Teachers in War Zone Education: Literature Review and Implications

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Abstract

Teaching is traditionally considered one of the most stressful of occupations. Lack of experience, training, and working with children with behavior problems represent variables shown to increase teachers' stress. Research also demonstrates teachers' stress can reduce their performance and also might lead to negative attitudes (Greenglass & Burke, 2003). The magnitude of concerns of teachers in war zones, however, greatly exceeds those typically discussed. Identification of psychological needs of teachers and students during crises is necessary in order to minimize future teaching and learning challenges (Sommers, 2002). During war, teachers and children both struggle through immense trauma. In this time of enhanced struggles, it is critical teachers concern themselves with effectively managing classrooms of often-traumatized children who have a right to a quality education (Brody & Baum, 2007). In the past, few studies however, focused specifically upon the emotional well-being and difficulties of teachers in war zones (Sumner, 2005; Ramos, 2010, Sharifian, 2017). This is clearly the case in describing Syrian teachers working and living inside the war zone.

Keywords: Primary Teachers, Resilience, War zone, Syria

Introduction

In June 2012, the United Nations proclaimed that Syria was in a civil war (BBC News, 2012). Syria currently is known as the world's largest producer of both internally displaced people and refugees (USA for United Nations High Commission for Refugees [USA for UNHCR], n.d.). Currently, 13.1 million Syrians are still in need of humanitarian assistance within Syria (United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). Of these, about 6.6 million lost their homes and are currently internally displaced persons (IDP). In addition, 5.6 million Syrians were forced to flee their home to neighboring countries. More than half of these refugees are children (World Vision, 2018).

A history of war prevails in the Middle East. If this history of continuing armed conflict is to diminish for future generations, it will most likely come about through education. Sommer (2002), describes how access to education is extremely difficult in wartime.   During war, the education of children is generally given a low priority. This low priority comes at a time when the needs of children (e.g. trauma from abuse, and psychological/emotional challenges) exhibit the greatest intensity. If education is the best hope for resolving conflict and enabling future peace, high quality education is most needed in war zones. Yet, little is known about the quality of education in war zone schools.

The Education of Children in War Zones: The Syrian Context

Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) describes education as an essential right for all children even during the times of emergencies (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2008). Dryden-Peterson (2011) suggests education is directly related to improving the quality of life for all people of the world. Education can lead to "poverty reduction, holding promises of stability, economic growth, and better lives for children, families, and communities" (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, p.8). Postponing or neglecting to provide education for children during crises is not only counter-productive, but is also likely to lead to delay achievement of sustainability (Global Education Monitoring Report Team UNESCO, 2015). Education, however, is seldom a priority in war zones. Sommers (2002) reported a large majority of war-affected children in their home country and those who have obtained refuge in neighboring countries are deprived of education mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This is clearly the case in Syria.

Prior to the conflict, education was an important (and free) part of Syrian society. There, "more than 90% of primary school-aged children were enrolled – one of the highest rates in the Middle East" (Save The Children, 2013, p. 12). War, however, has affected all aspects of Syrian lives and education is no exception (United Nation Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2018). Under international humanitarian law, targeting and attacking schools remain strictly prohibited (United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary for Children and Armed conflict, n.d.). In spite of this international prohibition, however, UNICEF reported that most of Syria's schools have been destroyed, damaged, or transformed into shelters. Throughout the war, the Syrian army used schools to harbor combatants which made schools prime targets for attack (Save The Children, 2013).

The UNICEF (2018) reported more than 2 million children inside Syria are out of school in 2016-17. Likewise, nearly 700,000 registered school-age children living in refugee camps outside of Syria (Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, & Iraq) did not enroll for school (UNICEF, 2018). In addition to the possibility of bombing at any time, students and teachers going to school are beset with many other dangers such as the fear of being abducted, raped, stepping on landmines or being caught in crossfire.

Because of these serious challenges, increasing numbers of fearful families chose to not send their children to school (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Yet, research suggests that attending schools in times of war actually lessens the psychological damage caused by the many horrors of war. Safety should be a basic principle for all schools (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Safety alone, however, does not necessarily lead to high quality education. A clear example of this is education in refugee camps. Where schools are available, refugee children study in a relatively safe environment. Research, however, suggests that children in refugee camps suffer from a disturbingly low quality of education. Indeed, the outcomes of students' learning are not even close to the education of children outside the camps. For instance, Dryden-Peterson (2011) found that among Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, less than 6% of refugee children had reached benchmark reading fluency by grade 4" (p. 6). In addition to a plethora of disputes described earlier, perhaps the most significant of all challenges to quality education in refugee camps, is securing a cadre of qualified teachers (Sommers, 2002). Critically. It is such qualified teachers that provide the greatest potential for creating a future generation of citizens who can find ways of solving problems without war (Miller & Affolter, 2002). Thus, war zone education is inherently an act of peace building, a commitment to peace education.

Teachers in War Zones

Buchanan, Casbergue, and Baumgartner (2010) suggest that in addition to family and community, teachers play a critical role in children's mental health following war trauma. Indeed, Buchanan et al. (2010) state that considering the lack of adequate support services to address the mental health of children, teachers may have the most potential to improve the mental health of disaster-affected communities. Stead (1940) comments:

Teachers have a great and difficult duty in wartime. More than any other section of the community they are the guardians of the future. For when armies melt away and the noise of battle dies down, it will be the products of the school who will have to repair the damage done. And this duty of the teachers involves a jealous guardianship of the proper function of schools and education (p. 102).

Similarly, Winthrop and Kirk (2008) suggest that re-building society by educating children after conflict was an important role of teachers in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. Likewise, Sommers (2002) suggests that the impact of teachers during crisis is even more critical than during peacetime. In addition to teaching and educating, teachers promote and foster the physical, social and psychosocial development of children. Aside from parents, de Berry et al. (2003) suggest teachers remain the most trusted adults in children's lives and because of this, they can have a major impact upon the child even in the absence of educational materials.

Being a teacher (even during peacetime) is no easy task. Teachers face many daily challenges at school and in classrooms. Stressors reported by teachers include: lacking professional resources, interacting with students with behavioral difficulties, overcrowding in classrooms, overloading in work responsibilities, wanting of administrative support, ongoing conflicts in work environments, missing staff communication, and diminishing of parent-teacher professional support (Lambert, O'Donnell, Kusherman, & McCarthy, 2006; Betoret, 2006; Younghusband, 2005; & Ullrich, 2009). Dealing with such challenges cause significant levels of teacher burnout (Betoret, 2006).

The magnitude of concerns of teachers in war zones, however, greatly exceeds those sited above. For example, Wa-Mbaleka (2013) identifies seven major educational challenges for teachers working with children in war zones including "disparities in access to financial support; large numbers of learners; few educational facilities; limited opportunities for teacher preparation; restricted choices for curriculum selection; minimal access to marketable skills, and negative attitudes towards female education " (p.34) . Thus, teachers in war zones encounter many more challenges likely to contribute to greatly expanded teacher burnout at a time when they are most needed to be at their best (Sommor, 2002).

During armed conflict, teachers encounter children experiencing greatly heightened psychological demands. Research suggests that school-based interventions through teachers are practical and achievable methods for the reduction and prevention of the symptoms of war trauma in children (Werner, 2005). However, securing high quality teachers capable of adequately addressing psychological demands of children in war areas is made even more difficult by the many personal challenges of teachers. Given the tenuous status of wartime governments and greatly decreased support from NGO's, for example, teachers who are willing to risk their lives to educate children in war zones most often perform this critical service with no compensation. Further, Dryden-Peterson (2011) suggests that teachers in war areas regularly teach overcrowded classrooms often exceeding ratios of one teacher to seventy students. Moreover, such teachers in war zones are likely to be severely untrained.

Refugee camp teacher training generally includes about 10 days of training. A limited number of teachers receive even this minimal training. In addition, Machel (1996) suggests that teacher performance generally declines greatly during wartime. This is often because they, too, may have been subjected to savagery, injury, trauma and/or sexual abuse for being a teacher. Teachers' mental health is an important factor that can affect their teaching performance and the quality of education that children receive in emergency situations (Seyle, Widyatmoko, & Silver, 2013). It may also impact teachers' emotional exhaustion and burnout. Because of these additional stressors, Ramos (2010) recommends it is critical for researchers to study the impact of trauma, burnout and resilience in quality of teachers in war zone schools.

Trauma in War Zone Teachers

War is a powerful source of enduring psychological disturbance. It involves an extensive range of violent and traumatic experiences, including the immediate threat of death and/or disfigurement, physical injury, witnessing injury and/or   death of others, and involvement in

injuring or killing both combatants and civilians (Weathers, Litz, & Keane, 1995). For some, war includes witnessing/participating in atrocities, as well as undergoing rape, capture, and prisoner-of- war experiences such as confinement, torture, and extreme physical deprivation. The impact of such traumatic experiences can affect all aspects of human lives. These traumas, in turn, can produce a variety of symptoms and disorders. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition (DSM-IV), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a condition emerging from "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violation" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2011) reports PTSD is the most common mental illness among those from war zones.

Symptoms of PTSD in children after experiencing war trauma become illustrated in numerous investigations (Morgos, Worden, & Gupta, 2007; Ursano & Shaw, 2007; Elbert, Schauer, Schauer, Hirth, & Neuner, 2009). These studies consistently suggest that more than half of children exposed to war exhibit PTSD symptoms (Allwood, Dolan, & Husain, 2002). Furthermore, war trauma not only affects the current health conditions of children, but their future education may also be severely affected by these experiences (Berson & Baggerly, 2009).

Research also emerges regarding trauma in adults. Studies suggest the military population with experience of war demonstrates a high rate of PTSD (Vasterling et al., 2010; Kaiser, 2012). Additional trauma research conducted with refugees demonstrates connections. For example, Bojic, Njoku, & Priebe (2015) performed a meta-analysis of long-term mental health of war-affected refugees comparing results from 29 different studies. They found that the prevalence of anxiety, depression and PTSD were significant in the refugee population. This study further indicated that prevalence range of PTSD was between (4.4-86%). Özer, Şirin, & Oppedal (2013) investigated war experiences and mental health of 311 children ages nine-18 in the Islahiye refugee camp in Turkey. Findings describe how 74 % of children experienced loss of a family member, 60% exhibited symptoms of depression, 45% indicated PTSD, 22% demonstrated aggression, and 65% evidenced psychosomatic symptoms. Furthermore, Al-Shagran, Khasawneh, Ahmed, & Jarrah (2015) studied 155 Syrian refugees living in a Jordanian refugee camp and found that rate of PTSD was higher in: females, those with greater than high school diploma ($p < .02$), those married ($p < .05$), those who experienced first-hand trauma, those physically hurt ($p < .000$), those who had observed family member(s) being physically hurt ($p < .000$), loss of a family member, and those exposed to traumatic events ($p < .000$).

Research is evident in the context of social ecology, the impact of caregiver's' mental health on children's trauma in war zone and refugee populations (Betancourt, Yudron, Wheaton, & Smith-Fawzi, 2012; Van Ee, Kleber, & Mooren, 2012). In a longitudinal study of 1,362 caregivers and children ages11-16 in two settings in Afghanistan, researchers described a significant association between caregiver's' mental health and children's mental health outcomes. Results suggested that outcomes in post- traumatic stress, depression, psychiatric difficulties, and prosocial strength were significantly correlated with their caregivers' mental health (Panter-Brick, Grimon, & Eggerman, 2014). Caregivers with better mental health, were increasing the possibility of higher mental health in children. A similar pattern was revealed between maternal post-traumatic stress

symptoms and an infant's developmental and psychological problems and parent-child interactions for refugees in Netherlands (Van Ee, Kleber, & Mooren, 2012).

As caregivers, teachers may also have an important role in supporting children who have experienced violence and trauma (Baker & Cunningham, 2009). In a study of teachers' experiences in refugee camps, Wa-Mbaleka (2013) found that 89% of teachers expressed their concern about traumatic experiences of their students in refugee or Internally Displace Person (IDP) camps.

Similarly, the role of teachers as support systems for children in traumatic environments is highlighted in school intervention studies (Berger, Pat-Horenczyk, & Gelkopf, 2007; Ehntholt, Smith, & Yule, 2005; Alisic, Bus, Dulack, Pennings, & Splinter, 2012). For example, researchers examined posttraumatic symptoms (PTS) and anxiety levels of children in northern Israel to investigate the impact of teachers' training in Building Resilience Intervention (BRI) of students. In this study, teachers received 12 hours of training to learn how to increase resilience in themselves and their students. Participants included 524 students with PTS and 490 students with anxiety issues in grades 4 and 6 from 4 schools. Subjects were divided into 2 groups of control and into 2 groups of intervention. The results indicate that students' PTS and anxiety decreased significantly in the intervention group compared to the control group ($p < 0.005$). Researchers concluded that teacher training in interventions focused on enhancing resilience to war trauma may help reduce PTS and anxiety in students with war and terror experience. This study also reported significantly ($p < 0.001$) higher PTS and anxiety levels in females, younger age children, and those having a longer history of trauma (Baum et al., 2013).

Teaching is traditionally considered one of the most stressful of occupations. Lack of experience, training, and working with children with behavior problems are variables shown to increase teacher stress. Research also demonstrates that stress in teachers can reduce teachers' performance and also might lead to negative attitudes (Greenglass & Burke, 2003). For example, Rogers (1997) studied how teachers during the Nicaragua conflict perceived effects of the war on their professional roles. The researcher interviewed twelve educators who were teaching during the time of war and postwar and asked them to use auto photographic techniques and take twelve pictures to portray the critical features of their current life. Then, dividing the pictures into three categories (related to the war, to professional role, and both), results of the interviews and photographs showed teachers perceived a loss of a future, violation of potential, failed expectations, incomprehensibility, disconnection, and uncertainty. Yet, these teachers remained committed to "the profession, to students, to improvement of the profession and to the concept of peace" (Rogers, 1997, p. iv).

Research also indicates that during war teachers themselves may suffer from trauma. For instance, Potts (2010) examined the relationship between community violence, PTSD and forgiveness in 193 Salvadorian teachers living in a high violence area in San Salvador as well as rural areas. El Salvador was involved in a civil war from 1980 to 1992 and still suffers from high community violence. The researcher implemented 16 hours workshops in managing aspects of burnout, PTSD, and self-care for participants in high violence communities. Using bivariate one-tailed Pearson correlation, findings describe a significant positive, albeit rather low, relationship

between PTSD and community violence (r =0.19, p = 0.01) and negative relationship between forgiveness and PTSD (r = - 0.25, p = 0.000). PTSD also demonstrates significant reverse correlation with forgiveness ($\beta = -.542, p < 0.01$). However, forgiveness as a moderator did not show a significant relationship with PTSD and community violence.

Similarly, Linscott (2010) studied the association among community violence, PTSD and fatalism in Salvadorian educators. Of the 193 participants, 65.8% identified as female and 32.6% identified as male. Samples participated in free training workshops to learn about vicarious trauma and self-care in working in high violence areas. Of those, 19.9% suffered from a high level of PTSD and 28.8% reported symptoms of PTSD. The study found a significant relationship between community violence and higher levels of PTSD in teachers (p <0.001). No significant correlation between fatalism and other variables evidenced. Likewise, Wolmer, Laor & Yazgan (2003) found that after crises, teachers may suffer from severe post-traumatic stress, depression and grief. Therefore, teachers might not be able or even interested in continuing working with students who experienced traumatic stress.

Trauma and emotional dysfunction in teachers during and after war may significantly impact teachers' emotional exhaustion and burnout (Ramos, 2010). Therefore, in addition to problems of obtaining qualified teacher candidates described above, the likely presence of psychological trauma creates additional challenges to providing children with greatest need of high-quality teachers (Sommers, 2002). Although research is beginning to investigate the association between PTSD and burnout in occupations related to human communication associated to health, education, and social services during crises, there is minimal research specifically investigating the psychological health of teachers in war zones.

Burnout in War Zone Teachers

Burnout in teachers is a major concern in education (Chang, 2009; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Van Tonder & Williams, 2009). Van Tonder and Williams (2009), state "burnout has become a crucial issue for all institutions that aim to produce quality products and services on a sustainable basis and to remain innovative in an increasingly competitive environment" (Van Tonder and Williams, 2009, p.1). According to U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), for example, 8% of 3,377,900 teachers of public schools in USA left their job during 2011-2012 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). In addition, Ingersoll & Smith (2004) suggest that burnout is a major concern in novice teachers since around 50% of them leave the profession early in their career. Moreover, teaching disadvantaged and special needs children demands even greater time and effort both inside and outside the classroom, which often leads to even greater burnout (Brown & Roloff, 2011).

Chubbuck & Zembylas (2008) describe how inner-city teachers often face challenges such as violence, lack of learning materials, students with emotional disorders, and a poor quality of learning environment. For example, Standish (2014) assessed the burnout and resilience of Black secondary school teachers in inner- city public schools. Thirteen Black secondary school teachers (grades 9-12) in inner-city schools of District of Columbia participated in in-depth interviews in this qualitative study. The entire population (100%) of participants suggested that

professional development is a potentially powerful source for nurturing resilience. More than 92.3% of participants further indicated that professional development is inadequate, 92.3% irrelevant, and 76.9% a waste of time and resources. In addition, all teachers (100%) expressed that the competitive environment at school was another variable relating to teacher burnout. Participants (92.3%) also claimed that decisions and policies were often not in favor of students as the most important stakeholders. Findings of this study also suggest that the DC inner- city public school setting does not help teachers to foster resilience. Nevertheless, teachers indicate that factors that assist them in developing resilience include: their relationship with God or a higher power (92.3%); their relationship with themselves (92.3%); their relationships with friends and family (86.1%); and their relationships with students (92.3%) (Standish, 2014).

Results of a study of teachers working with AIDs children suggest that teachers suffered symptoms of burnout, stress, exhaustion, and sadness. Consequently, teachers started to leave their job or lost their zeal for this work (Lucas, 2007). Ramos (2010) studied the association between emotional exhaustion using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), vicarious trauma by Community Violence Checklist (CVC), and Self-Care Checklist in a sample of 110 Salvadorian teachers. Results of the study suggest a significant correlation between teachers' vicarious trauma and emotional exhaustion (r =. 38, p = .01). In addition, data show a significant correlation between lower levels of self-care practices and emotional exhaustion $(r = .38, p = .01)$. The researcher recommends future research examine self-care's possible moderating effects on emotional exhaustion in teachers reporting high levels of vicarious trauma. Bobek (2002) also suggests that challenging conditions related to the teaching profession require that teachers represent high levels of resilience. Therefore, to prevent teacher burnout there are suggestions such as "significant adult relationships; a sense of personal responsibility; social and problem solving skills; a sense of competence, expectations and goals, confidence, a sense of humor; and a sense of accomplishment" (Bobek, 2002, p. 202).

Teachers in war zones encounter perhaps the most vulnerable of all children who have suffered from an entire cauldron of traumatic experiences. It is no surprise that research is beginning to demonstrate a major PTSD impact on the cognitive and emotional behavior of children. Specifically, findings regarding war-related trauma indicate to negatively affect children's intelligence, cognition, memory, and attention (Allwood et al., 2002; Qouta, Punamäki, Miller, & El Sarraj, 2008a; Qouta, Punamäki, Miller, & El Sarraj, 2008b). In addition, some of the educational obstacles and challenges that children face in war zone's (Strekalova and Hoot (2008)) include: exposure to traumatic experiences, new language challenges, impact of culture on identity, resistance of parents to allowing children to go to school, discrimination challenges, and socio-economic status.

Sharifian (2017), in her study on 70 Syrian primary teachers working inside the war zone, investigated the burnout level of teachers via Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey Format (MBI-ES). The one-way ANOVA analysis found a statistically significant main effect for teachers' training and emotional exhaustion (burnout subscale), F (2, 67) = 0.76, p < 0.01. This suggests educators with teacher training (M = 23.62) experienced greater emotional exhaustion than teachers without teacher training (M = 15.15). Data revealed no significant

differences between teacher training with depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (burnout subscale).

Given the aforementioned factors, nations envisioning a future citizenry who solve problems without war are left to determine how to create and retain a cadre of highly competent and resilient teachers (Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004) who can overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. Yet, research data guiding nations in *how* to do this is, for the most part, silent--especially in the Middle East.

Resilience in War Zone Teachers

People often react differently to traumatic events in their lives. Some show psychological traumatic symptoms (e.g, PTSD), while others appear resilient to these events (Winter, Brown and Goins, 2015); still others, remain not as severely affected (Bojic et al., 2015). Bonanno, Westphal & Mancini (2011), however, found that a major explanation for the differences in response to the same traumatic event was a variable called resilience. Bonanno (2004) defined resilience as:

The ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event, such as the death of a close relation or a violent or life-threatening situation, to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning (p. 20).

Similarly, Connor & Davidson (2003) suggest, "resilience embodies the personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity" (p. 76). Fostering resilience depends on a variety of factors. Goins (2015) classified factors affecting resilience as personality, environmental factors, previous stressors, agency and self-efficacy, priori beliefs and worldviews, faith and spirituality, acculturation skills, and the physical environment.

There is a growing body of resilience research with subjects involved in armed conflict. Besser, Weinberg, Zeigler-Hill, & Neria (2014), for example, explored the impact of intrapersonal (i.e., levels of hope, optimism, and self-esteem) and interpersonal sources (i.e., levels of support from family, friends, and significant others) upon resilience in treating PTSD symptoms and dissociative experiences in times of war. Researchers recruited 140 non-clinical female participants from the ongoing Israel War in Gaza. These researchers measured participants optimism by using the Life Orientation Test-Revised, hope by Trait Hope Scale, self-esteem by The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, perceived social support by Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, PTSD by PTSD Checklist-Civilian Version, and Dissociative Experiences by Dissociative Experiences Scale. Through structural equation modeling and data analysis, researchers reported a significant relationship between intrapersonal resilience and interpersonal resilience   ($r = 0.42$, $t = 3.41$, $p < 0.001$) in addition to a significant relationship with acute anxiety symptoms ($\beta = -0.52$, $t = -2.92$, $p < 0.003$ and $\beta = -0.40$, $t = -2.55$, $p < 0.01$). These data indicate resilient sources of support for people in war zones can serve as a deterrent from negative psychological outcomes such as PTSD.

Findings also describe resilience in children during war. For example, Punamäki, Qouta, Miller, & El-Sarraj (2011) studied resilience in Palestinian children in Gaza. Researchers recruited 640 children ages six-16 years-of-age for the study. Researchers measured a number of related demographic variables of both children and their families. These variables included: parent's education, family income, place of residency and family size, traumatic events, emotional and conduct disorders, resilience classification, parental mental health, parenting practices, school performance, physical health and cognitive-emotional functioning, and ante- and perinatal problems. Findings suggest that 23% of children evidenced high degrees of resilience. The study also found significant positive parental mental health ($p < .002$ mothers and $p < .003$ fathers), supportive parenting practices ($t = 2.87$, $p < .001$), and cognitive functioning ($t = 5.87$, $p < .001$) for the resilient group. Researchers concluded that school performance and physical health of resilient children were higher than less resilient children (Punamäki, Qouta, Miller, & El-Sarraj, 2011).

Groves (1997) asserted that early childhood teachers and educators may exhibit an important role in recognizing and supporting resilience in children living with violence and conflict. Furthermore, teachers can provide a nurturing environment through constancy, stable schedules, and creating a curriculum to support children (Baker & Cunningham, 2009). However, when enmeshed in war environments, nurturing the above skills becomes much more challenging for teachers given variations in resilience. For people who have experienced war and potentially trauma, resilience is an important factor in preparing them to move on to a healthy and successful future.

Despite these many challenges, however, Gu & Day (2007) describe how many teachers continue to develop their professional skills and maintain their commitment and their teaching effectiveness—i.e. resilience. Perhaps the mitigating variable here may be teacher resilience which Henderson & Milstein (2003) suggest can help teachers "bounce back from negative life experiences and become stronger in the process of overcoming them" (p.2). Likewise, Bobek (2002) suggests that "A teacher's resilience is enhanced when he is capable of assessing adverse situations, recognizing options for coping, and arriving at appropriate resolutions" (p. 202). Being a resilient teacher, then, is an important factor for developing resilient students who count on their teachers as a "role model" (Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

Resilience also allows educators to overcome many challenges of the teaching occupation. For example, Brunetti (2006) studied 13 teachers with more than 12 years' experience in inner- city schools. The researcher utilized semi structured and in-depth interviews. Results suggest that important variables relating to teacher resilience included: teachers' love of students, their professional and personal job satisfaction, and the support they received from school leaders and administrators.

Additionally, researchers studied teachers' resilience with teachers in disadvantaged schools of Australia. Howard and Johnson (2004), interviewed 10 teachers who were identified at-risk of burnout and stress, but they maintained their resilience by successful coping. Teachers in these schools faced a variety of challenges such as violent student behavior, students with experienced significant trauma (e.g., abuse/ neglect), lack of student motivation as well as lack of support

from administrators and colleagues. Further findings described resilient teachers to possess coping skills that included a sense of agency (opposite of helplessness) i.e., these teachers believed their ability to overcome obstacles, they expressed strong group support (i.e., they evidenced a strong social network outside of school such as family and/or friends who provided support, and they felt competent through a sense of achievement (producing to their success of making change in children lives and their professional ability).

An emerging body of research suggests teachers can play an important role in assisting children in overcoming symptoms of post war trauma such as PTSD and anxiety by developing resilience in their students (Wolmer, Laor, Dedeoglu, Siev, & Yazgan, 2005; Baum et al, 2013). However, little is known about the actual resilience of teachers in active war zones--especially in the Middle East. Sharifian's (2017) study of resilience of 70 primary teachers inside the Syria war zone suggested that sense of personal accomplishment, faith and spirituality, and teacher training programs remain necessary to not only prepare teachers to increase their resilience, but also promote the sense of purpose and belongings in crisis circumstances.

Brody & Baum (2007) studied the resilience of 2 kindergarten teachers in Israel. Using Richardson's Resilience Theory to inform their investigation, researchers found each teacher individually developed coping resilience strategies in communication with their students during the ongoing war and terror. The personal strategy of the first teacher was implementing direct discussion with her students about traumatic experiences of war in their daily lives. She asserts that children are capable of understanding war. The second teacher applied the opposite strategy and avoided any direct discussions regarding traumatic events. This teacher felt that preventing discussion of traumatic experiences at school would make school a much-needed space for comfort. Instead, she focused on enhancing self-esteem, promoting self-efficacy, and nurturing optimism in children by teaching decision-making skills, meeting achievable tasks, and teaching prayer; these strategies assist children to be resilient.

To investigate the hypothesis that greater resilience would result in less teacher-burnout during the war time, Sharifian (2017) utilized Pearson correlations to measure possible relations among all three burnout subscales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) and resilience. The results described how only the burnout subscale of personal accomplishment represented a significant positive correlation with resilience ($r=0.50$, $p \leq 0.001$). This suggests teachers with higher levels of personal accomplishment demonstrated higher levels of resilience. According to the MBI-ES, higher personal accomplishment indicates lower burnout; therefore, the positive correlation between personal accomplishment and resilience found that higher resilience resulted in less teacher burnout. In addition, to measure the relation between burnout and trauma, Pearson correlations were calculated. Correlations among trauma and burnout subscales suggested that trauma had a significant negative correlation ($r=-0.39$, $p < 0.001$) with personal accomplishment. This indicates teachers with higher trauma levels showed lower personal accomplishment. However, emotional exhaustion revealed no statistically significant relation with trauma ($r=0.261$, $p < 0.1$).

Nurturing resilience in wartime, however, is not easily achieved. War trauma presents more challenging conditions for teachers that demand even greater resiliency to maintain quality

teaching and supporting students in such an environment. However, teacher resilience in war zone research receives minimal attention compared to research in more stable teaching environments (Brody & Baum, 2007).

Conclusion

A major conclusion of the research on teachers in conflict areas involves the trauma and burnout struggles confronted by these courageous teachers in crisis. There is a potential role that resilience might play in decreasing trauma and burnout levels of teachers in active war zones. The issue remains how the teacher education profession might address assisting our international colleagues in conflict in increasing their capacity toward resilience. Teacher training programs remain necessary to not only prepare teachers to increase their resilience, but also promote their sense of purpose and belonging in crisis circumstances. It is important for research to consider conducting studies regarding the influence of training and workshops to improve resilience and coping strategies of teachers in war zones.

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