization") used to reduce stress. Special education teachers were asked to indicate how often they engaged in these activities to decrease their job-related stress. Answers were given based on the 0-5 Likert-type scale ranging from zero (never) to five (all of the time). Section three ends with a scale for teachers to rate their overall stress level as a special education teacher. This item was presented on a scale ranging from zero

(no stress) to nine (highest level of stress). This scale allows for increased variability of responses.

Section four. In section four, special education teachers were asked to make two separate judgments about 26 statements regarding the level of support from their direct administrator: the extent of administrative support and the level of importance each type of support is to the them personally and to their job (e.g., "shows genuine concern for my program and students," "allows input into decisions that affect me," and "notices my effort and shows appreciation for my work"). If there is more than one supervising administrator, the directions ask the respondent to consider the one to whom they usually report or the one with whom they have the greatest amount of contact. Both scales are based on the forced Likert-type scale of 0-5. The first response measured the extent of support from the administrator and was represented by one (no support) to five (full support). The second response measured the importance of each type of support and was represented by one (not important) to five (significantly important). Two additional items were included in this section to indicate the frequency of interaction with the administrator and the title of the administrator for whom the responses related.

Section five. The final section asked special education teachers to provide information about themselves, including responses regarding basic demographic information, teaching assignment, certification, and intent to stay. This section contained 17 items. Response choices were offered for all demographic items, and the participant chose the answer which best represented their personal information. Demographic information was gathered to increase external validity of the study so the results can be generalized to those not in the sample (Martella et al., 2013).

Survey Items

Job stressors. Twenty-three items evaluated the latent variable job stressors. This construct was divided into three main areas: workload manageability, student behavior, and working conditions. Workload manageability contained 14 survey items (a) "communicating with parents," (b) "excessive workload," (c) "excessive caseload," (d) "developing lesson plans," (e) "writing IEPs, FBAs, etc.," (f) "data collection and documentation," (g) "meetings," (h) "supervising paraprofessionals," (i) "role overload," (j) "role confusion - no clear guidelines of my responsibilities," (k) "work/life balance," (l) "others expecting me to perform tasks beyond my competency," (m) "fear of failing," and (n) "collaborating with general education teachers." Student behavior included three survey items (a) "classroom management," (b) "student discipline," and (c) "helping students with emotional and behavioral problems." Working conditions included six items (a) "teaching mixed ability groups," (b) "teaching similar ability groups," (c) "assessments," (d) "necessary materials and resources," (e) "time to complete work," and (f) "administrative support."

Coping strategies. Sixteen items evaluated the latent variable coping strategies. This construct was divided into two main areas: active coping strategies and palliative coping strategies. Active coping strategies contained eleven survey items (a) "reading for pleasure," (b) "writing/journaling," (c) "listening to music/dancing," (d) "outdoor activities/gardening," (e) "yoga/meditation," (f) "exercise," (g) "relaxing after school hours," (h) "support from family, friends, and colleagues," (i) "involvement in a professional organization," (j) "talking with my supervisor," and (k) "professional development." Palliative coping strategies contained five survey items (a) "counseling,"

(b) “prescription medication,” (c) “eating,” (d) “excessive sleeping,” and (e) “tobacco products/alcohol.”

Administrative support. Twenty-seven items evaluated the latent variable administrative support. This construct was divided into five categories: accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, provisions, and professional development. Accessibility included five items (a) “is easy to approach,” (b) “gives me undivided attention when I am talking,” (c) “is honest and straightforward with the staff,” (d) “is available to help when needed,” and (e) “participates in eligibility/IEP meetings/parent conferences.” Respect and appreciation included six items (a) “gives me a sense of importance that I make a difference,” (b) “shows genuine concern for my program and students,” (c) “notices my effort,” (d) “shows appreciation for my work,” (e) “gives clear guidelines regarding my job responsibilities,” and (f) “offers constructive and frequent feedback about my performance.” Social and emotional support includes three items (a) “helps me solve problems and conflicts that occur,” (b) “helps me with classroom management problems,” and (c) “helps me during parent conflicts, when necessary.” Professional development includes three items (a) “provides helpful information for improving personal coping skills,” (b) “provides information on up-to-date instructional and behavioral techniques,” and (c) “provides knowledge of current legal policies and administrative regulations.” Provisions includes ten items (a) “provides materials and resources needed to do my job,” (b) “provides mentors for new teachers,” (c) “provides opportunities to learn from other special education teachers,” (d) “provides me with adequate planning time,” (e) “provides opportunities for me to attend workshops and conferences,” (f) “provides paraprofessionals, when necessary,” (g) “supports me on

reasonable decisions," (h) "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions," (i) "allows input into decisions that affect me," and (j) "shows confidence in the decisions I make."

Study Participants

Participants included 2019-20 special education teachers in the state of Oklahoma. Data were collected through a survey which was distributed to special education teachers serving students in public schools ranging from birth through adulthood. A total of 854 special education teachers in Oklahoma participated in the study. A convenience sample was obtained through the certified staff email database on the Oklahoma State Department of Education website. This publicly available list contained the 2019-2020 contact information for all certified staff in public schools in Oklahoma, including charter schools (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2020a). Any personally identifiable information (including names and email addresses) obtained through the Oklahoma State Department of Education website was digitally saved and protected with a password. This email database was stored separately from the data gathered in the survey and could not be associated with the participant responses. No measures of coercion, including compensation, were used in the recruitment of participants.

Inclusion criteria. The last update to the Oklahoma certified staff directory was completed in January 2020. It is noted that some of the email addresses on the database might no longer be valid due to teacher turnover however, this was the most comprehensive and recent database of Oklahoma teacher contact information available at the time. The database was downloaded in February 2020, then sorted based on special

education programs. The inclusion list for the study was comprised of special education teachers designated with state job codes 213 (resource teacher), 210 (teacher, special education program), and 239 (teacher, special education program). There was a total of 6,710 special education certified staff entries, many of which were duplicate entries. A total of 1,920 duplicates were identified and removed. The finalized list included 4,790 names and email addresses for Oklahoma special education teachers.

Contact strategy. In April 2020, the online anonymous questionnaire (Appendix E) was distributed to the list of special education teachers in Oklahoma via Qualtrics© with an invitation to participate (Appendix F). A three-contact strategy was used to increase response rates (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). The email invitations were modeled after the samples provided in Dillman et al. (2009). The first contact provided essential information needed to complete the survey and was sent on a Monday morning for the highest potential response rate (Dillman et al., 2009). The second email was sent exactly one week following the initial invitation and served as a thank you to those who had chosen to participate. It was also a friendly reminder to those who had not yet completed the survey and included a new link for easy access. The final email was sent only days later and detailed the importance of completing the survey. The third contact included a brief reminder of the short amount of remaining time in which to complete the survey and another link to the web-based questionnaire. Survey protection settings in Qualtrics© were enabled to prevent participants from repeating the survey; therefore, data were not skewed by reminding participants to respond and sending multiple links to access the questionnaire.

Once a participant clicked on the Qualtrics© link to the survey, they were immediately directed to the consent page (Appendix G) which provided information regarding the study's purpose. Contact information for the lead researcher was included on the initial page. Participants were asked to indicate they were over 18 years old and if they were a current special education teacher. No personally identifiable information was collected. When the survey period closed, all responses were extracted from Qualtrics© and imported into jamovi© for computations.

Total respondents. The survey distribution included a total of 4,790 potential respondents (Appendix H). A total of 288 emails (6%) were returned as undeliverable. Therefore, 4,502 web-based surveys were successfully delivered to special education teachers in Oklahoma. A total of 925 special education teachers participated in the survey. The survey data were cleaned to ensure quality data for analysis. Responses were identified and removed if they were incomplete or if the participants did not respond thoughtfully (e.g., used the same number on the Likert scale for all responses, completed an inconsequential amount of the survey) All 925 responses were analyzed with descriptive statistics and chi-square goodness of fit tests. After cleaning the data, 854 quality responses remained. The 854 special education teachers who completed the online survey with fidelity reflects a 19% response rate. Although no minimum standard response rate is required, the higher the response rate, the less likely any potential bias exists (Martella et al., 2013).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed to answer research question 1 using descriptive measures of central tendency to investigate the latent constructs.

1. What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate:
    a. the stress-related factors they experience as a direct result of their job?
    b. their physical and emotional manifestations of job-related stress?
    c. the active and palliative coping strategies they employ to reduce job-related stress?
    d. the extent of support they receive from special education administrators?
    e. their perceived level of importance of administrative support?

Descriptive statistics. The data for research question 1 were analyzed with statistical methods prevalent in survey research. Quantitative data were collected from the participants regarding job stressors, manifestations of stress, coping strategies, administrative support, and demographic information. Frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion were used to organize data collected on the varying Likert-type scales and demographic information. Frequency distributions were examined for out-of-range or missing values. Closed-ended questions which required only one answer per item were used to capture special education teacher perceptions on the survey. All descriptive data were analyzed with the use of jamovi© software. The quantitative data were examined for potential variables that may influence the level of stress for special education teachers. An evaluation of the descriptive statistics revealed valuable information regarding special education teacher stressors, manifestations of stress, coping strategies, administrative support, and demographics of the participants.

Data were analyzed to answer research question 2 using multivariate analysis to test the hypotheses about the latent constructs.

2. Do survey items measure the 10 latent factors (i.e., workload manageability, working conditions, student behavior, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, social and emotional support, respect and appreciation, provisions, and professional development) in the proposed theoretical model? (Figure 1)?

Measurement model. The data for research question 2 were analyzed using a measurement model as part of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach. CFA is a multivariate analysis used to assess the extent to which a measured variable represents a construct (Kline, 2013). The goal of a CFA is to determine if the data fit a hypothesized measurement model, which is based on previous research and theory (Brown, 2015). A CFA does not determine causality, but, instead, is a correlational method. The model provides evidence relationships exist between variables (Kline, 2013). This type of procedure was chosen for this research study to determine if a relationship existed between the survey items and the 10 latent factors of the proposed theoretical model.

Job stressors. The three latent variables for job stressors included (a) workload manageability, (b) student behavior, and (c) working conditions.

Workload manageability. The level-1 measurement model was tested for workload manageability. The seven observable variables for workload manageability included (a) excessive workload, (b) role overload, (c) work/life balance, (d) lesson plans, (e) IEPs/FBAs/BIPs, (f) data collection, and (g) meetings.

Student behavior. The level-1 measurement model was tested for student behavior. The three observable variables for student behavior included (a) discipline

decisions, (b) working with students with emotional and behavior disorders, and (c) managing the classroom.

Working conditions. The level-1 measurement model was tested for working conditions. The four observable variables for working conditions included (a) teaching mixed ability groups, (b) materials, (c) time, and (d) administrative support.

Coping strategies. The two latent variables for coping strategies included (a) active coping strategies and (b) palliative coping strategies.

Active coping strategies. The level-1 measurement model was tested for active coping strategies. The three observable variables included (a) hobbies, (b) music, and (c) exercise.

Palliative coping strategies. The level-1 measurement model was tested for palliative coping strategies. The three observable variables for palliative coping strategies included (a) prescription medication, (b) eating or sleeping, and (c) counseling.

Administrative support. The five latent variables for administrative support included (a) accessibility, (b) respect and appreciation, (c) social and emotional support, (d) professional development, and (e) provisions.

Accessibility. The level-1 measurement model was tested for accessibility. The three observable variables included (a) available, (b) approachable, and (c) attentive.

Respect and appreciation. The level-1 measurement model was tested for respect and appreciation. The three observable variables included (a) sense of importance, (b) shows appreciation, and (c) clear job responsibilities.

Social and emotional support. The level-1 measurement model was tested for social and emotional support. The three observable variables included (a) problem solve, (b) dispute resolution, and (c) classroom management.

Professional development. The level-1 measurement model was tested for professional development. The three observable variables included (a) coping skills, (b) legal policies, and (c) instructional and behavioral techniques.

Provisions. The level-1 measurement model was tested for provisions. The three observable variables included (a) time, (b) resources, and (c) support/trust.

Confirmatory factor analysis. A CFA tests the hypothesis for a relationship between observable items and latent variables. Data for the CFA were analyzed with the use of two easily accessible online statistical programs: jamovi© and R package© with lavaan. A CFA was conducted in R package© to further determine the fit for each factor using the diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) method. The DWLS method was chosen to analyze the study data because this method makes no distributional assumptions about the observed variables in ordinal data (Li, 2016).

Items were coded in the survey so that a higher score (3-5) indicated a more positive experience, and a lower score (0-2) indicated a less positive experience. Before running the CFA to determine model fit, correlations were run on each of the 10 factors. Items correlated between 0.3 and 0.8 were kept, while items outside of that range were removed to improve model fit. Using only the acceptable correlated items, each CFA was run in R package©.

All hypotheses could not be tested at one time in the full model; therefore, the larger model was broken into three individual models and tested in stages. First, the job

stressors model was tested to investigate relationships among workload manageability, student behavior, and working conditions (Figure 2). Next, the coping strategies model was tested to investigate a relationship among active coping strategies and palliative coping strategies (Figure 3). Then, the administrative support model was tested to evaluate relationships between accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions (Figure 4). Finally, a combined model was tested with all predictors that were significant in prior models (Figure 1). Modification indices recommended ways to adjust the model parameters to make the model fit better. These indices were used to identify factors; however, changes were only made if they were theoretically sound. This allowed testing of complex relationships among many conditions without a large sample.

To evaluate model fit within each measurement model, numerous statistical indicators were considered. Each model was evaluated using a chi-square test (i.e., set alpha = 0.05), which evaluated the null hypothesis of perfect fit. The three goodness of fit indices used were (a) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The RMSEA and SRMR are similar in that they compare the current model fit to a model with perfect model fit (i.e., saturated model). This study used suggested benchmarks when interpreting model fit from estimates. Standard fit indices to assess model fit for RMSEA and SRMR included: RMSEA < 0.10 (Kline, 2016); SRMR < 0.08 (Brown, 2015; Kline 2016). CFI differs in that it compares the current model fit to the worst model fit. Standard fit indices to assess model fit for CFI included: CFI > .90 (Kline, 2016; Bentler, 1990).

Justification of Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was systematically chosen to increase reliability and validity of the study, precisely summarize the details of the study, and directly answer the research questions. Pilot testing the compiled and adapted survey increased the likelihood the administered survey would produce reliable and valid data. Reporting descriptive statistics including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency were chosen to organize and accurately categorize data. Descriptive statistics provide clear, concise summaries of data, can be displayed graphically, and present data in a meaningful way. The use of confirmatory factor analysis allowed the researcher to (a) investigate how the observable variables related to one another through factor loadings of survey items, and (b) evaluate the theory of the composition of the observable variables on latent factors (i.e., workload manageability, student behavior, working conditions, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, provisions, and professional development).

Chapter 4

Results

Results for Participant Demographics

Participants included 2019-20 special education teachers in the state of Oklahoma. Data were collected through a survey which was distributed to special education teachers serving students in public schools ranging from birth through adulthood. As displayed in Table 2, participant demographic data includes information regarding personal background, teacher career and experience, and current teaching position.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Data

Variable	*n*	%
Age		
20-29	62	7.7
30-39	117	14.5
40-49	209	26.0
50-59	255	31.7
60-69+	162	20.1
Missing	49	-
Ethnic Background		
White	689	85.8
Black	26	3.2
Hispanic	16	2.0
Asian	4	0.5
Native American	48	6.0
Other	20	2.5
Missing	51	-
Gender		
Male	69	8.6
Female	733	91.1
Binary/Other	3	0.3
Missing	49	-
Total Years in Field of Education		
0-5 years	154	19.2
6-10 years	124	15.4

11-15 years	99	12.3
16-20 years	130	16.2
21-25 years	121	15.1
26+ years	175	21.8
Missing	51	-
Years at Present Position		
1 year	175	22.0
2 years	104	13.0
3 years	95	11.9
4 years	65	8.2
5 years	56	7.0
6-10 years	144	18.1
11-14 years	48	6.0
15-19 years	45	5.6
20-25 years	36	4.5
26+ years	29	3.6
Missing	57	-
Intent to Remain in Field		
Leave as soon as I can	72	9.2
Until something better	167	21.3
Until early retirement	283	36.1
Until forced to retire	262	33.4
Missing	70	-
Teaching Assignment		
Inclusion	215	26.9
Co-Teacher	325	40.7
Resource Teacher	76	9.5
Self-Contained Teacher	58	7.3
Separate School	119	14.9
Homebound/Hospital	0	0.0
Other	5	0.6
Missing	56	-
School Type		
Public School	767	96.1
Public Alternative School	8	1.0
Charter	13	1.6
Separate Facility	3	0.4
Other	7	0.9
Missing	56	-
District Socioeconomic Level		
Low	539	67.7
Middle	246	30.9
High	11	1.4
Missing	58	-
Grade Level of Assignment		
Early Childhood (PreK-K)	45	5.7

Elementary (Grades 1-5)	336	42.2
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	198	24.9
High School (Grades 9-12)	215	27.0
Adult Education	2	0.3
Missing	58	-
Caseload Size		
0-5	10	1.3
6-10	120	15.0
11-15	107	13.4
16-20	145	18.1
21-25	174	21.8
26-30	114	14.3
31+	129	16.1
Missing	55	-
Paraprofessionals under Supervision		
0	300	37.5
1-5	474	59.4
6-10	23	3.0
11-15	2	0.2
Missing	55	-
Caseload Type		
Similar disabilities/needs	204	25.6
Varying disabilities/needs	593	74.4
Missing	57	-
Special Education Certification		
Traditional	586	73.0
Alternative	209	26.0
Emergency	6	0.7
Not Certified	2	0.2
Missing	51	-
Hold Special Education License		
Yes	783	97.6
No	19	2.4
Missing	52	-

Note. Responses were included from 854 participants in the study. Missing responses from the 854 participants is noted for each category.

Personal background. Personal background data of respondents which were collected included age, ethnic identification, and gender identification. Participant age distributions were reported as: 62 (7.7%) 20-29 years old; 117 (14.5%) 30-39 years old; 209 (26.0%) 40-49 years old; 255 (31.7%) 50-59 years old; 162 (20.1%) 60-69+ years

old. The age demographics indicate 77.6% of the respondents were over the age 40, while only 22.2% were under 39 years old. Ethnic identification was reported as: 689 (85.8%) White; 26 (3.2%) Black; 16 (2.0%) Hispanic; 4 (0.5%) Asian; 48 (6.0%) Native American; and 20 (2.5%) other ethnicity. Special education teacher gender identification was reported as: 69 (8.6%) male; 733 (91.1%) female; 2 (0.2%) binary; and 1 (0.1%) other.

Participant career and experience. Participant career and experience demographic information was also collected including total years of experience in the field of education, years in present position, teacher certification, license, and how long the participant planned to teach. Total years of experience in the field of education were reported in five-year increments: 154 (19.2%) 0-5 years; 124 (15.4%) 6-10 years; 99 (12.3%) 11-15 years; 130 (16.2%) 16-20 years; 121 (15.1%) 21-25 years; and 175 (21.8%) 26+ years. Years spent in the present special education position was reported as: 175 (22.0%) 1 year experience; 104 (13.0%) 2 years; 95 (11.9%) 3 years; 65 (8.2%) 4 years; 56 (7.0%) 5 years; 144 (18.1%) 6-10 years; 48 (6.0%) 11-14 years; 45 (5.6%) 15-19 years; 36 (4.5%) 20-25 years; and 29 (3.6%) 26+ years. Participants reported certification as: 586 (73.0%) traditional special education certification; followed by 209 (26.0%) alternative special education certification; 6 (0.7%) emergency certification; and 2 (0.2%) no certification. Participants reported current license or endorsement in teaching as: 783 (97.6%) yes and 19 (2.4%) no. Participants reported how long they planned to teach as: 72 (9.2%) definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as I can; 167 (21.3%) will probably continue until something better comes along; 283 (36.1%) until I am eligible for early retirement; and 262 (33.4%) until forced to retire at any age.

Participant current teaching position. Participant demographic information was also collected regarding current teaching position including public school type, teaching assignments, grade level, caseload size, and socioeconomic level of the students at their current position. Special education teachers reported working in a variety of public school formats including: 767 (96.1%) public schools; 8 (1.0%) public alternative school; 13 (1.6%) public charter school; 3 (0.4%) public separate facility for students with severe challenging behavior; or 7 (0.9%) other public school. Teaching assignments among respondents were reported as: 325 (40.7%) co-teacher; 215 (26.9%) inclusive classroom; 119 (14.9%) separate school; 76 (9.5%) resource; 58 (7.3%) self-contained; 5 (0.6%) other; and 0 (0.0%) homebound/hospital. Students in their caseloads were reported as: 204 (25.6%) similar disabilities/educational needs and 593 (74.4%) had varying disabilities/educational needs. The participants teach in a wide range of grade levels including: 45 (5.7%) early childhood; 336 (42.2%) elementary; 198 (24.9%) middle school; 215 (27.0%) high school; and 2 (0.3%) adult education. These participants managed a variety of caseload sizes including: 10 (1.3%) 0-5 students; 120 (15.0%) 6-10 students; 107 (13.4%) 11-15 students; 145 (18.1%) 16-20 students; 174 (21.8%) 21-25 students; 114 (14.3%) 25-30 students; and 129 (16.1%) 26+ students. The socioeconomic status of the students attending their school included: 539 (67.7%) low; 246 (30.9%) middle; and 11 (1.4%) high.

Participant demographics compared to statewide data. The demographics of the sample of special education teachers were compared to the population of all Oklahoma teachers. Statewide data were reported for age, experience, and qualification (Lazarate Alcala, 2018). Oklahoma statewide teacher age distributions in 2017-18

included: ≤ 31 years old (11.2%); 32-53 years old (23.7%); 54-59 years old (28.6%); 60-61 years old (24.2%); and ≥ 62 years old (12.3%). Statewide teacher experience distributions in 2017-18 included: 0 years (10.7%); 1-3 years (17.3%); 4-9 years (21.2%); 10-14 years (14.7%); and 15+ years (36.1%). Statewide teacher qualification distributions for certified and active teachers in 2017-18 included: standard certificate (77.3%); alternative certificates (11.6%); multiple certificate (5.0%); and provisional/emergency/other certificate (6.1%). The demographics of the sample of special education teachers were compared to the population of Oklahoma teachers for ethnic identification (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Oklahoma teacher distributions for ethnic identification included: Hispanic (1.1%); White (82.0%); Black (3.2%); Native American (8.6%); and two or more races (4.5%).

Results for Research Question 1

What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate the stress-related factors they experience as a direct result of their job? Various descriptive statistics regarding job stressors were considered. This included a close examination of the 0-5 Likert-type scale items in section one of the questionnaire. Items which were identified as the top five job stressors from participant ratings in descending order were: "excessive workload" (M = 3.77, SD = 1.30); "required paperwork" (M = 3.75, SD = 1.33); "data collection and documentation" (M = 3.69, SD = 1.29); "inadequate time to complete work" (M = 3.46, SD = 1.50); and "excessive caseload" (M = 3.44, SD = 1.50).

Items which were identified as the lowest five job stressors from participant ratings in ascending order were: "teaching similar ability groups" (M = 1.47, SD = 1.20); "supervising paraprofessionals" (M = 2.04, SD = 1.63); "lack of administrative support"

(*M* = 2.10, *SD* = 1.69); "role confusion" (*M* = 2.41, *SD* = 1.65); and "collaborating with general education teachers" (*M* = 2.45, *SD* = 1.40). Table 3 details respondents' answers to job stressors (items 1-23) in section one of the survey.

Table 3

Job Stress Factors

	Survey Scale			0	1	2	3	4	5
#	Survey Item	*Mean*	*SD*	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %
8	Excessive workload	3.77	1.30	(10) 1.2%	(52) 6.1%	(95) 11.2%	(137) 16.1%	(228) 26.8%	(330) 38.7%
11	Required paperwork	3.75	1.33	(9) 1.1%	(62) 7.3%	(97) 11.4%	(134) 15.7%	(214) 25.1%	(337) 39.5%
12	Data collection documentation	3.69	1.29	(10) 1.2%	(60) 7.1%	(87) 10.2%	(156) 18.4%	(248) 29.2%	(289) 34.0%
22	Inadequate time to complete work	3.46	1.50	(32) 3.8%	(79) 9.3%	(127) 14.9%	(132) 15.5%	(186) 21.9%	(295) 34.7%
9	Excessive caseload	3.44	1.50	(25) 2.9%	(101) 11.9%	(112) 13.1%	(140) 16.4%	(181) 21.2%	(293) 34.4%
3	Helping students with EBD	3.27	1.26	(13) 1.5%	(71) 8.3%	(143) 16.8%	(230) 27.0%	(239) 28.1%	(156) 18.3%
15	Role overload	3.20	1.53	(41) 4.8%	(102) 12.0%	(145) 17.0%	(158) 18.5%	(173) 20.3%	(233) 27.3%
4	Teaching mixed ability groups	3.20	1.51	(37) 4.3%	(111) 13.0%	(128) 15.0%	(169) 19.8%	(184) 21.6%	(223) 26.2%
19	Fear of failing	3.06	1.68	(67) 7.9%	(128) 15.0%	(133) 15.6%	(137) 16.1%	(135) 15.8%	(252) 29.6%
21	Lack of materials and resources	3.05	1.57	(48) 5.6%	(141) 16.5%	(118) 13.8%	(163) 19.1%	(179) 21.0%	(204) 23.9%
13	Meetings	3.02	1.39	(23) 2.7%	(121) 14.2%	(159) 18.7%	(214) 25.1%	(181) 21.2%	(154) 18.1%
17	Work/life balance	2.95	1.49	(47) 5.5%	(120) 14.1%	(166) 19.5%	(182) 21.4%	(172) 20.2%	(165) 19.4%
2	Student discipline	2.88	1.26	(20) 2.4%	(114) 13.4%	(187) 22.0%	(241) 28.3%	(204) 24.0%	(85) 10.0%
6	Assessments	2.81	1.37	(40) 4.7%	(118) 13.8%	(194) 22.8%	(217) 25.5%	(180) 21.1%	(103) 12.1%
1	Classroom management	2.71	1.33	(32) 3.8%	(153) 18.0%	(178) 20.9%	(237) 27.8%	(170) 20.0%	(82) 9.6%
10	Developing lesson plans	2.59	1.48	(72) 8.4%	(159) 18.6%	(167) 19.6%	(207) 24.2%	(143) 16.7%	(106) 12.4%
7	Communicating with parents	2.48	1.45	(70) 8.2%	(183) 21.6%	(169) 19.9%	(205) 24.1%	(138) 16.3%	(84) 9.9%
18	Others expectations	2.47	1.59	(103) 12.1%	(173) 20.3%	(167) 19.6%	(164) 19.2%	(124) 14.5%	(122) 14.3%

20	Collaborating with gen ed	2.45	1.40	(66) 7.7%	(184) 21.6%	(185) 21.7%	(211) 24.8%	(133) 15.6%	(73) 8.6%
16	Role confusion	2.41	1.65	(118) 13.8%	(184) 21.6%	(162) 19.0%	(147) 17.2%	(105) 12.3%	(137) 16.1%
23	Lack of admin support	2.10	1.69	(177) 20.8%	(215) 25.2%	(121) 14.2%	(132) 15.5%	(98) 11.5%	(110) 12.9%
14	Supervising paraprofessionals	2.04	1.63	(198) 23.3%	(167) 19.6%	(158) 18.6%	(148) 17.4%	(90) 10.6%	(89) 10.5%
5	Teaching similar ability groups	1.47	1.20	(189) 22.2%	(303) 35.6%	(202) 23.7%	(109) 12.8%	(27) 3.2%	(21) 2.5%

Note. Job Stress Factors sorted by *Mean*. All survey items included on this table Min = 0, Max = 5; *SD* = Standard Deviation.

What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate the physical and emotional manifestations of job-related stress? A variety of descriptive statistics identified the survey items which were manifestations of stress for special education teachers measured on the 0-5 Likert-type scale ratings. Items which were identified as the top five manifestations of stress from participant ratings in descending order included: "my work causes me to have stress" (*M* = 3.45, *SD* = 1.30); "I feel tired" (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.58); "I carry my school problems home with me" (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.48); "I feel frustrated" (*M* = 3.12, *SD* = 1.42); and "I feel tense" (*M* = 3.12, *SD* = 1.45).

Items which were identified as the lowest five manifestations of stress from participant ratings in ascending order included: "I miss a lot of time from work" (*M* = 0.53, *SD* = 1.07); "I have sought counseling or psychological help" (*M* = 1.09, *SD* = 1.65); "I find myself seeking medical care often" (*M* = 1.30, *SD* = 1.50); "I have high blood pressure" (*M* = 1.62, *SD* = 1.93); and "my stomach hurts when I think of returning to work after a weekend or hard day" (*M* = 1.66, *SD* = 1.67). Table 4 details respondents' answers to manifestations of stress (items 24-38) in section two of the survey.

Table 4

Manifestations of Stress

	Survey Scale			0	1	2	3	4	5
#	Survey Item	*Mean*	*SD*	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %
24	My work causes me to have stress	3.45	1.30	(15) 1.8%	(62) 7.3%	(116) 13.6%	(206) 24.2%	(235) 27.5%	(219) 25.7%
34	I feel tired	3.18	1.58	(57) 6.7%	(108) 12.7%	(103) 12.1%	(169) 19.9%	(186) 21.9%	(228) 26.8%
25	I carry school problems home	3.18	1.48	(30) 3.5%	(115) 13.5%	(136) 16.0%	(161) 18.9%	(208) 24.4%	(202) 23.7%
26	I feel frustrated	3.12	1.42	(30) 3.5%	(108) 12.7%	(143) 16.8%	(196) 23.0%	(204) 23.9%	(172) 20.2%
27	I feel tense	3.12	1.45	(40) 4.7%	(91) 10.7%	(158) 18.5%	(187) 21.9%	(193) 22.6%	(184) 21.6%
28	Work amount impacts quality	3.03	1.52	(44) 5.2%	(121) 14.3%	(146) 17.2%	(182) 21.4%	(165) 19.4%	(191) 22.5%
30	I do not sleep well	2.88	1.68	(93) 10.9%	(134) 15.7%	(105) 12.3%	(160) 18.8%	(167) 19.6%	(192) 22.6%
29	Work impacts my eating habits	2.81	1.71	(116) 13.6%	(121) 14.2%	(109) 12.8%	(151) 17.7%	(176) 20.6%	(180) 21.1%
31	I have difficulty focusing	2.05	1.51	(148) 17.4%	(206) 24.3%	(181) 21.2%	(159) 18.6%	(89) 10.4%	(69) 8.1%
33	I have frequent headaches	1.98	1.78	(250) 29.3%	(165) 19.4%	(118) 13.8%	(102) 12.0%	(105) 12.3%	(112) 13.1%
32	My stomach hurts	1.66	1.67	(299) 35.1%	(180) 21.1%	(114) 13.4%	(105) 12.3%	(79) 9.3%	(75) 8.8%
37	I have high blood pressure	1.62	1.93	(404) 47.5%	(116) 13.6%	(69) 8.1%	(59) 6.9%	(67) 7.9%	(136) 16.0%
35	I seek medical care often	1.30	1.50	(364) 42.9%	(192) 22.6%	(101) 11.9%	(104) 12.2%	(45) 5.3%	(43) 5.1%
36	I have sought psychological help	1.09	1.65	(518) 60.9%	(98) 11.5%	(56) 6.6%	(70) 8.2%	(39) 4.6%	(70) 8.2%
38	I miss a lot of time from work	0.53	1.07	(611) 72.1%	(135) 15.9%	(41) 4.8%	(29) 3.4%	(18) 2.1%	(14) 1.7%

Note. Manifestations of Stress sorted by *Mean.* All survey items included on this table Min = 0, Max = 5. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate the active and palliative coping strategies they employ to reduce job-related stress? Descriptive statistics identified survey items which special education teachers use to cope with job-related stress on a 0-5 Likert-type scale rating. Items which were identified as the top five

coping mechanisms from participant ratings in descending order included: "support from family, friends, and colleagues" (*M* = 3.41, *SD* = 1.37); "relaxing after school hours" (*M* = 2.88, *SD* = 1.43); "listening to music/dancing" (*M* = 2.85, *SD* = 1.50); "outdoor activities/gardening" (*M* = 2.72, *SD* = 1.49); and "eating" (*M* = 2.49, *SD* = 1.60).

Items which were identified as the lowest five coping strategies from participant ratings in ascending order included: "counseling" (*M* = 0.69, *SD* = 1.32); "tobacco products/alcohol" (*M* = 0.79, *SD* = 1.34); "writing" (*M* = 1.01, *SD* = 1.30); "yoga/meditation" (*M* = 1.09, *SD* = 1.38); and "involvement in a professional organization" (*M* = 1.23, *SD* = 1.40). Table 5 details respondents' answers to coping strategies (items 39-54) in section three of the survey.

Table 5

Coping Strategies

	Survey Scale			0	1	2	3	4	5
#	Survey Item	*Mean*	*SD*	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %
47	Support from family and friends	3.41	1.37	(27) 3.2%	(64) 7.5%	(112) 13.1%	(202) 23.7%	(223) 26.2%	(224) 26.3%
46	Relaxing after school hours	2.88	1.43	(55) 6.5%	(105) 12.4%	(158) 18.6%	(221) 26.0%	(188) 22.1%	(123) 14.5%
41	Listening to music/dancing	2.85	1.50	(61) 7.1%	(124) 14.5%	(159) 18.6%	(182) 21.3%	(196) 23.0%	(132) 15.5%
42	Outdoor activities/Gardening	2.72	1.49	(80) 9.4%	(114) 13.4%	(167) 19.6%	(207) 24.3%	(174) 20.4%	(111) 13.0%
52	Eating	2.49	1.60	(132) 15.5%	(115) 13.5%	(171) 20.0%	(191) 22.4%	(127) 14.9%	(117) 13.7%
45	Exercise	2.39	1.50	(93) 11.0%	(166) 19.6%	(210) 24.7%	(175) 20.6%	(105) 12.4%	(100) 11.8%
39	Reading for pleasure	2.18	1.61	(148) 17.4%	(208) 24.4%	(140) 16.4%	(146) 17.1%	(121) 14.2%	(90) 10.6%
50	Professional development	2.00	1.37	(135) 15.8%	(195) 22.9%	(229) 26.9%	(163) 19.1%	(92) 10.8%	(38) 4.5%
51	Prescription medication	1.95	2.11	(388) 45.5%	(76) 8.9%	(46) 5.4%	(74) 8.7%	(67) 7.9%	(201) 23.7%
49	Talking with my supervisor	1.71	1.43	(202) 23.7%	(234) 27.4%	(176) 20.6%	(126) 14.8%	(78) 9.1%	(37) 4.3%

53	Excessive sleeping	1.40	1.62	(375)	(158)	(102)	(88)	(70)	(56)
				44.2%	18.6%	12.0%	10.4%	8.2%	6.6%
48	Professional organization	1.23	1.40	(352)	(227)	(110)	(90)	(42)	(32)
				41.3%	26.6%	12.9%	10.6%	4.9%	3.8%
43	Yoga/Meditation	1.09	1.38	(415)	(184)	(107)	(71)	(49)	(24)
				48.8%	21.6%	12.6%	8.4%	5.8%	2.8%
40	Writing/Journaling	1.01	1.30	(419)	(208)	(104)	(61)	(42)	(19)
				49.1%	24.4%	12.2%	7.2%	4.9%	2.2%
54	Tobacco products/alcohol	0.79	1.34	(561)	(102)	(79)	(49)	(32)	(28)
				65.9%	12.0%	9.3%	5.8%	3.8%	3.3%
44	Counseling	0.69	1.32	(599)	(110)	(39)	(40)	(32)	(30)
				70.5%	12.9%	4.6%	4.7%	3.8%	3.5%

Note. Coping Strategies sorted by *Mean.* All survey items included on this table Min = 0, Max = 5. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate the extent of support they receive from their special education administrators? Descriptive statistics identified survey items in which special education teachers rated the extent of support they received from their administrator. On a Likert-type scale rating of 0-5, the top five survey items regarding extent of support from administrators identified by participant ratings in descending order included: "provides materials and resources needed to do my job" (*M* = 4.12, *SD* = 1.34); "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions" (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = 1.38); "supports me on reasonable decisions" (*M* = 3.94, *SD* = 1.37); "provides me with adequate planning time" (*M* = 3.90, *SD* = 1.48); and "helps me with classroom management problems" (*M* = 3.89, *SD* = 1.45).

Items which were identified by participant ratings in ascending order as the lowest five survey items regarding extent of support from administrators included: "shows confidence in decisions I make" (*M* = 2.48, *SD* = 1.74); "provides helpful information for improving personal coping skills" (*M* = 2.69, *SD* = 1.71); "provides mentors for new teachers" (*M* = 2.81, *SD* = 1.78); "helps me during parent conflicts when necessary" (*M* = 2.88, *SD* = 1.75); and "helps me solve problems and conflicts that occur" (*M* = 3.15, *SD*

= 1.63). Table 6 details respondents' answers to extent of administrative support (items 55-80) in section four of the survey.

Table 6

Extent of Administrative Support

	Survey Scale			0	1	2	3	4	5
#	Survey Item	*Mean*	*SD*	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %
66	Provides materials and resources	4.12	1.34	(31) 3.9%	(30) 3.8%	(33) 4.1%	(82) 10.3%	(168) 21.0%	(455) 56.9%
67	Trusts my judgment	3.95	1.38	(31) 3.9%	(35) 4.4%	(57) 7.2%	(89) 11.2%	(190) 23.8%	(395) 49.6%
60	Supports me on decisions	3.94	1.37	(28) 3.5%	(39) 4.9%	(54) 6.8%	(97) 12.2%	(192) 24.1%	(388) 48.6%
77	Adequate planning time	3.90	1.48	(34) 4.3%	(53) 6.7%	(56) 7.0%	(92) 11.6%	(144) 18.1%	(416) 52.3%
75	Classroom management	3.89	1.45	(31) 3.9%	(56) 7.1%	(45) 5.7%	(95) 12.0%	(177) 22.3%	(389) 49.1%
61	Shows genuine concern	3.81	1.54	(48) 6.0%	(44) 5.5%	(65) 8.1%	(94) 11.8%	(150) 18.8%	(399) 49.9%
55	Is easy to approach	3.79	1.37	(23) 2.9%	(51) 6.3%	(57) 7.1%	(151) 18.8%	(178) 22.1%	(344) 42.8%
57	Is honest and straightforward	3.70	1.50	(39) 4.9%	(58) 7.2%	(61) 7.6%	(126) 15.8%	(175) 21.9%	(341) 42.6%
81	Provides paraprofessionals	3.69	1.56	(54) 6.8%	(51) 6.4%	(62) 7.8%	(100) 12.6%	(179) 22.5%	(350) 44.0%
56	Gives me attention	3.67	1.43	(28) 3.5%	(52) 6.5%	(88) 11.0%	(135) 16.9%	(186) 23.3%	(311) 38.9%
73	Is available to help when needed	3.62	1.42	(33) 4.1%	(49) 6.1%	(79) 9.9%	(155) 19.4%	(192) 24.1%	(289) 36.3%
58	Gives me a sense of importance	3.61	1.58	(59) 7.4%	(54) 6.8%	(57) 7.1%	(130) 16.3%	(169) 21.1%	(331) 41.4%
62	Notices my effort	3.53	1.62	(56) 7.0%	(71) 8.9%	(70) 8.8%	(126) 15.8%	(145) 18.1%	(331) 41.4%
72	Allows me to attend conferences	3.51	1.45	(31) 3.9%	(61) 7.7%	(100) 12.6%	(150) 18.9%	(184) 23.0%	(270) 34.0%
71	Legal and admin policies	3.44	1.65	(61) 7.7%	(75) 9.4%	(82) 10.3%	(125) 15.7%	(144) 18.1%	(310) 38.9%
59	Allows input into decisions	3.31	1.60	(61) 7.6%	(78) 9.8%	(93) 11.6%	(139) 17.4%	(179) 22.4%	(250) 31.3%
80	Sped mentor teachers	3.29	1.78	(97) 12.2%	(74) 9.3%	(71) 9.0%	(108) 13.6%	(146) 18.4%	(297) 37.5%
63	Appreciates my work	3.20	1.54	(49) 6.2%	(85) 10.7%	(109) 13.7%	(185) 23.3%	(150) 18.9%	(216) 27.2%
74	Solves problems and conflicts	3.15	1.63	(69) 8.7%	(83) 10.5%	(111) 14.0%	(151) 19.0%	(154) 19.4%	(226) 28.5%

78	Participates in meetings	3.14	1.81	(102) 13.1%	(89) 11.4%	(75) 9.6%	(121) 15.5%	(119) 15.3%	(274) 35.1%
64	Clear guidelines regarding my job	3.13	1.57	(54) 6.8%	(101) 12.6%	(109) 13.6%	(159) 19.9%	(175) 21.9%	(201) 25.2%
65	Constructive and frequent feedback	2.99	1.64	(84) 10.5%	(93) 11.7%	(104) 13.0%	(167) 21.0%	(160) 20.1%	(189) 23.7%
70	Instructional methods	2.97	1.74	(107) 13.4%	(92) 11.5%	(92) 11.5%	(147) 18.4%	(146) 18.3%	(213) 26.7%
76	Helps me during parent conflicts	2.88	1.75	(106) 13.4%	(110) 13.9%	(95) 12.0%	(151) 19.0%	(127) 16.0%	(205) 25.8%
79	Provides mentors for new teachers	2.81	1.78	(112) 14.2%	(121) 15.3%	(100) 12.7%	(129) 16.3%	(128) 16.2%	(200) 25.3%
69	Provides info on coping skills	2.69	1.71	(129) 16.2%	(96) 12.1%	(111) 14.0%	(165) 20.8%	(145) 18.2%	(149) 18.7%
68	Shows confidence in my decisions	2.48	1.74	(147) 18.5%	(127) 16.0%	(110) 13.9%	(158) 19.9%	(111) 14.0%	(141) 17.8%

Note. Extent of Administrative Support sorted by *Mean.* All survey items included on this table Min = 0, Max = 5. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

What is the frequency in which special education teachers rate the perceived level of importance of administrative support? Special education teachers also identified the importance of each type of administrative support on the survey. On a Likert-type scale rating of 0-5, the top five survey items regarding importance of support from administrators identified by participant ratings in descending order included: "provides materials and resources needed to do my job" (*M* = 4.67, *SD* = 0.68); "shows genuine concern for my program and students" (*M* = 4.66, *SD* = 0.75); "is honest and straightforward with staff" (*M* = 4.63, *SD* = 0.78); "supports me on reasonable decisions" (*M* = 4.60, *SD* = 0.74); and "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions" (*M* = 4.57, *SD* = 0.80).

Items which were identified by participant ratings in ascending order as the lowest five survey items regarding importance of support from administrators included: "shows confidence in the decisions I make" (*M* = 3.30, *SD* = 1.55); "provides helpful information for improving personal coping skills" (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 1.34); "provides mentors for new

teachers" (*M* = 3.90, *SD* = 1.33); "helps me solve problems and conflicts that occur" (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 1.32); and "provides information on up-to-date instructional and behavioral techniques" (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 1.32). Table 7 details respondents' answers to importance of administrative support (items 55-80) in section four of the survey.

Table 7

Importance of Administrative Support

	Survey Scale			0	1	2	3	4	5
#	Survey Item	*Mean*	*SD*	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %	(n) and %
93	Provides materials and resources	4.67	0.68	(1) 0.1%	(2) 0.3%	(11) 1.4%	(41) 5.2%	(135) 17.1%	(600) 75.9%
88	Shows genuine concern	4.66	0.75	(3) 0.4%	(6) 0.8%	(13) 1.6%	(31) 3.9%	(126) 15.9%	(613) 77.4%
84	Is honest and straightforward	4.63	0.78	(3) 0.4%	(8) 1.0%	(4) 0.5%	(55) 7.0%	(119) 15.1%	(598) 76.0%
87	Supports me on decisions	4.60	0.74	(1) 0.1%	(3) 0.4%	(16) 2.0%	(44) 5.6%	(159) 20.3%	(562) 71.6%
94	Trusts my judgment	4.57	0.80	(2) 0.3%	(4) 0.5%	(20) 2.6%	(50) 6.4%	(149) 19.0%	(558) 71.3%
82	Is easy to approach	4.55	0.87	(5) 0.6%	(8) 1.0%	(16) 2.0%	(56) 7.0%	(142) 17.9%	(568) 71.4%
99	Allows me to attend conferences	4.47	0.83	(3) 0.4%	(5) 0.6%	(10) 1.3%	(81) 10.3%	(192) 24.4%	(496) 63.0%
102	Classroom management	4.46	0.97	(8) 1.0%	(7) 0.9%	(27) 3.5%	(64) 8.2%	(143) 18.3%	(533) 68.2%
86	Allows input into decisions	4.46	0.91	(7) 0.9%	(7) 0.9%	(18) 2.3%	(63) 8.0%	(184) 23.3%	(511) 64.7%
108	Provides paraprofessionals	4.44	0.97	(5) 0.6%	(11) 1.4%	(31) 3.9%	(62) 7.8%	(157) 19.9%	(524) 66.3%
85	Gives me a sense of importance	4.41	0.97	(5) 0.6%	(11) 1.4%	(26) 3.3%	(79) 9.9%	(161) 20.3%	(512) 64.5%
83	Gives me attention	4.39	0.98	(6) 0.8%	(13) 1.6%	(21) 2.7%	(82) 10.4%	(171) 21.6%	(497) 62.9%
100	Is available to help when needed	4.39	0.92	(5) 0.6%	(6) 0.8%	(23) 2.9%	(86) 10.9%	(192) 24.4%	(476) 60.4%
104	Adequate planning time	4.37	1.12	(13) 1.6%	(19) 2.4%	(32) 4.1%	(66) 8.4%	(131) 16.6%	(528) 66.9%
103	Helps me during parent conflicts	4.36	1.06	(11) 1.4%	(13) 1.7%	(32) 4.1%	(65) 8.3%	(171) 21.9%	(490) 62.7%
89	Notices my effort	4.32	1.06	(6) 0.8%	(19) 2.4%	(31) 3.9%	(87) 11.0%	(160) 20.3%	(486) 61.6%
90	Appreciates my work	4.28	1.04	(6) 0.8%	(15) 1.9%	(35) 4.4%	(93) 11.8%	(186) 23.6%	(454) 57.5%

92	Constructive and frequent feedback	4.28	1.04	(7) 0.9%	(15) 1.9%	(34) 4.3%	(86) 10.9%	(198) 25.1%	(449) 56.9%
107	Sped mentor teachers	4.26	1.28	(31) 4.0%	(16) 2.0%	(35) 4.5%	(55) 7.0%	(144) 18.4%	(501) 64.1%
105	Participates in meetings	4.14	1.26	(19) 2.4%	(24) 3.1%	(46) 5.9%	(102) 13.1%	(138) 17.8%	(448) 57.7%
91	Clear guidelines regarding my job	4.07	1.09	(5) 0.6%	(20) 2.5%	(43) 5.4%	(147) 18.8%	(207) 26.2%	(366) 46.4%
98	Legal and admin policies	3.97	1.26	(12) 1.5%	(31) 3.9%	(64) 8.1%	(137) 17.3%	(160) 20.3%	(386) 48.9%
97	Instructional methods	3.96	1.32	(19) 2.4%	(39) 5.0%	(53) 6.7%	(119) 15.1%	(171) 21.7%	(386) 49.0%
101	Solves problems and conflicts	3.96	1.32	(20) 2.5%	(34) 4.3%	(62) 7.9%	(111) 14.1%	(174) 22.1%	(386) 49.0%
106	Provides mentors for new teachers	3.90	1.33	(21) 2.7%	(36) 4.6%	(62) 7.9%	(124) 15.8%	(179) 22.9%	(361) 46.1%
96	Provides info on coping skills	3.71	1.34	(20) 2.5%	(39) 4.9%	(90) 11.4%	(154) 19.5%	(186) 23.6%	(299) 37.9%
95	Shows confidence in my decisions	3.30	1.55	(52) 6.6%	(64) 8.1%	(113) 14.4%	(159) 20.2%	(160) 20.4%	(238) 30.3%

Note. Importance of Administrative Support sorted by *Mean.* All survey items included on this table Min = 0, Max = 5. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

Overall stress rating. Participants in the survey were also asked to rate the overall stress level they experience as a special education teacher on a Likert-type scale of 0-9. The participant ratings were ($M = 6.42$, $SD = 1.91$).

Results for Research Question 2

Factor loadings. The factor loadings for the measurement model include standard latent variable, standard error, and *p*-value. Factor loadings are a data reduction method designed to explain the correlations between observed variables loading on a latent construct. Items with the largest estimate on factor loading are the strongest predictors of the latent construct, while items with the lowest estimate on factor loading are less strong predictors.

Workload manageability. The strongest predictors for workload manageability were "excessive workload" (0.831) and "required paperwork" (0.794). The lowest item in the set was "developing lesson plans" (0.669).

Student behavior. The strongest predictors for student behavior were "student discipline" (0.875) and "classroom management" (0.854). The lowest item in the set was "helping students with emotional and behavioral disorders" (0.789).

Working conditions. The strongest predictors for working conditions were "inadequate time to complete work" (0.803) and "lack necessary materials and resources" (0.654). The lowest item in the set was "teaching mixed ability groups" (0.574).

Active coping strategies. The strongest predictors for active coping strategies were "outdoor activities/gardening" (0.730) and "exercise" (0.632). The lowest item in the set was "yoga/meditation" (0.432).

Palliative coping strategies. The strongest predictors for palliative coping strategies were "eating" (0.719) and "prescription medication" (0.661). The lowest item in the set was "excessive sleeping" (0.636).

Accessibility. The strongest predictors for accessibility were "is available to help when needed" (0.922) and "is easy to approach" (0.844). The lowest item in the set was "participates in eligibility/IEP meetings and parent conferences" (0.700).

Respect and appreciation. The strongest predictors for respect and appreciation were "gives me a sense of importance that I make a difference" (0.904) and "gives clear guidelines regarding my job responsibilities" (0.831). The lowest item in the set was "shows appreciation for my work" (0.815).

Social and emotional support. The strongest predictors for social and emotional support were "helps me solve problems and conflicts when they occur" (0.878) and "helps me with classroom management problems" (0.871). The lowest item in the set was "Helps me during parent conflicts when necessary" (0.688).

Provisions. The strongest predictors provisions were "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions" (0.930) and "supports me on reasonable decisions" (0.904). The lowest item in the set was "provides me with adequate planning time" (0.671).

Professional development. The strongest predictors for professional development were "provides helpful information for improving personal coping skills" (0.861) and "provides information on up-to-date instructional and behavioral techniques" (0.823). The lowest item in the set was "provides knowledge on current legal policies and administrative regulations" (0.704).

The strength of the factor loadings were reported in Table 8.

Table 8

Factor Loadings

Latent Variable	Survey Item	Std. lv	Std. Error	P-Value
Workload Manageability				
	Excessive workload	0.831	-	-
	Required paperwork	0.794	0.025	0.000
	Data and documentation	0.766	0.027	0.000
	Role overload	0.748	0.029	0.000
	Meetings	0.704	0.029	0.000
	Work/Life balance	0.673	0.031	0.000
	Developing lesson plans	0.669	0.030	0.000
Student Behavior				
	Student discipline	0.875	0.032	0.000
	Classroom management	0.854	-	-
	Students with EBD	0.789	0.028	0.000
Working Conditions				
	Inadequate time	0.803	0.076	0.000
	Materials and resources	0.654	0.067	0.000

	Mixed ability groups	0.574	-	-
Active Coping Strategies				
	Outdoor activities	0.730	0.206	0.000
	Exercise	0.632	0.157	0.000
	Music/dancing	0.482	-	-
	Yoga/meditation	0.423	0.130	0.000
Palliative Coping Strategies				
	Eating	0.719	0.120	0.000
	Prescription medication	0.661	0.100	0.000
	Counseling	0.657	-	-
	Excessive sleeping	0.636	0.105	0.000
Accessibility				
	Available to help	0.922	0.016	0.000
	Easy to approach	0.844	-	-
	Honest and straightforward	0.832	0.018	0.000
	Undivided attention	0.792	0.018	0.000
	Participates in meetings	0.700	0.025	0.000
Respect and Appreciation				
	Sense of importance	0.904	-	-
	Clear job responsibilities	0.831	0.015	0.000
	Shows appreciation	0.815	0.016	0.000
Social/Emotional Support				
	Solve problems	0.878	-	-
	Classroom management	0.871	0.017	0.000
	Parent conflicts	0.688	0.025	0.000
Provisions				
	Trusts judgment	0.930	0.012	0.000
	Reasonable decisions	0.904	0.012	0.000
	Materials and resources	0.903	-	-
	Workshops/Conferences	0.884	0.014	0.000
	Mentors	0.743	0.022	0.000
	Adequate planning time	0.671	0.026	0.000
Professional Development				
	Coping strategies	0.861	-	-
	Instruction and behavior	0.823	0.025	0.000
	Legal and admin policies	0.704	0.030	0.000

Note. Std. lv = Standardized latent variable. Std. Error = Standard Error.

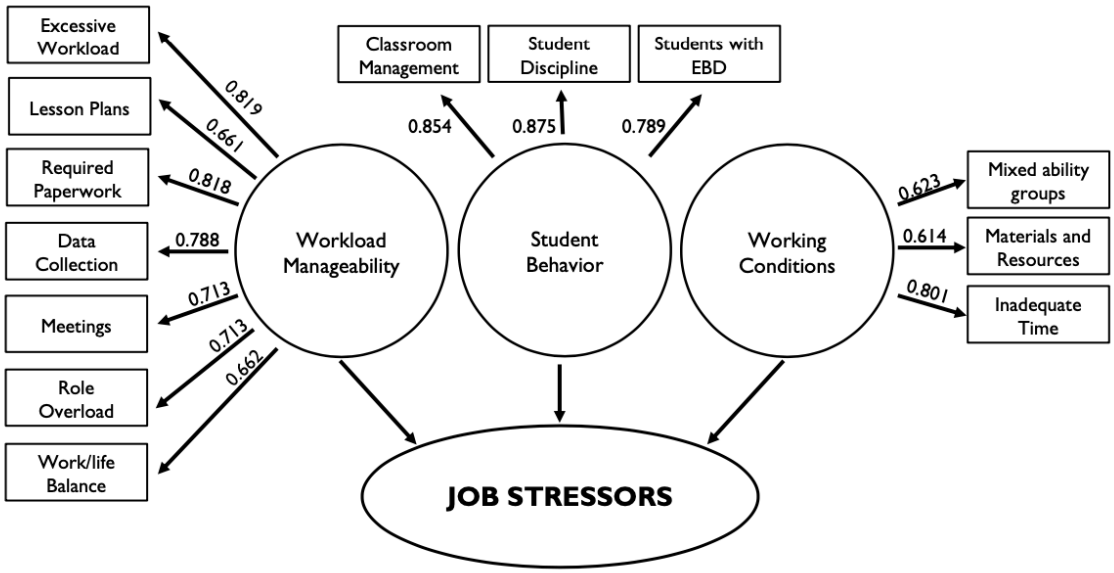
Confirmatory factor analysis. The survey included items measuring job stressors, coping strategies, and administrative support. Correlation tests were run in jamovi© to evaluate the association between the observable variables. Examining the correlation matrices for bivariate correlations helped determine which items were either

too highly or too poorly correlated prior to running the CFA. This study sought to retain as many items as possible which were correlated between 0.3 and 0.8 for the best fit. An initial CFA was conducted to determine fit for the individual models. The lowest item was dropped from each latent variable based on standardized factor loading. A subsequent CFA was conducted on the full 10-factor model. Items were removed or remapped based on the information provided in the modification indices. This study used suggested benchmarks when interpreting model fit from estimates. Standard fit indices to assess model fit included: RMSEA < 0.10 (Kline, 2016); SRMR < 0.08 (Brown, 2015; Kline 2016); and CFI > .90 (Kline, 2016; Bentler, 1990).

Job stressors. Twenty-three items measured job stressors (Figure 5). Fourteen items measured workload manageability, three items measured student behavior, and six items measured working conditions. One item was removed for low correlation including "supervising paraprofessionals" (0.252). Seven additional items were dropped based on initial low factor loadings including "teaching similar ability groups," "assessments," "communicating with parents," "role confusion," "others expecting me to perform tasks beyond my competency," "fear of failing," and "collaborating with general education teachers." After these items were dropped, the remaining items were tested with a resulting model fit: CFI (0.981), RMSEA (0.102), and SRMR (0.072). According to the suggested benchmarks used for this study, the fit for the job stressors model indicated CFI fit (>.90 acceptable), RMSEA fit (<.10 inadequate), and SRMR (<.08 acceptable).

Figure 5

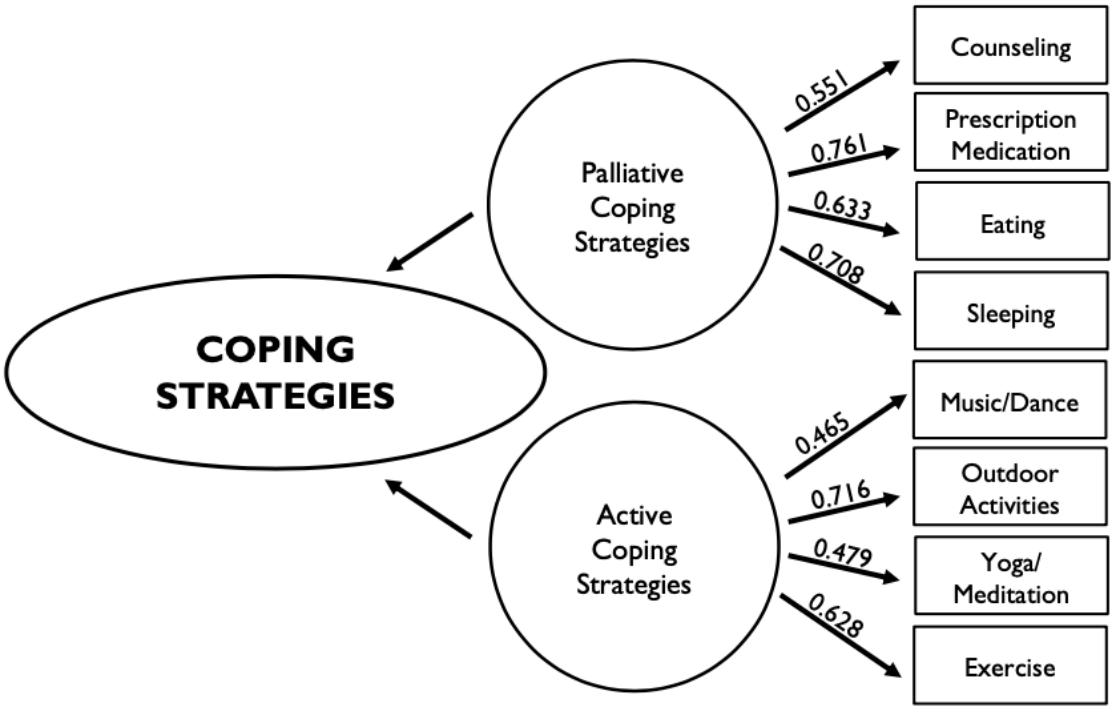
Job Stressors Model with Path Coefficients



Coping strategies. Sixteen items measured coping strategies (Figure 6). Eleven items measured active coping strategies and five items measured palliative coping strategies. Four items were removed for low correlations including "relaxing after school hours" (0.234), "involvement in a professional organization" (0.231), "talking with my supervisor" (0.269), and "tobacco products/alcohol" (0.183). Four additional items were dropped based on initial low factor loadings including "reading for pleasure," "writing/journaling," support from family, friends, and colleagues," and "professional development." After these items were dropped, the remaining items were tested with a resulting model fit: CFI (0.923), RMSEA (0.097), and SRMR (0.085). According to the suggested benchmarks used for this study, the fit for the coping strategies model indicated: CFI fit (>.90 acceptable), RMSEA fit (<.10 acceptable), and SRMR fit (<.08 inadequate).

Figure 6

Coping Strategies Model with Path Coefficients

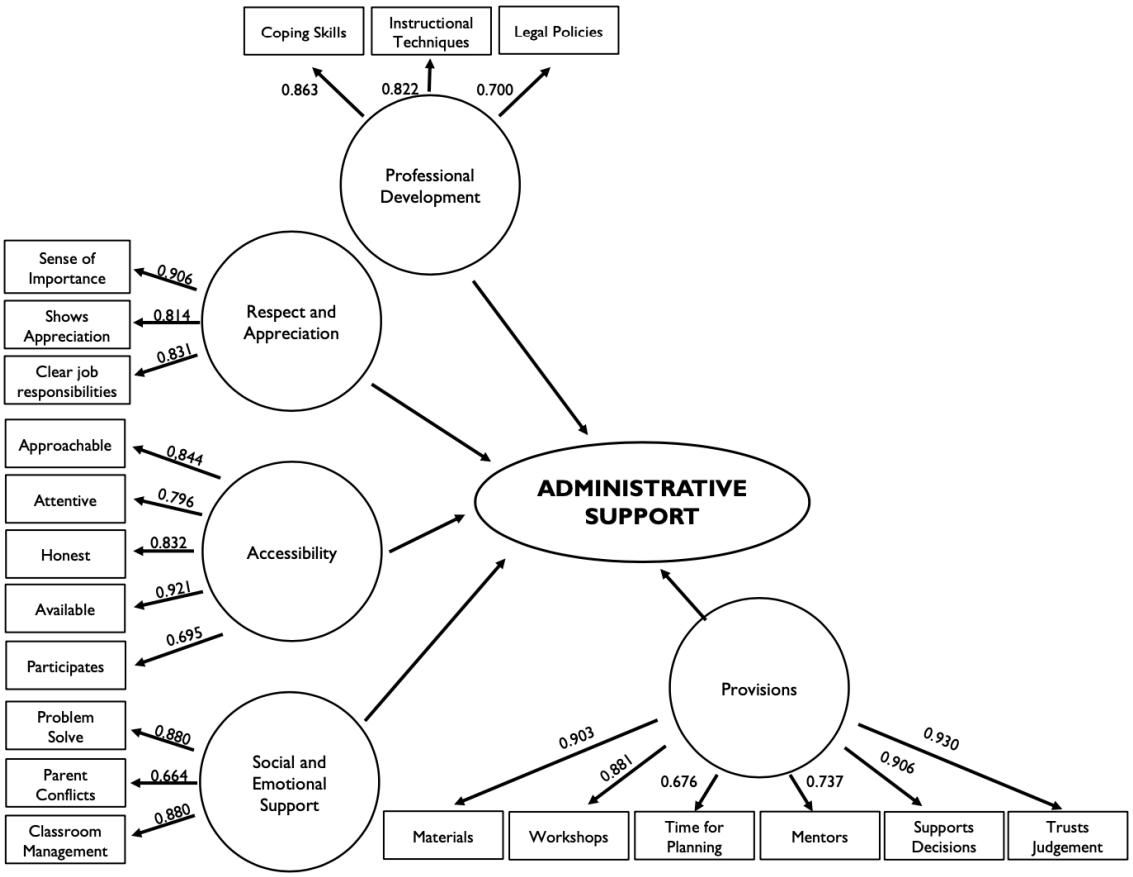


Administrative support. Twenty-seven items measure administrative support (Figure 7). Five items measured accessibility, three items measured social and emotional support, three items measured professional development, six items measured respect and appreciation, and ten items measured provisions. One item was removed for high correlation including "notices my effort" (0.834). Six additional items were dropped based on initial low factor loadings including "allows input into decisions that affect me," "shows genuine concern for my program and students," "offers constructive and frequent feedback," "shows confidence in the decisions I make," provides opportunities to learn from other special education teachers," and "provides paraprofessionals, as necessary." After these items were dropped, the remaining items were tested with a resulting model fit: CFI (0.995), RMSEA (0.079), and SRMR (0.050). According to the suggested

benchmarks used for this study, the fit for the administrative support model indicated: CFI fit (>.90 acceptable), RMSEA fit (<.10 acceptable), and SRMR (<.08 acceptable).

Figure 7

Administrative Support Model with Path Coefficients

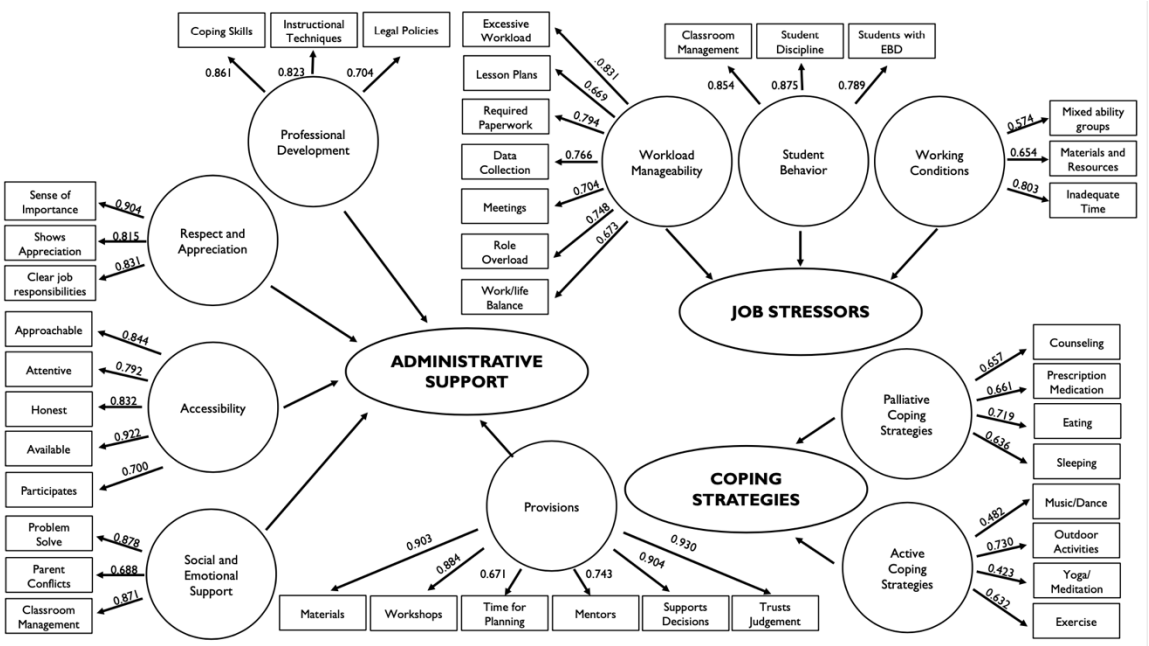


10-factor model. A 10-factor model CFA was conducted in R package© to further determine fit for the full model using DWLS method (Figure 8). The CFA indicated a non-positive definite result. A non-positive definite result occurs when items are too highly correlated producing multicollinearity. The Modification Indices (MI) indicated some items should be removed or remapped. Survey items which were moved to load on a different factor for better fit included (a) "supports me on reasonable decisions," and (b) "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions." The six

additional items which proved problematic for the fit included (a) “excessive caseload,” (b) “lack of administrative support,” (c) “allows input into decisions that affect me,” (d) “shows genuine concern for my program and students,” (e) “shows confidence in the decisions I make,” and (f) “provides paraprofessionals, when necessary.” These items were removed from the model. The resulting fit for the 10-factor model CFA included: CFI (0.991), RMSEA (0.055), and SRMR (0.053). According to the suggested benchmarks used for this study, the fit for the 10-factor model indicated: CFI fit (>.90 acceptable), RMSEA fit (<.08 acceptable), and SRMR (<.08 acceptable).

Figure 8

10-Factor Model with Path Coefficients



Chapter 5

Discussion

Participant Demographics

The participant personal background data would indicate the majority of special education teachers who participated in the study identified as White (85.7%), female (90.9%), and over the age 40 (77.6%). The data indicated a fairly even spread of total years in the field of education with the highest percentage (21.8%) for teachers with 26+ years of experience followed by (19.2%) of teachers who had 0-5 years of experience. Most teachers (61.9%) have spent between 1-5 years in their present position. The majority of participants possessed a current teaching certificate (99.6%), license (97.6%), and expressed an intent to teach until retirement age or beyond (69.5%).

The survey sample was composed of special education teachers in traditional public schools (96.1%) with various teaching assignments, the highest percentage of which were co-teachers (40.7%). Participants' responses were distributed across grade levels; however, most responses were from teachers in early childhood/elementary school (47.8%). The majority of respondents carried a caseload of greater than 21 students (52.1%), of varying disabilities/educational needs (74.4%), and worked in schools where the average socioeconomic level was low (67.7%).

When comparing the survey participant demographics to the overall Oklahoma teacher demographics, teacher ages were reported from the study as over the age 50 (51.7%) as compared to from the state of Oklahoma teachers over the age 53 (65.1%). Special education teachers in the study who held a standard or alternative certificate (98.9%) were compared to (93.9%) of overall Oklahoma teachers. Special education

teacher ethnic identifications from the study were reported as White (85.7%), Native American (6%), and Black (3.2%); as compared to White (82%), Native American (8.6%), and Black (3.2%) for the overall Oklahoma teachers. The sample of special education teachers from the study were similar to those of the state of Oklahoma.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Special education teachers will rate situational stressors they experience at work. It was hypothesized the findings from the current study would align with research literature which identified job-related stressors associated with workload manageability, working conditions, and student behavior (Bettini et al., 2017c; Cancio et al., 2013; Kaff, 2004).

The hypothesis was verified regarding job stressors. Items which were rated higher on the scale ($3.06 < M < 3.77$) indicated special education teachers had elevated stress levels associated with workload manageability (i.e., "excessive workload," "data collection and documentation," and "required paperwork"), working conditions (i.e., "inadequate time"), and student behavior (i.e., "helping students with emotional and behavioral disorders"). A close examination of the results indicated special education teachers become stressed when their workloads and/or caseloads are too large, they have excessive paperwork, data documentation, and/or meetings. These tasks are closely associated with the high stress rating of inadequate time to complete job-related tasks. Student behavior when working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders was also indicated in the top job stressors.

Items which were rated lower on the scale ($1.47 < M < 2.95$) were largely tasks associated with instruction, such as "teaching similar ability groups," "planning," and

"collaboration with general education teachers." This would indicate special education teachers feel more confident and less stress in teaching-related tasks.

Hypothesis 2. Special education teachers will identify how job-related stress manifests itself in them personally. It was hypothesized the findings from the current study would align with research literature which identifies physical and/or emotional manifestations of stress (Hakanen et al., 2006; Matheny et al., 2000).

The hypothesis was verified regarding manifestations of stress. Items which were rated higher on the scale ($2.81 < M < 3.45$) indicated special education teachers reported a higher incidence of how they experienced stress. The highest manifestations of stress included a combination of physical and emotional manifestations. Emotional manifestations included "general job-related stress," "frustration," "tension", and "carrying school problems home." Physical manifestations included "being tired," "having difficulty sleeping," and "experiencing disruptions to their eating habits (either too little or too much)."

Items which were rated lower on the scale ($1.09 < M < 2.05$) indicated special education teachers reported a lower incidence of how they experienced stress. Almost all manifestations of stress that were reported with lower incidence were physical manifestations. Special education teachers reported a low incidence of "headaches," "stomachaches," "high blood pressure," and "seeking medical care for stress." They also reported a low incidence of "seeking counseling or psychological help."

One item was an outlier in the manifestations of stress section of the survey. Special education teachers reported "missing a lot of time from work due to stress" as the lowest rated item at $M = 0.53$. This would indicate stress levels do not interfere with a

special education teacher's attendance to work. This may also suggest it is more stressful for special education teachers to stay home than to come to work. Making lesson plans for a substitute can be extremely difficult when working in special education classrooms, especially when it requires behavior supports.

Hypothesis 3. Coping strategies would fall into two categories: active and palliative (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Active strategies are used to eliminate stress before it starts (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Palliative strategies are used primarily to avoid the effects of stress and have been shown to be ineffective in stress reduction (Austin et al., 2005; Cancio et al., 2018; Carton & Fruchart, 2014). It was hypothesized special education teachers often implement palliative coping strategies due to highly stressful situations they encounter regularly in their jobs.

The hypothesis was not verified regarding coping strategies. Items which were rated higher on the scale ($2.00 < M < 3.41$) indicated special education teachers reported a higher incidence of using coping strategies. The coping strategy they used most often was an active coping strategy, "support from family, friends, and colleagues." This was also the highest rated coping strategy in the study by Cancio et al. (2018). The second most used coping strategy was "relaxing after school hours," which Austin and colleagues (2005) recommend as an effective active coping strategy. Of the top rated coping strategies, all except one, "eating," were active coping strategies, which was in contrast to the hypothesis. Special education teacher survey participants indicated they used active coping strategies more often than palliative coping strategies.

Items which were rated lower on the scale ($0.69 < M < 1.95$) indicated special education teachers reported a lower incidence of engaging in these types of coping

strategies. Many of the lower rated coping strategies were palliative including use of "prescription medication," "excessive sleeping," and "the use of tobacco and alcohol." Lesser used active coping strategies included "seeking professional development," "talking with supervisor," "engaging in professional organizations," "participating in yoga/meditation," and "writing". The results from this survey were in contrast with research literature suggesting teachers with higher stress levels engaged in palliative coping strategies more often than active coping strategies (Austin et al., 2005).

Hypothesis 4. Special education teachers will report the extent of support they receive from their administrator and how important each type of support is to their job. Administrators play an active role in reducing special education teacher stress and promoting teacher retention (Albrecht et al., 2009; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). In similar studies, support from administrators has been found to decrease stress and attrition, and offset the negative effects of stress caused by unmanageable workloads (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; Cancio et al., 2013). It was hypothesized special education teachers would report a difference in their perceived level of support and the importance of support they received from their administrators.

The hypothesis was verified regarding the difference in perceived level of administrative support versus importance of support. When comparing the top 10 items of both lists, the number one item for both extent and importance was provides materials and resources to do my job. Overall, eight items were present in the top 10 list of each category with order slightly altered. While this may seem as though there were no differences in perceived level of administrative support and importance of administrative support, the marked difference was in the means. The range of means including 27 survey

items for extent of support was ($2.48 < M < 4.12$), as compared to the range of means for importance of support was ($3.30 < M < 4.67$). Only the bottom six items for importance of support dropped below a $M < 4.00$ on a Likert-type scale of 0-5. Respondents reported all items in this section were important areas for administrators to support special education teachers.

Hypothesis 5. Survey items were selected from existing surveys, current research literature, and the author's experience as a special education professional. It was hypothesized that survey items measured workload manageability, student behavior, working conditions, active coping strategies, palliative coping strategies, accessibility, respect and appreciation, social and emotional support, professional development, and provisions.

The hypothesis was verified regarding the alignment of survey items to the latent variables. A CFA was conducted on the individual models (i.e., job stressors, coping strategies, and administrative support) and the 10-factor model to determine if survey items measured the latent constructs. Fit indices (i.e., CFI, RMSEA, SRMR) indicated appropriate fit on all models.

Implications for Practice

Special education teachers. Data from the study provides implications for practice to special education teachers who struggle with negative effects of job-related stress. Special education teachers need tools to manage the intensity of their stressful events (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999). First, special education teachers would benefit from professional development targeted at understanding the difference between active and palliative coping strategies for stress reduction. Carton and Fruchart (2014)

indicated active strategies reduce stress more effectively than palliative strategies. Study participants indicated the top active coping strategies they used for reducing stress included "support from family, friends, and colleagues," "relaxing after school hours," "listening to music/dancing," and "outdoor activities/gardening." I speculate based on these findings that when special education teachers actively pursue relaxing activities and hobbies, it reduces job-related stress. Other commonly used active coping strategies include regular exercise, yoga, meditation, and other relaxation activities. Another effective proactive strategy includes determining the source of job-related stress in order to eliminate it. For example, special education teachers should consider making changes within their control such as adjusting their daily schedule, allotting designated time for paperwork, and/or delegating responsibilities to paraprofessionals. They should also regularly talk with their supervisor in order to advocate for necessary changes, seek targeted professional development, and join professional organizations or groups.

Special education teachers would also be encouraged to self-monitor their manifestations of stress because it is necessary to have an awareness of when they are beginning to engage in palliative coping skills to relieve the pain of stress (Carton & Fruchart, 2014). Stress has a cumulative effect which special education teachers often don't recognize until its negative impact has exceeded their available resources or abilities (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Study participants indicated the most commonly used palliative coping strategies were "eating," "prescription medication," and "sleeping." While palliative coping strategies temporarily relieve the pain, they do not address or remedy the source of stress. I speculate that when special education teachers engage in palliative coping strategies, they only find short-term results. Chan and Hui

(1996) indicate teachers who engage in palliative coping strategies are more prone to burnout.

Administrators. Data from the study provides implications for practice to administrators who supervise special education teachers. These implications are targeted means in which administrators can practically reduce the negative effects of job-related stress for special education teachers. Study participants indicated the job-related stressors which cause the most stress included "excessive workload," "required paperwork," "data collection and documentation," "inadequate time to plan," and "excessive caseload." These job-stressors are all related to workload manageability and working conditions in which administrators have considerable control to improve. I speculate based on these findings, that job stress would be decreased if special education teachers' workload would decrease.

Administrators can improve the workload manageability by increasing the special education staff with highly qualified teachers. While this is an expensive solution, the workload of special education teachers would decrease if their caseloads were smaller and more homogenous. Study participants indicated diverse caseloads by grade or disability/needs increased stress. Retention of special education teachers would be improved by increasing the special education staff. Other ways to decrease workload is to provide adequate support staff. Paraprofessionals are essential to supporting special education teachers and maintaining well-staffed special education classrooms. These professionals are certified and trained to support teachers in instructional duties, behavior management, and general classroom assistance. A lesser expensive option would be for administrators to extend special considerations for special education teachers when

assigning school-wide duties, committees, or other service activities. Freeing up additional time for special education teachers would increase the amount of time they had available during the school day to complete tasks such as paperwork, data collection and documentation, correspondence with parents, or data analysis.

Study participants indicated all of the items included on the survey were important ways for administrators to support them, with the lowest observed mean at 3.30 on a Likert-type scale of 0-5. Items rated as the most important ways for administrators to provide support included "provides materials and resources needed to do my job," "shows genuine concern for my program and students," "is honest and straightforward with staff," and "trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions." I speculate that highly qualified teachers feel capable of delivering effective instruction and managing their jobs if they do not lack necessary materials. Once they have adequate resources, it is most important to have supportive administrators who show genuine care and concern. Special education teachers feel most supported when their administrators are honest, direct, and have confidence in their ability to make appropriate decisions. Other implications for administrators include seeking out special education teachers to actively listen to the sources of their stress and suggesting solutions. Administrators should provide professional development opportunities related to the issues which are causing stress for their teachers. Funds should also be allotted for special education teachers to join professional organizations to receive access to the most recent research and professional support.

Limitations

Generalization. Results should be interpreted with caution as the generalizability of the survey was limited since the survey instrument was not tested for test-retest reliability prior to distribution and subsequent data collection. If this survey were to be used in the future, test-retest reliability could be explored by a new distribution to participants who are demographically similar. Generalizability was also limited due to the limited scope of participants of the study. Respondents were a targeted population of Oklahoma special education teachers at all grade levels and working with all disability populations. Future replications would need to be expanded to the same population to strengthen reliability and validity and generalize the results.

The process of convenience sampling also limited the generalizability of the study. Since the survey invitation was explicitly limited to special education teachers in Oklahoma, it weakens the sample's national representation. Future distributions of the study should include a stratified random sample of special education teachers at all grade levels working with all disability populations for comparison. Additional studies targeting special education teachers of specific disability populations (e.g., emotional and behavioral disorders, intellectual disability, or specific learning disability) or specific teaching assignment (e.g., self-contained classroom, co-teaching, or resource classroom) could be conducted to investigate a narrow focus of teacher stress, coping strategies, and administrative support.

Self-perceptions. Participants of the study were asked to provide self-perceptions on a Likert-type scale regarding their job-related stress and coping strategies. Self-

perceptions can often be limited and respondents might have had difficulty labeling their stress level on a scale of 0-5 (never to always).

Incentives. No incentives were offered to special education teachers to participate in the survey. In the future, a variety of methods could be used to increase participation including monetary incentives such as a drawing for a chance to win popular gift cards or membership to professional organizations. The sample of participants could potentially have been increased through these types of motivational distribution strategies.

Pandemic. In December 2019, an outbreak of the novel human coronavirus disease (COVID-19) began in Wuhan, China. This highly contagious severe acute respiratory syndrome rapidly spreads through human-to-human transmission and continuously evolves (Liu, Kuo, & Shih, 2020). It was first reported in the United States in January 2020 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020).

In response to this pandemic the Oklahoma State Department of Education, under the leadership of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister, ordered a mandatory closure of all Oklahoma public schools from March 17, 2020 through April 6, 2020 (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2020b). Following the cessation of instruction on April 6, 2020, all Oklahoma public schools were mandated to move instruction to a distance learning model. While there were no specific requirements on how distance learning must occur at each school site, guidelines required instruction must occur outside the traditional school building to focus on the safety and health of the students and school staff (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2020c). School

districts across the state of Oklahoma had to quickly move instruction online where possible, or provide paper/pencil materials with strict guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It was an uncertain time for school administrators, teachers, and staff. District decisions were made quickly and teachers began a new model for delivering instruction for the last six weeks of the academic year beginning April 6, 2020. Special education teachers across the state had to teach their students without access to materials, face-to-face time, or paraprofessionals. There was a digital learning curve for parents and teachers as online programs began to replace best practices in which teachers were accustomed to teaching.

Instruction quickly settled into a new normal; however, the survey for this study was first distributed online on April 20, 2020, exactly two weeks after the distance learning model began. It is possible the timing of the survey distribution impacted the survey results in two ways: (1) Special education teacher stress ratings could have been impacted by the change from a traditional teaching model to distance learning just weeks before the survey was distributed. Significant consideration was given to postponing the delivery of the survey; however, with the uncertain nature of the unprecedented time with a pandemic, it was determined there was no way to predict if stress would be differently impacted by COVID-19 at a later date if the survey were postponed. (2) The special education teacher response rate was potentially impacted because they were working from home without students face-to-face. For some special education teachers, there would potentially have been more time to access email and take a 15-minute survey regarding their job stress, while others time might have had less time for a 15-minute

survey, depending on their district and expectations. Under normal circumstances, mid-April would have been a very busy season with end-of-year state assessments and activities.

Future Research

As a continuation to this study, the next step of the CFA would be to measure level-2 of the model. Factor coefficients of the 10 latent factors would indicate the degree of strength in which the level-1 factors loaded on the level-2 constructions (i.e., job stressors, coping strategies, and administrative support). Once the hierarchical model is complete, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) could be used to analyze interactions of the latent variables of job stressors, administrative support, and coping strategies. A hypothesized model was originally proposed in this study; however, the model did not converge once the SEM was run in R package© (Figure 9). Future investigation of the study variables and a new theoretical model could provide insight into the structural relationship between the observable variables and latent constructs.

A hypothesized model was also proposed to investigate job stressors and coping strategies as mediators for special education teacher stress and administrative support (Figure 10). Future research exploring the ways job-related stressors and coping skills are mediated through administrative support would provide valuable information for administrative practices to decrease special education teacher stress.

Figure 9

Hypothesized Structural Equation Model

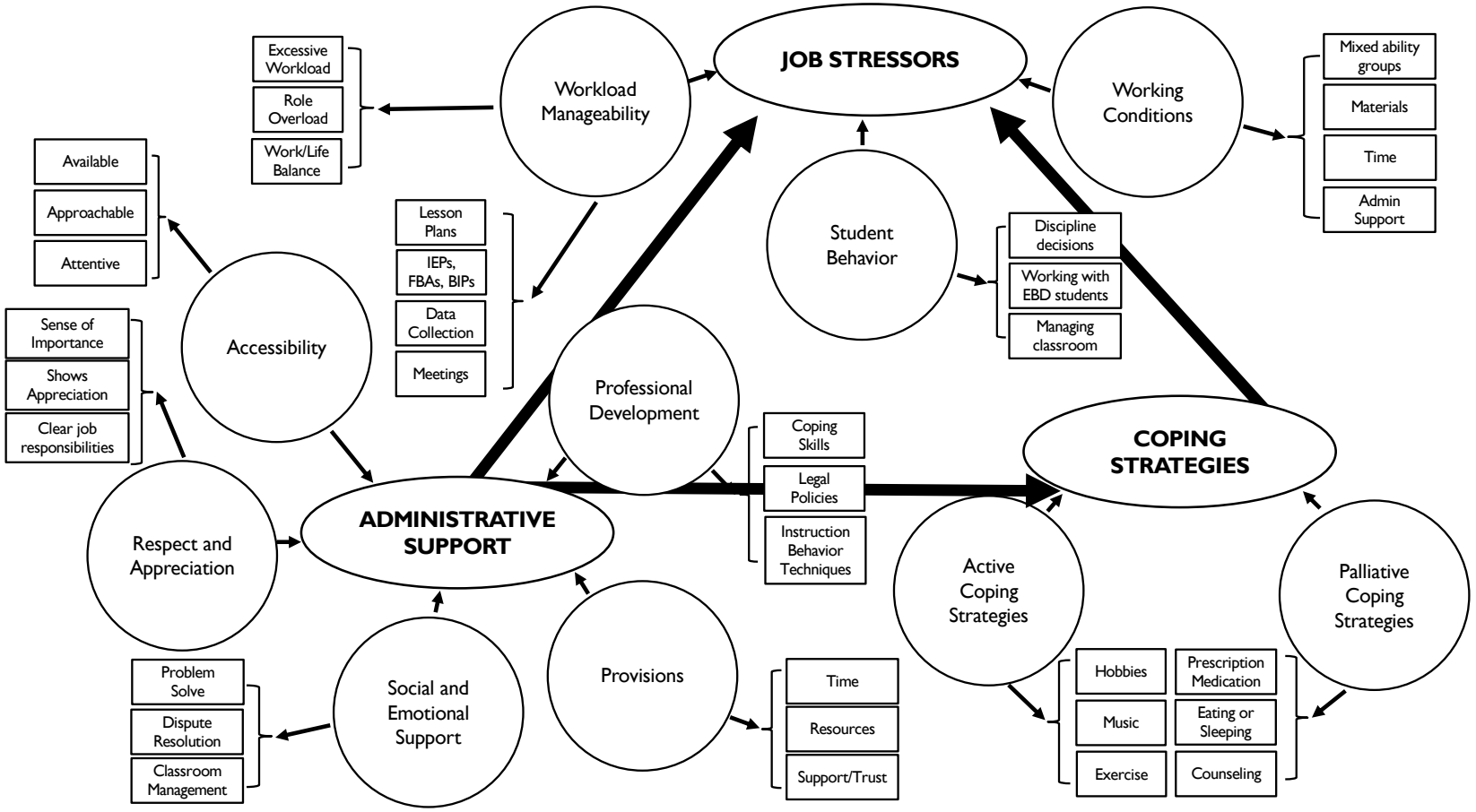
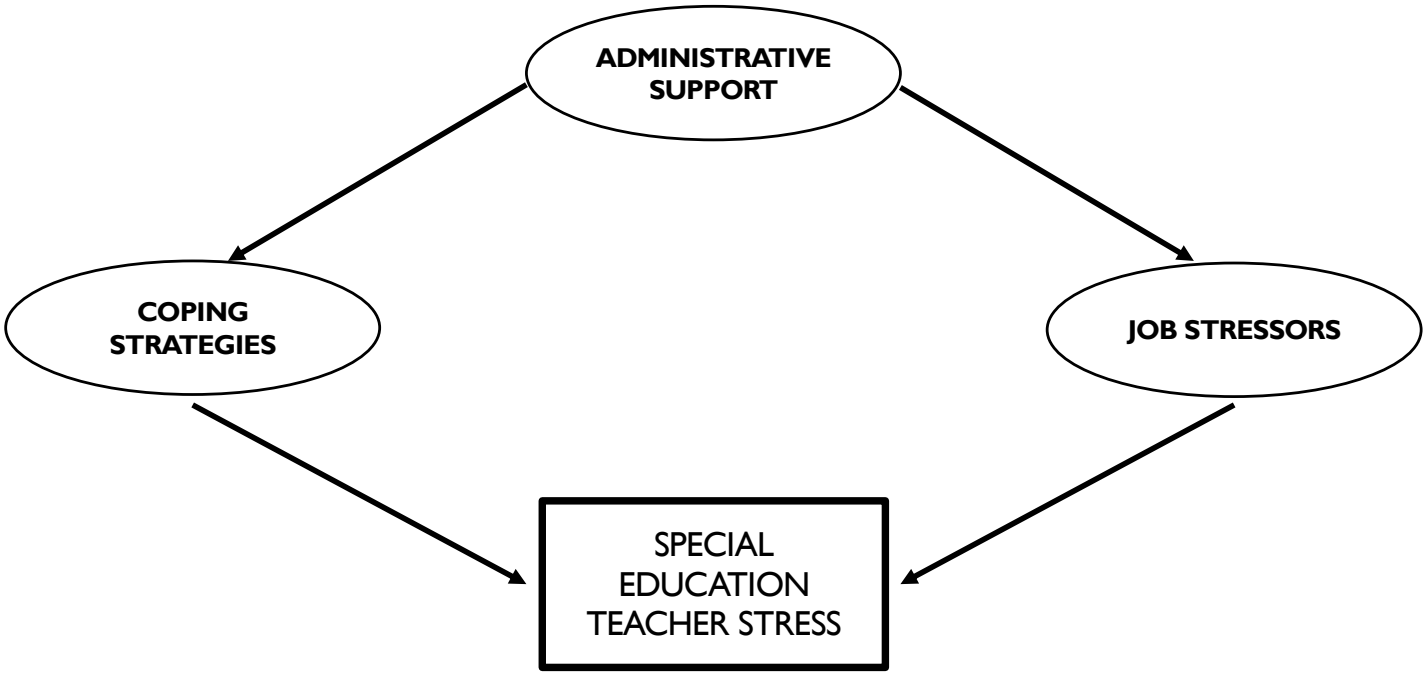


Figure 10

Hypothesized Mediated Model



The findings of this study suggest future research should include investigations on interventions designed to assist special education teachers to decrease their job-related stress. Prior research suggests these interventions should be determined based on special education teacher working conditions, workload manageability, and student behavior. Other research could include the association of special education teacher stress and attrition as more qualitative research in this area could give insight into special education teachers' intent to leave their jobs and the role of job-related stress in attrition.

More research is needed to identify active coping strategies necessary for stressful jobs, like those of special education teachers. Research-based strategies are needed for coping under the pressures of working with students with disabilities and their families. Other beneficial research for special education teachers include approaches to recognize active and palliative coping strategies associated with their job-related stress. Special education teachers need to understand the difference in palliative coping strategies which might help relieve the pain without dealing with the cause versus active coping strategies which relieve the pain by understanding the cause.

Future research should also include interventions designed to increase school administrative support for special education teachers. Administrators need proactive research-based strategies to decrease stress for special education teachers. They also need reactive strategies to identify levels of increasing stress in their teachers and ways to increase necessary supports and active coping strategies to help eliminate the source of the problem. Additionally, research on the administrators' perspective of the support they provide their teachers would be insightful. Comparing the perspectives of special

education teachers from this survey to a future survey of administrators would provide valuable information regarding any discrepancies or areas of concern.

Conclusion

This study provided important information for special education teachers and their administrators on how to identify and address job-related stress. Survey results provided insight on the top job-related stress factors which need to be addressed by special education teachers and their administrators to decrease stress at work. Decreasing job-related stress could increase longevity in special educators' careers and job satisfaction. Personal coping strategies were identified to understand what teachers were currently implementing to address elevated stress. Special education teachers and their administrators should identify active coping strategies, which, when appropriately implemented, decrease stress and address the source of the stressful problems. The level and importance of administrative support was also identified. The resulting data gives insight into areas in which special education teachers perceived a need for support. An examination of these factors provides a starting point for helping administrators address problem areas and better support special education teachers.

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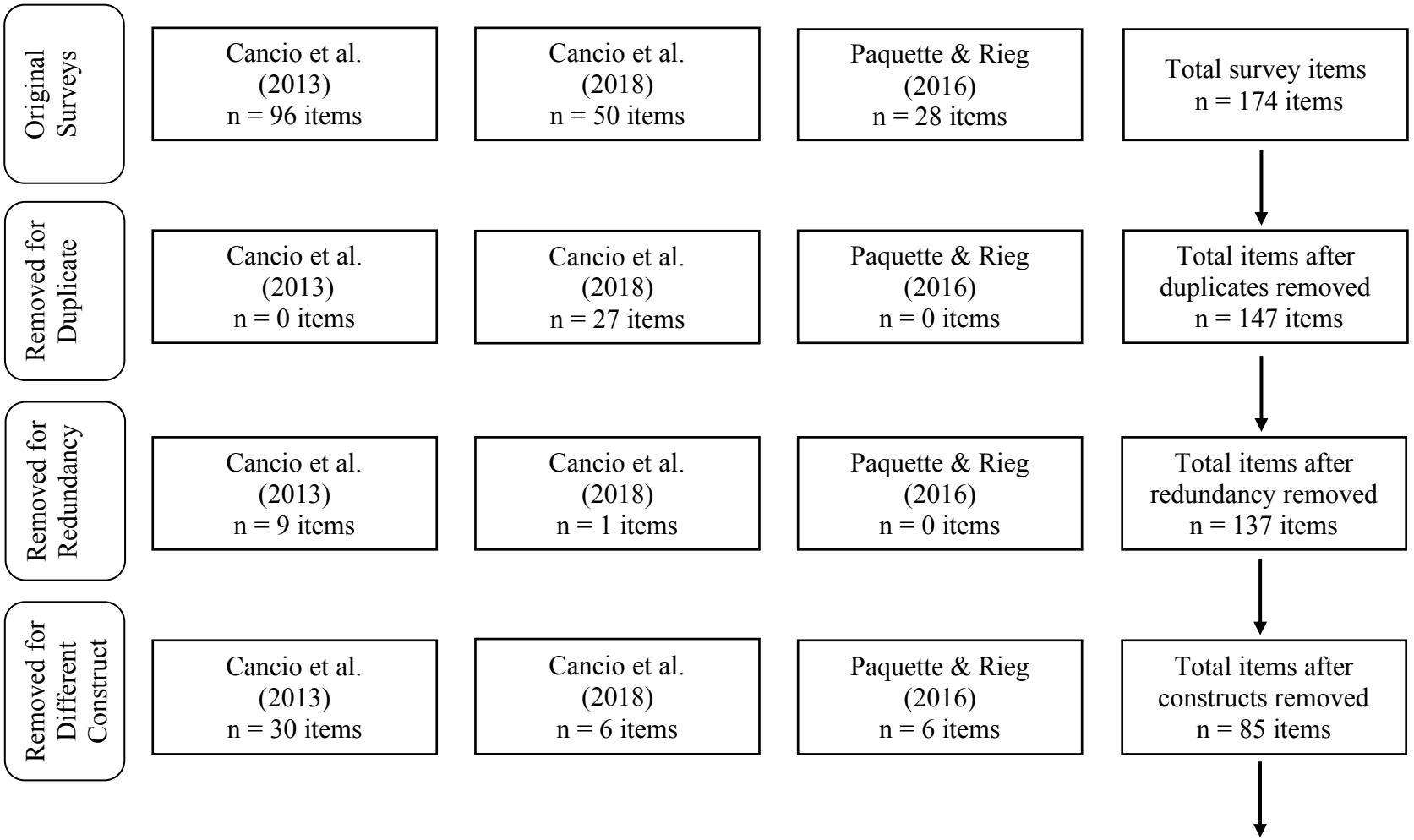
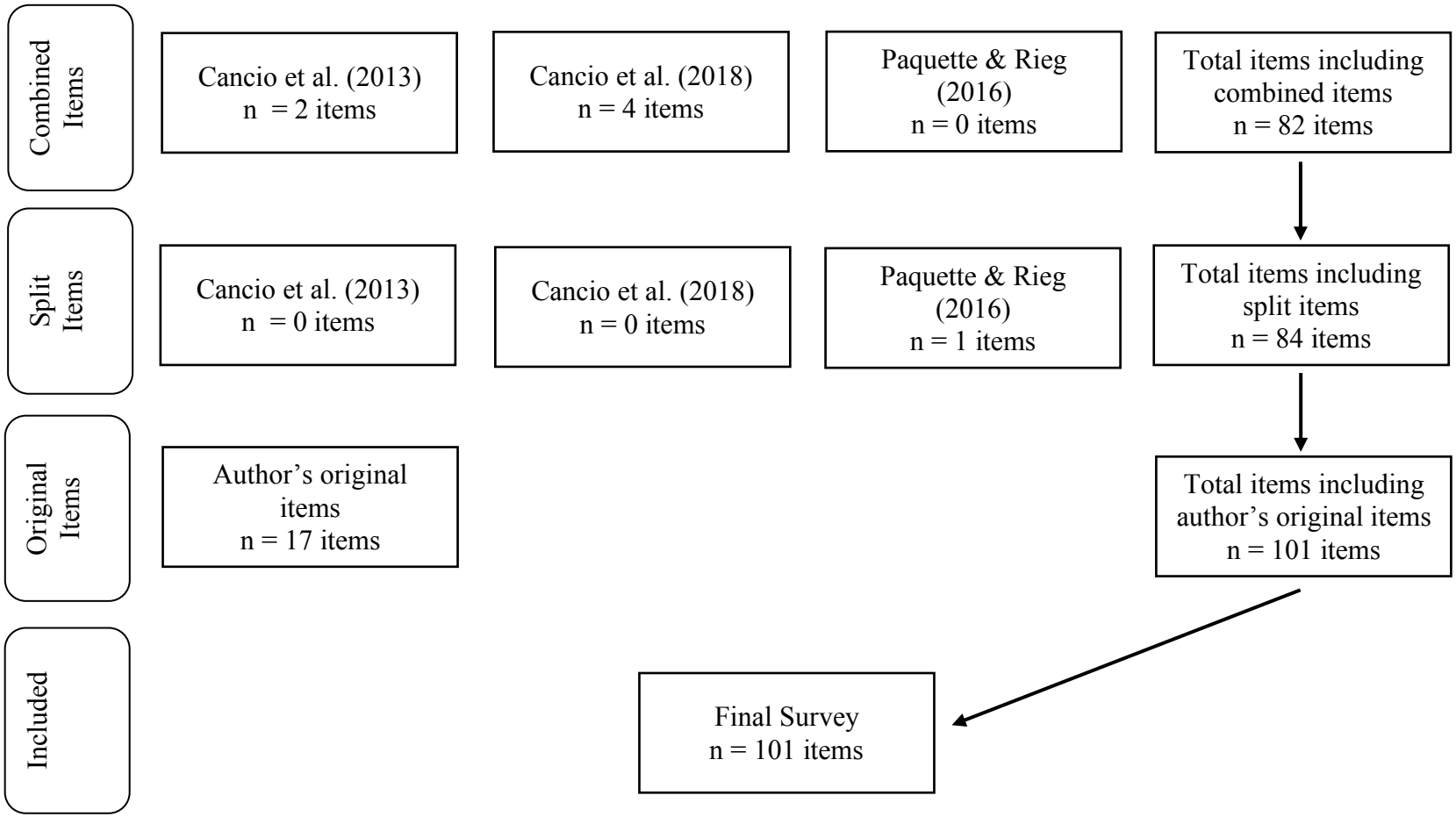
Appendix A
Survey Development Flow Chart




Combined Items
Cancio et al. (2013)
n = 2 items
Cancio et al. (2018)
n = 4 items
Paquette & Rieg (2016)
n = 0 items
Total items including combined items
n = 82 items
Split Items
Cancio et al. (2013)
n = 0 items
Cancio et al. (2018)
n = 0 items
Paquette & Rieg (2016)
n = 1 items
Total items including split items
n = 84 items
Original Items
Author's original items
n = 17 items
Total items including author's original items
n = 101 items
Included
Final Survey
n = 101 items

Appendix B

Cancio et al. (2013) Original Survey
Impact of Administrative Support on the Stress, Burnout, and Attrition
of Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Part 1
Extent and Importance of Administrative Support

In this section we are asking you to make two judgments about each statement. We are interested in knowing the extent of support you receive from your administrator and how important each type of support is to you and your job. If there are two or more administrators who supervise you, consider the one to whom you usually report to or the one with whom you have the greatest amount of contact. Extent of support scale 1-4 scale, importance of support scale 1-4.

1. Is easy to approach
2. Gives me undivided attention when I am talking
3. Is honest and straightforward with the staff
4. Gives me a sense of importance that I make a difference
5. Considers my ideas
6. Allows input into decisions that affect me
7. Supports me on reasonable decisions
8. Shows genuine concern for my program and students
9. Notices my efforts
10. Shows appreciation for my work
11. Treats me as one of the faculty
12. Gives clear guidelines regarding my job responsibilities
13. Provides standards for my performance
14. Offers constructive feedback after observing my teaching
15. Provides frequent feedback about my performance
16. Provides materials and resources needed to do my job
17. Trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions
18. Shows confidence in the decisions I make
19. Provides helpful information for improving personal coping skills
20. Provides information on up-to-date instructional & behavioral techniques
21. Provides knowledge of current legal policies and administrative regulations
22. Provides opportunities for me to attend workshops and conferences
23. During my interview, was honest about school climate
24. Encourages professional growth
25. Provides suggestions for me to improve instruction
26. Identifies resource personnel for specific problems I am unable to solve
27. Assists with proper identification of students with EBD
28. Is available to help when needed
29. Helps me solve problems and conflicts that occur
30. Helps me with classroom management problems
31. Helps me during parent conflicts, when necessary
32. Provides time for various non-teaching responsibilities (e.g., IEP, meetings)

33. Provides adequate planning time
34. Participates in child study/eligibility/IEP meetings/parent conferences
35. Works with me to plan goals and objectives for my program and students
36. Provides resources when I become overloaded
37. Equally distributes resources and unpopular chores
38. Provides mentors for new teachers
39. Provides opportunities to learn from fellow special education teachers
40. Provides a paraprofessional for your program
41. Please identify the gender of the supervisor for whom your responses relate
42. Please indicate how often you interact with this supervisor
43. Title of supervisor for whom your responses relate:
    a. Building Principal
    b. Special Education Supervisor
    c. Assistant Principal
    d. Director of Special Education
    e. Other

Part 2
Job Satisfaction

In this section please consider how satisfied you are with various aspects of your job. Satisfaction scale 1-4 scale

44. Salary and fringe benefits
45. Importance of my position
46. Classroom is sufficient in size
47. Challenge of my position
48. There is a location to remove students during crisis situations (time-out room or another classroom)
49. There is a systematic district/school-wide plan to integrate students into regular education settings
50. Regular education teachers are willing to take your students into their classroom when appropriate
51. Opportunity for promotion and advancement
52. Opportunity to use past training and education
53. Job security and permanence
54. Supervisor(s)
55. Opportunity for developing new skills
56. Pride and respect I receive from family and friends for being in this profession
57. Relationships with colleagues

Part 3
Feelings that People Experience Concerning their Jobs

The following statements express various "feelings" that people experience concerning their jobs. Indicate how often you experience the feelings described in each statement. Frequency scale 1-5.

58. You carry your school problems home with you
59. Your work makes you frustrated
60. Your work makes you tense
61. The amount of work you have to get done interferes with how well it gets done
62. Your work causes you a great deal of stress

Part 4
Views About School

In this section please indicate the degree to which each of the following statements reflects your views about your school. Agreement (scale 1-5)

63. I am willing to provide the effort beyond what is normally expected of my position
64. I talk up this school to my friends as a great school to work in
65. I feel very little loyalty to this school
66. I find that my values and the school's values are very similar
67. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this school
68. This school really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance
69. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this school
70. I am glad that I was assigned/work at this school
71. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this school's policies
72. I really care about this school
73. For me, this is the best of all possible schools in which to work
74. Deciding to work in this school was a definite mistake on my part
75. Please indicate which of the following comes closest to describing how long you plan to teach.
    a. Definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as I can
    b. Will probably continue until something better comes along
    c. Until I am eligible for early retirement
    d. Until normal retirement
    e. Until forced to retire due to age

Part 5
Items that Describe You

In this section please indicate the extent to which each of the following items might describe you. Frequency scale 1-5.

76. I often get upset and cannot eat
77. I do not sleep well
78. I have a lot of headaches
79. I feel tired
80. I find myself seeking medical care often
81. I have sought counseling or psychological help
82. I have high blood pressure

83. I miss a lot of time from work

Part 6
Demographics

Please provide the following information about yourself.

84. Gender
    a. Male
    b. Female
85. Age
    a. 25 or less
    b. 26 to 29
    c. 30 to 35
    d. 36 to 40
    e. 41 to 45
    f. 46 to 50
    g. 51 to 55
    h. 56 to 60
    i. 60 plus
86. Ethnic background
    a. White
    b. Black
    c. Hispanic
    d. Asian
    e. Native American
    f. Other
87. How many years have you been present in your position?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5
    f. 6 to 10
    g. 11 to 14
    h. 15 to 19
    i. 20 to 25
    j. 26 plus
88. How many years experience have you had in education all together?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5
    f. 6 to 10
    g. 11 to 14

h. 15 to 19
i. 20 to 25
j. 26 plus

89. Are you endorsed/licensed in the area you are currently teaching?
    a. Yes
    b. No
90. Certification
    a. LBSI
    b. BD/SED
    c. LD
    d. EMH
    e. TMH
    f. LBSII
91. Which grade level to do you at
    a. Elementary
    b. Middle School/Jr. High
    c. High School
    d. Other
92. Average socioeconomic level of the students attending my school is
    a. Low
    b. Middle
    c. High
93. Number of teachers within your classroom
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. Other
94. Number of students within your classroom
    a. 0-7
    b. 8-10
    c. 11-13
    d. 14-20
    e. 21-30
    f. Other
95. Classroom type
    a. EBD Self-Contained
    b. EBD Resource
    c. Cross-Categorical Self-Contained
    d. Cross Categorial Resource
    e. Other
96. Classroom is set with in a
    a. Public School
    b. Public EBD Alternative School
    c. Private Therapeutic Day School
    d. Other

Appendix C

Cancio et al. (2018) Original Survey
How Special Educators Cope with Stress

Part 1
Job Satisfaction

In this section, please consider how satisfied you are with various aspects of your job.
Participants answer on a forced Likert scale 1-4

1. I value my position
2. My classroom is sufficient in size
3. I have difficulty with my position
4. I have job security and permanence
5. I receive pride and respect from family and friends for being in my profession
6. I have positive relationships with colleagues.

Part 2
Feelings you Experience on the Job

The following statements express various "feelings" that people experience concerning their jobs. Indicate how often you experience the feelings described in each statement.
Participants answer based on a Likert scale 1-5

7. You carry school problems home with you
8. Your work makes you frustrated
9. Your work makes you tense
10. The amount of work you have to get done interferes with how well it gets done
11. Your work causes you a great deal of stress

Part 3
Descriptive Items

In this section please indicate the extent to which the following item might describe you.
Participants answer based on a Likert scale 1-5

12. I often get upset and cannot eat
13. I do not sleep well
14. I have a lot of headaches
15. I feel tired
16. I find myself seeking medical care often
17. I have sought counseling or psychological help
18. I have high blood pressure
19. I miss a lot of time from work

Part 4
Coping Strategies

In this section please indicate how you are coping with your stress
Participants answer based on a Likert scale 1-5

20. Dancing
21. Writing
22. Listening to music
23. Gardening
24. Talking with your supervisor
25. Yoga
26. Exercise
27. Support from family, friends, and colleagues
28. Involvement in a professional organization
29. Counseling
30. Engaging in staff development
31. Eating
32. Prescription medication
33. Tobacco products
34. Alcohol
35. Recreational drugs

Part 5
Demographics

Please provide information about yourself

36. Gender
    a. Male
    b. Female
37. Age
    a. 25 or less
    b. 26 to 29
    c. 30 to 35
    d. 36 to 40
    e. 41 to 45
    f. 46 to 50
    g. 51 to 55
    h. 56 to 60
    i. 61 plus
38. Ethnic background
    a. White
    b. Black
    c. Hispanic
    d. Asian
    e. Native American
    f. Other (specify)
39. How many years have you been at your present position?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5

f. 6 to 10
g. 11 to 14
h. 15 to 19
i. 20 to 25
j. 26 plus

40. How many years of experience have you had in education all together?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5
    f. 6 to 10
    g. 11 to 14
    h. 15 to 19
    i. 20 to 25
    j. 26 plus
41. Are you endorsed/licensed in the area you are currently teaching?
    a. Yes
    b. No
42. Certification
    a. Mild/Moderate
    b. Moderate to Severe
    c. EBD
    d. LD
    e. Intellectual Disabilities
    f. Other (specify)
43. What grade level do you teach
    a. Elementary
    b. Middle School/Jr High
    c. High School
    d. Other (specify)
44. Average socioeconomic level of the students attending your school
    a. Low
    b. Middle
    c. High
45. Number of teachers within your classroom
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. Other (specify)
46. Number of paraprofessionals within your classroom
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. Other (specify)
47. Number of students within your classroom

a. 0-7
b. 8-10
c. 11-13
d. 14-20
e. 21-30
f. Other (specify)

48. Classroom type
    a. Self-contained
    b. Resource
    c. Cross-Categorical
    d. Inclusive setting
    e. Other (specify)
49. What type of students with disabilities do you teach?
    a. Emotionally Disturbed/Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (ED/EBD)
    b. Learning Disabled (LD)
    c. Intellectual Disabilities/Cognitive Disabilities (ID/CD)
    d. ED/EBD, LD, ID/CD
    e. Other (specify)
50. Classroom is set within a
    a. Public School
    b. Public Alternative School
    c. Private Therapeutic Day School
    d. Separate Facility for Students with Severe Challenging Behavior
    e. Other (specify)

Appendix D

Paquette and Rieg (2016) Original Survey

Stressors and Coping Strategies of Early Childhood/Special Education Pre-Service Teachers

1. Managing the class and enforcing discipline
2. Delivering the lesson
3. Managing group work
4. Managing the individual seat work
5. Establishing a rapport with students
6. Giving appropriate feedback to students
7. Assessing students' written work
8. Teaching mixed ability classes
9. Helping students with learning difficulties
10. Helping students with emotional/behavioral problems
11. Communicating concepts to students
12. Having high expectations of my teaching performance
13. Overall teaching workload
14. Managing time
15. Striking balance between practicum and personal commitments
16. Selecting appropriate content for my lessons
17. Developing lessons plans
18. Preparing resources for my lessons
19. Others expecting me to perform tasks beyond my competency
20. Being observed by my university supervisor
21. Being evaluated by my university supervisor
22. Communicating with/relating to my university supervisor
23. Being observed by my cooperating teacher
24. Being evaluated by my cooperating teacher
25. Communicating with/relating to my cooperating teacher
26. Fear of failing the practicum
27. Communicating with/relating to teachers in the school
28. Communicating with/relating to principal/school administrator

Appendix E

Dissertation Survey

Special Education Teacher Stress, Coping Strategies, and Administrative Support

Adapted from:

Cancio, E. J., Albrecht, S. F., & Johns, B. H. (2013). Defining administrative support and its relationship to the attrition of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 71-94.

Cancio, E. J., Larsen, R., Mathur, S. R., Estes, M. B., Johns, B., & Chang, M. (2018). Special Education Teacher Stress: Coping Strategies. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *41*(4), 457-481.

Paquette, K. R., & Rieg, S. A. (2016). Stressors and coping strategies through the lens of early childhood/special education pre-service teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *57*, 51-58.

Part 1
Job Stressors

The following statements express various aspects of a special education teacher's jobs. Indicate **how often you experience stress** in relation to the job aspect described in each statement.

Participants answer based on a Likert-type scale 0-5 (0 – Never; 5 – All of the time)

1. Classroom management
2. Student discipline
3. Helping students with emotional/behavior problems
4. Teaching mixed ability groups
5. Teaching similar ability groups
6. Assessments (formative and summative)
7. Communicating with parents
8. Excessive workload
9. Excessive caseload
10. Developing lesson plans
11. Required paperwork (IEPs, FBAs, etc.)
12. Data collection and documentation
13. Meetings
14. Supervising paraprofessionals
15. Role overload (wear too many hats)
16. Role confusion (no clear guidelines of my responsibilities)
17. Work/life balance
18. Others expecting me to perform tasks beyond my competency
19. Fear of failing
20. Collaborating with general education teachers
21. Lack of necessary materials and resources
22. Inadequate time to complete work

23. Lack of administrative support

Part 2
Manifestations of Stress

In this section please indicate the **extent** to which the following items **describe your stress** as a special education teacher.
Participants answer based on a Likert-type scale 0-5 (0 – Never; 5 – All of the time)

24. My work causes me to have stress
25. I carry school problems home with me
26. I feel frustrated
27. I feel tense
28. The amount of work I have to get done interferes with how well it gets done
29. I get upset and it impacts my eating habits (either I can't eat or I eat too much)
30. I do not sleep well
31. I have difficulty focusing on my job
32. My stomach hurts when I think of returning to work after a weekend or hard day
33. I have frequent headaches
34. I feel tired
35. I find myself seeking medical care often
36. I have sought counseling or psychological help
37. I have high blood pressure
38. I miss a lot of time from work

Part 3
Coping Strategies

In this section please indicate how you are coping with your stress. **How often** do you engage in these activities **to cope with your job-related stress**?
Participants answer based on a Likert-type scale 0-5 (0 – Never; 5 – All of the time)

39. Reading for pleasure
40. Writing/Journaling
41. Listening to music/dancing
42. Outdoor activities/Gardening
43. Yoga/Meditation
44. Counseling
45. Exercise
46. Relaxing after school hours
47. Support from family, friends, and colleagues
48. Involvement in a professional organization
49. Talking with my supervisor
50. Professional development (formal or informal)
51. Prescription medication
52. Eating
53. Excessive sleeping
54. Tobacco products/Alcohol

Part 4
Administrative Support

In this section you need to make two judgments about each statement: what is the **extent of support you receive from your administrator** and **how important is each type of support to you and your job**? If there are two or more administrators who supervise you, consider the one to whom you usually report to or the one with whom you have the greatest amount of contact.

Participants answer based on a Likert-type scale 0-5

0- No Support; 5- Full Support

0 – Not Important; 5 – Significantly Important

55. Is easy to approach
56. Gives me undivided attention when I am talking
57. Is honest and straightforward with staff
58. Gives me a sense of importance that I make a difference
59. Allows input into decisions that affect me
60. Supports me on reasonable decisions
61. Shows genuine concern for my program and students
62. Notices my effort
63. Shows appreciation for my work
64. Gives clear guidelines regarding my job responsibilities
65. Offers constructive and frequent feedback about my performance
66. Provides materials and resources needed to do my job
67. Trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions
68. Shows confidence in the decisions I make
69. Provides helpful information for improving personal coping skills
70. Provides information on up-to-date instructional and behavioral techniques
71. Provides knowledge of current legal policies and administrative regulations
72. Provides opportunities for me to attend workshops and conferences
73. Is available to help when needed
74. Helps me solve problems and conflicts that occur
75. Helps me with classroom management problems
76. Helps me during parent conflicts, when necessary
77. Provides me with adequate planning time
78. Participates in eligibility/IEP meetings/parent conferences
79. Provides mentors for new teachers
80. Provides opportunities to learn from other special education teachers
81. Provides paraprofessionals, when necessary

82. Please indicate how frequently you interact with your administrator.
    a. Seldom
    b. Occasionally
    c. Frequently
83. What is the title of the administrator for whom your responses relate?
    a. Principal
    b. Assistant Principal

c. Special Education Coordinator/Department Chair
d. Special Education Director
e. Other

84. How do you rate your overall stress level as a special education teacher? (Indicate level from 0-9 on a sliding scale bar)
0 – no stress; 9 – highest level of stress

Part 5
Demographic Information

In this section you will provide **information about yourself.**

85. What is your gender?
a. Male
b. Female
c. Binary
d. Other

86. Please indicate your age range.
a. 20-29
b. 30-39
c. 40-49
d. 50-59
e. 60-69+

87. How would you describe your ethnic background?
a. White
b. Black
c. Hispanic
d. Asian
e. Native American
f. Other (please specify)

88. How many total years of experience have you been in the field of education?
a. 0-5
b. 6-10
c. 11-15
d. 16-20
e. 21-25
f. 26+

89. How many years have you been at your present position?
a. 1
b. 2
c. 3
d. 4
e. 5
f. 6-10
g. 11-14
h. 15-19
i. 20-25
j. 26+

90. How long do you plan to teach?
    a. Definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as I can
    b. Will probably continue until something better comes along
    c. Until I am eligible for early retirement
    d. Until forced to retire at any age.
91. Are you endorsed/licensed in the area you are currently teaching?
    a. Yes
    b. No
92. What type of special education certification do you hold?
    a. Traditional
    b. Alternative
    c. Emergency
    d. Not Certified
93. How many special education students are in your caseload?
    a. 0-5
    b. 6-10
    c. 11-15
    d. 16-20
    e. 21-25
    f. 26-30
    g. 31+
94. What grade level do you primarily teach?
    a. Early Childhood (PreK-K)
    b. Elementary (Grades 1-5)
    c. Middle School (Grades 6-8)
    d. High School (Grades 9-12)
    e. Adult Education (Beyond Grade 12)
95. How would you describe the student disabilities in your caseload? (Please mark all that apply)
    a. Emotionally Disturbed/Emotional and Behavioral Disorders
    b. Specific Learning Disability
    c. Intellectual Disability
    d. Autism Spectrum Disorder
    e. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
    f. Multiple Disabilities
    g. Visual Impairment (Blind)/Hard of Hearing (Deaf)
    h. Other (please specify)
96. What is the description of your teaching assignment?
    a. Inclusive classroom
    b. Co-teacher
    c. Resource
    d. Self-contained
    e. Separate school
    f. Homebound/Hospital
    g. Other (please specify)

97. Your classroom is set within a
    a. Public School
    b. Public Alternative School
    c. Charter School
    d. Separate Facility for Students with Severe Challenging Behavior
    e. Other (please specify)
98. The students in your caseload have
    a. Similar disabilities/educational needs
    b. Varying disabilities/educational needs
99. What is the average socioeconomic level of the students attending your school?
    a. Low
    b. Middle
    c. High
100. How many certified teachers work within your classroom? (i.e., Are you the only teacher or do you co-teach with other certified teachers?) Please indicate number of certified teachers _____
101. How many paraprofessionals do you supervise? Please indicate number of paraprofessionals _____

Appendix F

Email Invitations to Participate in Survey

Adapted from sample contact strategy (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009)

Monday, April 20, 2020

Dear Special Education Colleague,

If you are a current special education teacher in Oklahoma, I am writing to invite you to participate in a survey entitled "Special Education Teachers: An Evaluation of Stress, Coping Strategies, and the Impact of Administrative Support." I am conducting this survey as part of my dissertation research through the University of Oklahoma. This survey will invite you to reflect on your experiences with stress in your job, how you personally cope, and how administrative support impacts your job-related stress.

As you may know, there is a national shortage of qualified and experienced special education teachers. This can be attributed to the stress involved when working with special education populations. The purpose of this study is to provide information to identify job-related stressors, develop strategies to help teachers cope with job-related stress, and determine how administrators can best support special education teachers.

Your responses to this survey are very important and will help in advancing special education teacher retention and research on special education teacher stress.

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the online survey. Completing the survey should take you no more than 15 minutes. Please click on the link below to go to the survey website (or copy and paste the survey link into your internet browser).

Survey link: https://ousurvey.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9mpNyxrfVJ7Kd2l

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses in any reports of this data. Confidentiality of records and participant identity is insured and will be maintained at all times. To further protect and prevent the breach of confidentiality, please do not share your responses to the survey with any other individual. Participants of the study may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions without penalty or prejudice.

I appreciate your time and consideration in completing the survey. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at lmathews@ou.edu.

Leslie A. Mathews, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education
Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education
University of Oklahoma

First Reminder Email Invitation to Participate in Survey
Follow-up Email #1

Dear Special Education Colleague,

Monday, April 27, 2020

I recently sent you an email asking you to respond to a survey entitled "Special Education Teachers: An Evaluation of Stress, Coping Strategies, and the Impact of Administrative Support." Your response to this survey is important and will help in advancing special education teacher retention and research on special education teacher stress, coping strategies, and administrator support.

This survey is short and should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you have already completed the survey, I appreciate your participation. If you have not yet responded to the survey, I encourage you to take a few minutes and complete the survey.

Please click on the link below to go to the survey website (or copy and paste the survey link into your internet browser).

Survey link: https://ousurvey.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9mpNyxrfVJ7Kd2l

Your response is important. Getting direct feedback from special education teachers in the classroom is crucial in improving job-related stress and teacher retention. Thank you in advance for your help.

Leslie A. Mathews, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education
Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education
University of Oklahoma

First Reminder Email Invitation to Participate in Survey
Final Email

Friday, May 1, 2020

Dear Special Education Colleague,

Spring is a busy time for teachers and I understand how valuable your time is as we approach the end of the school year. I sincerely hope you may be able to give about 15 minutes of your time to help me collect important information for the University of Oklahoma by completing this short survey.

If you have already completed the survey, I truly appreciate your participation. If you have not yet responded to the survey, I encourage you to complete the survey. **I plan to end this study next week**, so I wanted to email everyone who has not responded to make sure you had a chance to participate.

Please click on the link below to go to the survey website (or copy and paste the survey link into your internet browser).

Survey link: https://ousurvey.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9mpNyxrfVJ7Kd2l

Thank you in advance for completing the survey. Your responses are important. Special education teachers who are currently in the classroom are the best source of information to help understand teacher stress and administrative support.

Leslie A. Mathews, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education
Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education
University of Oklahoma

Appendix G

Consent to Participate in Research at the University of Oklahoma
[OU-NC IRB Number: 11922 Approval Date: 04/08/2020

You are invited to participate in research about the job-related stress for special education teachers. This survey will investigate the level of special education teacher stress, specific job-related stressors, manifestations of stress, coping strategies, and the level and importance of administrative support.

If you agree to participate, you will complete this online survey. There are no risks or benefits. You may experience discomfort talking about stressful events and can skip any questions that they don't feel comfortable answering. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be anonymous.

Even if you choose to participate now, you may stop participating at any time and for any reason. In the future, after removing all identifiers, we might share your data with other researchers or use it in future research without obtaining additional consent from you.

Data are collected via an online survey system that has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. No assurance can be made as to their use of the data you provide. If you have questions about this research, please contact: Leslie Mathews: lmathews@ou.edu (731) 613-3276 or Corey Peltier: coreypeltier@ou.edu or (401) 487-0921.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu with questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant, or if you don't want to talk to the researcher.

Please print this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this research.

Appendix H

Survey Distribution Flow Chart