Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology
Programme Director: Vivian Hill

Institute of Education, University of London

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Doctoral Thesis

A Qualitative Exploration of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on teacher Perceptions of their Stress and Job Role: Giving a voice to teachers.

Jale Raman

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Abstract

Teacher stress has been a long standing and growing concern over the past few decades in many countries owing to multiple challenges within the educational landscape and the teacher's role. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges within the Education sector. Specifically, teachers faced new challenges in a pre-existing stressful occupation. This study sheds light on a timely and critical research area: What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers' perception of stress, and what do they identify as needed to support them in their role in the aftermath of the pandemic?

The current study has adopted a qualitative research approach, utilising semi-structured interviews to interview seven secondary school teachers. All interviews took place during the pandemic in 2021. Teachers shared their lived experiences, providing insight into the challenges they faced in their job role and the support they would like in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The four emergent themes from the current study are as follows: 1) The need for Compassion, 2) Connections, Communication and Consistency; 3) Evolving Professional Competencies: Bridging the gap between teacher skills and student needs; 4) fostering a supportive ecosystem in education.

Finally, the themes are discussed in relation to Kyriacou's and Sutcliffe's (1978a) stress model and the Bioecological systems model. The study underlines the pivotal role of Educational Psychologists in identifying and fostering support systems around the teacher and their job role to reduce their perceived stress.

Impact statement

This thesis explores the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on teachers' perception of stress within their job roles. It provides insight into teachers' challenges concerning their job role in the pandemic. With the teacher's voice at the centre of the thesis, the study provides a platform for teachers to share, explore and consider the different types of support they would like in their job role to reduce their perceptions of stress. The current study employs an adapted version of the Bioecological systems model, positioning the teacher at the centre of the model. The utilisation of the model provides a wider understanding of the different systems that impact teachers' perceptions of stress.

To date, there is limited research that explores secondary school teachers' perceptions of stress during the pandemic, and therefore, this study is uniquely positioned to have had the opportunity to interview teachers who were experiencing the impact of the pandemic as it was ongoing.

The thesis illuminates pre-existing challenges within the teaching profession and provides insights into how the pandemic has exacerbated existing stressors. Moreover, it highlights the need to acknowledge and target those stressors from different levels, such as individual (the teacher) and systemic means like the school, LA, and Government. Further, it provides insight into the different systems that may obstruct or foster teachers in their role and stress experience.

The implications of the current study provide insight into how Educational Psychologists can work alongside schools to develop bespoke support mechanisms within the school. This support varies from providing training to meet teacher's needs related to their job to providing supervision for teachers to navigate through post-pandemic challenges. Further, as shared by many teachers, teachers felt that they did not have a voice in the development of policymaking during the pandemic. Educational psychologists are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between policy makers and teachers. For example, by having proactive involvement, through research or active collaboration with various stakeholders, Educational Psychologists would be able to advocate and ensure the teachers voice is represented in the policy making process.

The findings indicate that, as well as the proximal support that teachers are exposed to, teachers require clear, timely and consistent communication between different systems around them. Further, the findings suggest that teachers require compassion (empathy in action) from senior leaders and the Local authority and Government bodies to reduce their experience of stress and feel supported in their role. Educational Psychologists are knowledgeable about the intricacies of the school environment and the different dynamics at play. Therefore, they are well positioned to support schools in navigating, prioritising, and developing a multifaceted web of support in collaboration with teachers and school leaders, depending on the needs of the school.

Finally, this thesis builds on emerging research which indicates that there is a need for additional funding, provision of time and mental health support for teachers; indicating that policy development needs to be proactive and not reactive to the teacher's context.

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My dear husband, words cannot describe how incredibly proud I am to be your wife. I feel blessed to have you in my life, and I have infinite gratitude for all the support you have given me throughout my doctoral studies. You have listened to me rant, cry and laugh. Your wisdom, advice and guidance have helped me throughout my studies, so thank you. I love you, Evren.

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List of Abbreviations

BPS = British Psychology Society

BSM= Bio-Ecological Systems Model

COVID-19= Coronavirus Disease 2019

EP= Educational Psychologist

LA= Local Authority

MH= Mental Health

MT= Microsoft Teams

NPI= Non-Pharmacological Interventions

OECD= The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

SLT= Senior Leadership Team

TES= Times Educational Supplement

WHO= World Health Organisation

1. Introduction

1.1 An Overview of Teachers' Stress

The increasing incidence of stress among teaching professionals has received significant attention over the past few decades (Travers & Cooper, 1993; Burke et al., 1996). The Health and Safety Executive (2014) report shows that teachers have a higher rate of reported stress than the national average for all industries. The contributory factors identified within this report include teachers managing workload, the lack of support from senior leadership teams and managing challenging student behaviour. The report identified that the named factors need to be addressed to support teachers in managing their stress but does not mention specific ways to address them.

The Labour Force Survey self-reported work-related illness questionnaire results further confirm that self-reported stress, depression and anxiety within the teaching profession were more than double when compared to the mean rates of the sample (HSE, 2012). In addition, Health and Safety Executive statistics indicated that in 2006/07, stress, depression, or anxiety accounted for 46% of days lost due to work-related illness and constituted the single most significant cause of all absences attributable to work-related illness (Cooper & Dewe, 2008). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) further reported that poor mental health of teachers could lead to presenteeism, meaning that teachers are physically present at work but are underperforming, negatively impacting student learning (Jain et al., 2013; Gibbs & Miller, 2013).

The emergent picture highlights that teachers are faced with significant emotional and psychological strain. The heightened stress levels experienced by teachers not only impact their health and wellbeing but also pose a considerable threat to the stability and longevity of the teaching profession. Therefore, given the larger potential impact that teacher stress has on the education sector, there has been increasing focus on

identifying the causes, types and effects of stress that negatively affect teaching staff, as teacher retention is a long-standing problem in the U.K. (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Gallant and Riley (2014) estimate that 40–50% of early career teachers leave the profession within the first five years, which is consistent with a study conducted in 2017 by IIAC (IIAC Position Paper 37, 2017). Some reasons for such attrition within the teaching profession are workload, increasing pressure to meet targets, stress related to excessive bureaucracy, and problems associated with disruptive student behaviour (Mansfield et al., 2016).

Much research has indicated that teachers are more susceptible to work-related psychological distress and burnout than in many other occupations (Jones et al., 2003; Kyriacou, 2001). Further, research conducted within the U.K. (Kokikinos, 2007) along with other countries (Chen & Miller, 1997) has shown that several identified stressors are reported by school teachers that impact their overall stress levels. Some of the major stressors Chen and Miller (1997) found were high and heavy workloads, lack of administrative support, insufficient time to complete tasks and unreasonable demands from supervisors. The following section highlights some of the frequently identified stressors related to teacher stress.

1.2 Workload

One of the most consistent and conspicuous factors impacting teacher stress in research has been workload (Catalan et al., 2019). Workload is often associated with an extensive list of factors that cause high stress levels in teachers and, therefore, poor mental health outcomes. Another example of the sustained presence of stress within teachers' roles can be found in the Teacher Support Network survey, whereby the findings suggest that increases in teacher stress were most commonly associated with workload (78%) (Bricheno et al., 2009). In many cases, the experience of stress within teachers' roles can lead to issues around staff retention. For example, using a meta-analytic approach, Madigan and Kim (2021) reported that burnout and job satisfaction are closely linked to teachers' intentions to quit. Notably, the authors posited that burnout presents a heightened risk for teacher attrition compared to the

protective effects offered by satisfaction, and there is an indication that this risk may be on the rise. The study's strength lies in its extensive data collection and rigorous methodological approach, synthesising results from various studies to provide a more global understanding of the challenges teachers face. It particularly emphasises the significant impact of burnout on teachers' intentions to quit, with exhaustion being the most important predictor (Madigan & Kim, 2021). While it provides substantial insights, the study acknowledges limitations, including its reliance on correlational data, which can elucidate relationships between variables but is less definitive in establishing causation (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

In line with this, previous research also highlights the interconnectedness of teacher burnout, job satisfaction, and the intention to quit. For instance, a study by Montgomery and Rupp (2005) found persistent effects of burnout on job satisfaction and subsequent teacher turnover while emphasising the critical role of administrative support in mitigating these effects. Shen et al. (2015) further explore how environmental factors, such as student behaviour and administrative policies, contribute to teacher stress and burnout, potentially leading to lower job satisfaction and higher attrition rates. Additionally, a more recent study by Gray et al. (2019) discusses the importance of resilience and coping strategies in reducing burnout and improving retention among teachers. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of teacher burnout and job satisfaction, illustrating the need for multi-pronged approaches to address teacher stress and enhance their professional wellbeing and retention (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Shen et al., 2015; Gray et al., 2019).

In response to the consistent findings in the literature concerning teacher stress associated with workload, the Department for Education has attempted to tackle some of these challenges by publishing a plan (Department for Education, 2019a). The Department of Education's 2019 plan to address teachers' stress involved recognising data management as a significant cause of unnecessary workload in schools. To tackle this, the DfE committed to carrying out user research to determine the need for a tool or checklist on effective data use, with the aim to include this in the workload reduction toolkit. The DfE also planned to use the report's findings to inform its guidance and update the toolkit's content, ensuring it reflects the identified principles.

To tackle some of the challenges related to workload and long working hours, they recommended tackling and promoting the following: 1) Engagement from senior leaders, 2) Implementing whole school approaches, 3) Support mentoring and training, 4) fostering resilience and mindfulness, 5) Healthy lifestyles and 6) Positive environments and signposting. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a delay in implementing the plan to target workload-associated challenges.

1.2.1 Efforts, Rewards and Administrative Demands

The perceived imbalance between efforts, rewards, and administrative demands can also impact teachers' burnout levels and job satisfaction (Van Dick & Wagner, 2001). Using a cross-sectional survey, they examined the relationship between teacher burnout and the reciprocity between effort, rewards and administrative demands in their job in Germany. In this case, the research design was fit for purpose as they needed to measure multiple independent and dependent variables. They found that when teachers felt an imbalance between the effort they would put into their job and the rewards they would receive, combined with administrative duties, it resulted in high burnout amongst staff and decreased job satisfaction. A limitation of the above research is that its findings may have limited generalisability as the sample was restricted to individuals from Germany, and the findings may differ according to the country, context and culture a teacher may be from (i.e. personal characteristics). The social constructionist perspective posits that social interactions and cultural contexts shape knowledge and experiences, and therefore, there is a need for local studies to better understand social and cultural variation in the understanding and interpretation of stress as a construct.

1.2.2 Balancing Academic and Pastoral Needs within the Teaching Profession

As an additional consideration, the role of teachers extends beyond academic instruction to include pastoral care, thereby placing them at the intersection of educational and emotional support for students. This dual responsibility significantly impacts their workload and stress levels, influencing their overall wellbeing. Research, including recent empirical studies, has consistently highlighted the stress associated

with the teaching profession, stemming from a variety of sources, including workload, student behaviour, and administrative duties.

Current literature, building on studies like Birchinal et al. (2019) and Day and Gu (2007), continues to provide insights into the multifaceted nature of teacher stress. For example, the study on the impact of student self-disclosure during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the additional emotional labour and stress experienced by educators (Dutton & Sotardi, 2023). Similarly, research on the non-linear contribution of specific teaching tasks elucidates how varying academic responsibilities can differentially impact teacher wellbeing (Jerrim & Sims, 2021). These reinforce the understanding of the cumulative burden and intricate balance of educational and emotional needs that teachers must manage.

To critically explore the links between academic and pastoral duties and teacher stress, theoretical frameworks like the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provide a useful lens. This model helps delineate how the dual demands of teaching lead to stress when resources are inadequate. Recent scoping reviews and empirical studies further contribute to this understanding by highlighting essential predictors of teacher wellbeing, such as workload, work stress, and work environment (Muzakki & Arum, 2022).

Critically examining the methodologies and findings of key studies requires attention to the diversity of educational contexts, the evolving nature of teaching demands, and the specificity of measured outcomes. For instance, examining the changes in teacher stress throughout the academic year offers insights into how stressors fluctuate and may require different interventions at different times (von der Embse & Mankin, 2021).

Rienzo et al. (2015) and Suldo et al. (2013) report that when students' social and emotional needs are met, they are more likely to achieve higher and have better academic outcomes than those who do not receive such support. While support is ultimately necessary for students, balancing academic and pastoral educational needs is a significant challenge for teachers (Salter-Jones, 2012). Therefore, they state that finding such a balance within the dual role places strain and creates stress on staff

members as they are partly responsible for supporting and meeting the student's needs.

1.3 The Ambiguity of the Teacher's Role

Travers and Cooper (1993) found that teachers' exposure to various job pressures and personal factors predicted poor mental health but was mainly associated with the ambiguity of the teacher's role. The ambiguity comprised the teacher's feeling of unclear expectations and responsibilities. Those who experienced a lack of clarity were likelier to experience poor mental health outcomes than teachers who understood their job clearly. To further support this, Stoeber and Rennert (2008) found that a lack of clear expectations and role confusion led to increased stress among teachers.

Educational policies and practices have also been found to contribute to teachers experiencing stress. For example, Kyriacou (2001) stated that the demand for the teaching role could be overwhelming when teachers experience role ambiguity. This can cause teachers to experience even higher stress levels, especially if they perceive a lack of support from their senior leadership in school. He expanded by stating that this can cause further disruption to other areas of the teacher's role in a school, such as job satisfaction, student outcomes and teachers' wellbeing.

Therefore, addressing issues related to role ambiguity is a critical area that schools must address to mitigate its impact on teacher stress and improve student learning. For example, Sang et al. (2022) found that supporting teachers in their roles, such as mentoring and professional development opportunities, can significantly reduce teacher stress and improve job satisfaction.

As presented in the definition section below, stress can be linked with mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Therefore, as an extension of pre-pandemic research on teacher stress, the following section will provide an overview of research exploring teachers' mental health and wellbeing before the pandemic.

1.4 An Overview of Teacher Mental Health and Wellbeing

Before the pandemic, there was growing evidence of increased mental health difficulties (Travers, 2017) and dissatisfaction with the teaching profession experienced by teachers across the U.K. (Toropova et al., 2021). The factors that impact the teaching profession stem from individual and systemic components. For example, Ouellet et al. (2018) found that personal characteristics (i.e. teaching experience and coping mechanisms (such as mindful self-regulation skills and self-compassionate mind-sets)) along with systemic factors (such as school policies, culture and student behaviour) all contribute to teacher-wellbeing. They argued that implementing support for teachers requires considering systemic and individual factors. Some of the recommendations from the above studies were related to providing adequate resources and support for teachers, developing healthy work environments, and offering mindfulness programmes and other self-care strategies to help teachers manage their stress and promote their wellbeing.

Birchall et al. (2019) conducted a study in the United Kingdom, providing another example of some of the key findings and implications of mental health difficulties experienced by teachers. They found that, in the U.K., teacher absence due to mental health concerns had increased from "213,000 days in 2004 to approximately 312,000 days in 2017, leading to a financial cost of over £65 million" (Birchinall et al., 2019, p.1). Additionally, Day and Gu (2007) found that job demands detrimentally affect teacher commitment, wellbeing, and health and are a barrier to maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Therefore, in line with existing research, mental health concerns are considered a key reason for absence from work and a leading cause of attrition in the teaching profession (Bowers, 2004).

1.4.1 The Teacher Wellbeing Index (2018; 2019)

The Teacher Wellbeing Index is an annual report carried out by Education Support and provides insight into the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and education staff working in schools in the U.K. All respondents are recruited from the YouGov research panel, and the data is weighted to be representative of the wider education population by stage, organisation, type and respondent age to ensure generalisations can be made to the wider education population.

The Teacher Wellbeing Index (2018) reported that out of 314 educational staff who completed the survey, 69% had reported that symptoms of mental health issues were related to excessive workload, 43% related mental health issues to students' behaviour, and 41% related their symptoms to unreasonable demands by management. Concerning this, the index also highlighted that the most critical aspect in which teachers' work performance was affected by mental health issues was their ability to plan lessons and mark students' work (30%). Additionally, work performance negatively impacted their ability to manage poor student behaviour in classes (41%); relationship with colleagues was also reported by 21% and student learning (15%).

A year later, the Teacher Wellbeing Index (2019) indicated that 34% of educational professionals experienced a mental health issue in the past academic year. Furthermore, 78% of all educational professionals experiencing symptoms relating to mental health were reported to be due to their work. In 2019, 84% of senior leaders reported the highest stress levels compared to 80% in 2018 and 75% in 2017. On average, educational professionals scored 44.7 on the 14-point Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), lower than the general population score of 49.85 in England. The WEMWBS (Tennant et al., 2007) is a self-report questionnaire that measures an individual's psychological wellbeing. It is used to assess various aspects of wellbeing, including positive affect, satisfying interpersonal relationships, and a sense of purpose in life. The scale consists of 14 statements, and respondents rate how often they have experienced these feelings or thoughts over the past two weeks. A WEMWBS score of 44.7, as above, represents the mean score achieved by teachers completing the scale. The WEMWBS score typically ranges from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating higher levels of wellbeing. Therefore, a WEMWBS score of 44.7 falls in the low-to-moderate wellbeing range. In addition, there has been an increase in the reported levels of stress by staff in schools in 2019 (73%) since 2017 (67%).

1.4.2 A note on the role of individual differences on the effect of working conditions and mental wellbeing.

Whilst the scope of the current study does not explore individual differences, it is noteworthy to consider how individual differences impact mental health and wellbeing. A study by Tushnova et al. (2022) highlighted the role of personal growth and development in relation to enhancing resilience and coping mechanisms among teachers. It provides an understanding of individual differences and professional development. They found that there were individual differences between teachers' psychological wellbeing and the professional demands engaged in professional activities. However, the study might benefit from a broader consideration of external factors such as institutional support and policy frameworks that also significantly impact wellbeing.

Another study by Capone and Petrillo (2020) examined the relationships between job satisfaction, efficacy beliefs, burnout and depression. Using a self-report questionnaire, they found that there were significant differences between permanent and temporary teachers in relation to their job satisfaction and teacher efficacy. The study suggested that the type of contract influenced their job satisfaction. Further, they found that boosting teachers' confidence supported their overall wellbeing and that self-efficacy and job satisfaction were more strongly related to depression than burnout. The study acknowledges that further research is needed that considers contextual factors such as school size and age of students as it challenges the school functions and can increase the demands on teachers, which in turn can impact teachers' efficacy and well-being (Avanzi et al., 2018). They study's strength lies in the detailed exploration of the psychological landscape of teachers, but it may have limitations due to its cross-sectional nature, which restricts the ability to establish causation. In line with this, Cann et al. (2022) highlight the role of both individual and environmental factors on teacher wellbeing. Cann and colleagues (2022) explored the interplay between individual, relational, and organisational factors and their impact on teacher wellbeing. The study found that while individual, relational, and organisational factors all contributed to teacher wellbeing, the perception of trusting and collaborative school conditions emerged as the most important predictor of wellbeing.

In summary, recent studies collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between individual differences, working conditions, and the mental wellbeing of teachers. They highlight the importance of both personal and environmental factors, calling for a comprehensive approach to addressing teacher wellbeing. However, they also underscore the need for further research, particularly longitudinal and diverse studies, to deepen and refine our understanding of these crucial dynamics. Before exploring the literature concerning the impact of the pandemic on teachers' stress, mental health and wellbeing, it is important to define and operationalise these concepts.

1.5 Definitions

1.5.1 Defining teacher stress

Consistent with research, the teaching occupation has often been associated with work-related stress, generating the term teacher stress (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977). Work-related stress is a fundamental challenge for policymakers (Naghieh et al., 2015), and within the teaching profession, numerous reports support the view of a high prevalence of work-related stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Seidman & Zager, 1991). According to Kyriacou (2011), teacher stress is the negative emotional state experienced by teachers as an outcome of their occupation. It is believed to be provoked by the perception of threat in dealing with the demands made upon them. Additionally, Kyriacou (2011) stipulates that the trigger of threat comprises three distinct parts: having to deal with demand, not satisfactorily meeting the needs of the demand, and the fear of negative consequences in failing to cope with demand.

The evolution of the definition of stress from Kyriacou stemmed from his early work with Sutcliff in 1977. They developed and presented a model of teacher stress where objective factors such as time constraints and workload are accounted for, and subjective factors such as their interpretation of how accessible resources are and their ability to cope with those demands are considered. The stress model below in Figure 1 has been presented differently from the original model but follows the same structure and loops (a, b, c, d).

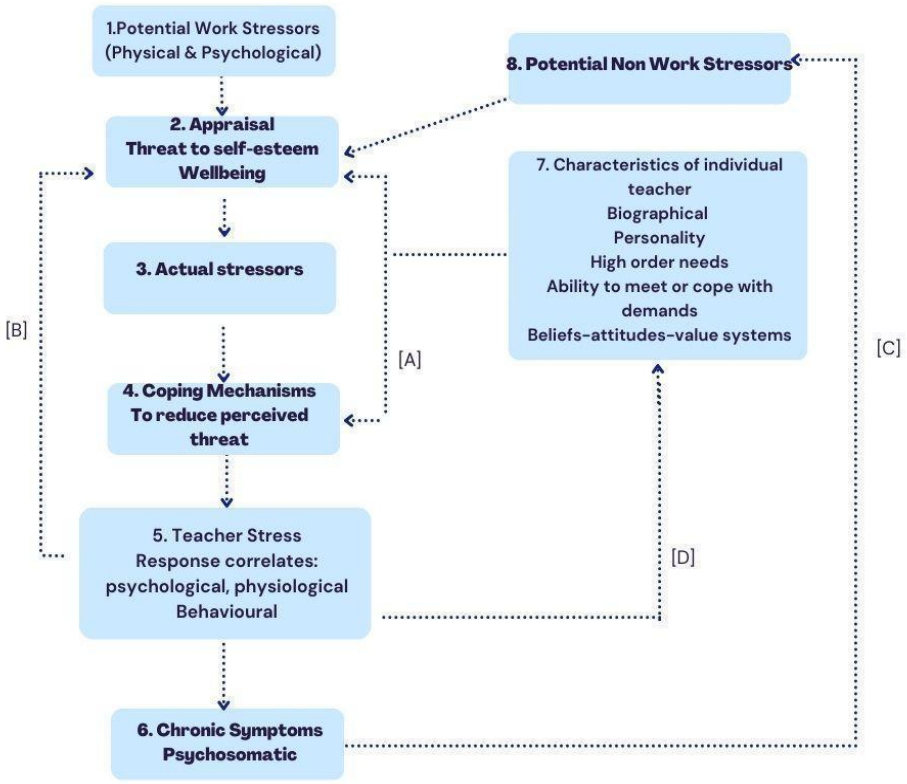


Figure 2 shows an adapted version of the model of stress by Kyriacou Sutcliffe (1978).

The stress model by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) can be understood by considering eight factors that make up teacher stress (see Figure 1). The first encompasses potential work stressors such as physical stressors (e.g., class sizes and high noises) and psychological stressors (e.g. pressure of producing quality work and poor relationships with others). The second captures their subjective understanding and interpretation of the potential stressors and the implications this can have on their self-esteem and wellbeing. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) argue that the appraisal of a situation or potential stressor made by the teachers is fundamental in establishing whether or not teachers encounter stress.

The following section will offer a definition of mental health and wellbeing that has been adopted for the current study.

1.5.2 Defining Mental Health and Wellbeing

The current study has adopted the definition of mental health from the World Health Organisation (2022b), which states that mental health is

"a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her potential can cope with the normal stresses of life can work productively and fruitfully and can make a contribution to her or his community."

The current study must adopt a definition that reflects a core universal concept while also considering differences in values across cultures, classes, and genders (WHO 2004, Mental Health, Para. 1). This definition takes a positivist approach to mental health and defines mental health as the foundation for wellbeing and effective functioning for an individual and community. This conceptualisation of mental health is consistent with its wide and varied interpretation across cultures and is ideally structured in a manner that reflects the heterogeneous makeup of the U.K.'s teaching profession.

In line with the above definition, in the context of the teaching profession, Aelterman (2007) defined teacher wellbeing as an emotional state that stems from congruence between environmental factors, teachers' personal needs and expectations. They argue that wellbeing can be measured through various constructs within a teacher's interaction with their job, such as job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and work stress burnout. This definition is relevant to this study as the teacher's context within their job is a vital component that will be explored in the current thesis.

1.5.3 The Interconnectedness of Mental Health and Wellbeing

To better understand the relationship between mental health and wellbeing, the Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health (Tudor, 1996; Jay et al., 2017) explains how individuals fall into four quadrants between mental health and wellbeing. Below is a figure to demonstrate this relationship.

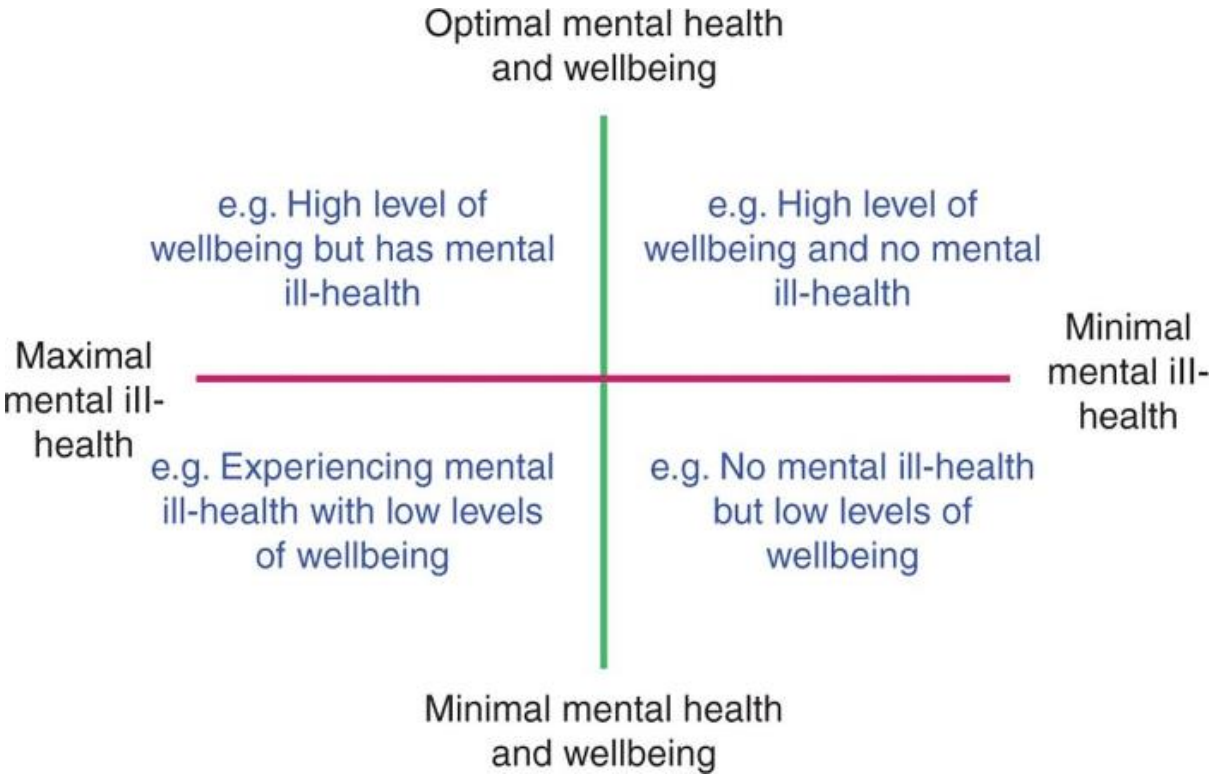


Figure 2: The Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health. Taken from Jay, Macadam, Gardner, Mahboub (2017)- Adapted version of Tudor (1996)

The Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health (Tudor, 1996) explains that mental health and mental illness as two related but distinct dimensions. More specifically, mental health and mental illness are proposed to not be on opposite ends of a single spectrum but exist on two separate continuums.

On the first continuum, mental health ranges from high-level mental wellbeing to low-level mental wellbeing. Tudor (1996) argues that high mental wellbeing can be characterised by positive feelings about oneself and others, highlighting the ability to cope. Conversely, low mental wellbeing is argued to maintain feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness or a lack of functioning. On the second continuum, mental illness ranges from the presence to the absence of mental illness. The absence of mental illness means that no mental health conditions are present.

Whilst the WHO definition of mental health is universal, the dual continuum model provides a more nuanced distinction between mental health and wellbeing in that they are closely related but distinct entities, i.e. an individual can have an absence of mental

illness and yet have a lack of "high" mental wellbeing. The WHO definition includes the term wellbeing within its definition, and therefore, making the distinction provides clarity between the two terms, especially as they are often used interchangeably. In the context of Educational settings, it provides practical implications that address the prevention of mental ill health and promote wellbeing, ensuring a holistic approach is adopted.

Now that teacher stress, mental health and wellbeing have been defined, and an overview of pre-pandemic teacher stress and wellbeing has been offered, the COVID-19 pandemic and how it impacted schools will be discussed.

1.6 Overview of the COVID-19 Pandemic and its global impact

The first case of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was detected in December 2019 and spread globally. On 30th January 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was announced as an international public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). As of March 2020, there has been a report of over 595.2 million confirmed cases, accompanied by more than 6.45 million corona-related deaths worldwide (WHO, 2022a). In the United Kingdom (U.K.), over 23.46 million confirmed cases and over 187,017 deaths between March 2020 and May 2022. Figure 3 shows the daily growth rate of COVID-19 confirmed new cases per million in the U.K. between March 2020 and May 2022.

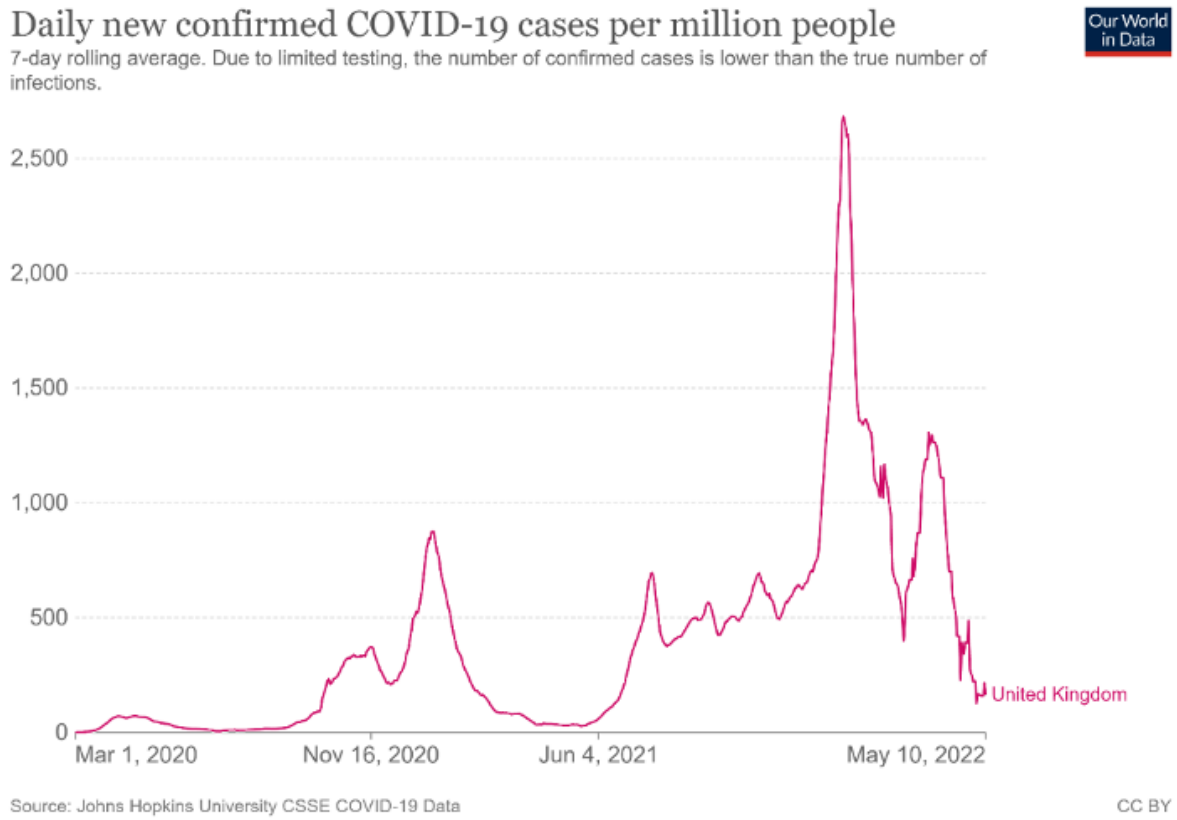


Figure 3: Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people in the U.K.The figure highlights the rapid increase in daily reported infection rates at several time points within the period explored in the current study.

Given the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes pertinent to consider its impact on teachers. The following section will delve deeper into the specific effects COVID-19 has had on education, with particular emphasis on teachers, who are at the core of this vital sector. This closer examination will highlight the situation's complexities and lay the groundwork for the subsequent discussion on teacher stress and wellbeing in the context of the pandemic.

1.7 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Education Sector

1.7.1 Non-pharmacological Interventions

The rapid spread of COVID-19 brought about a global effort to introduce several disease control policies intended to hinder viral transmission chains, often called Non-Pharmacological Interventions (Ferguson et al., 2020). Such approaches included lockdown strategies such as social distancing, quarantine, and isolation (U.K. Government, 2021). Concerning schools, by mid-April 2020, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020a) estimated that around 192 countries had employed national school closures related to COVID-19, affecting roughly 90% of the global student population (~1.5 billion students[1] people).

1.7.2 School Closures in England

The U.K. Government announced the closure of schools on 20th March 2020 but remained open to only a priority group of students, including children of critical workers and vulnerable students. During national school closures, teaching continued through online learning platforms, with 86% of private schools compared to 50% of state schools using online teaching during the first lockdown (Montacute & Cullinane, 2021). The pandemic was a novel experience for the English schooling system, and as shown by Ball et al. (2020), teachers experienced a sense of being overwhelmed and unsupported by the Government's inconsistent, unclear information and changing guidance. Consequently, their study found that many teachers were left confused and anxious, impacting their ability to effectively educate their students. This is further supported by Ainscow et al. (2021) research, which found that due to the Government's response to the pandemic, school staff reported feeling uncertainty and confusion. They further argued that the Government's response was fragmented and reactive, leading to disparities concerning remote teaching. This will be further discussed in the literature review.

Several organisations, such as The Sutton Trust (Cullinane & Montacute, 2020), provided guidance for schools concerning school closures during this period and emphasised the need to prioritise disadvantaged students. They highlighted the need to ensure that all students had access to educational resources (i.e. technology and books) and support during the pandemic. Within the guidance, they also made several recommendations around schools maintaining clear communication with all their staff, students and families and providing mental and emotional support for student wellbeing. Finally, they recommended that organisations and schools work together to provide additional support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and have a plan for a phased return to in-person teaching and learning with safety measures in place.

In line with the phased return to schools, on 1st June 2020, early years providers and primary schools were requested to reopen for students in crucial transition years (nursery, reception, years 1 and 6). From 15th June 2020, secondary schools were opened for year 10 and 12 students to attend school in small groups, with public health risk reduction measures in place. With the new academic year, schools in England reopened in early September 2020 amid the coronavirus pandemic and closed again in January 2021.

To demonstrate how the pandemic caused scheduled school closures, see the table below highlighting the implementation timeline of the three national lockdowns and the general school closure status. A full timeline of Government announcements, implementation of national lockdowns and non-pharmaceutical interventions put in place by the Government can be found in Appendix A. The implications of school closure on teachers will be discussed in the literature review of this thesis.

Table 1: This table shows a timeline of the three national lockdowns

Lockdown identifier	Date of Announcement of lockdown	School closure status
1	23/03/2020	Schools closed
2	05/11/2020	Reopened but closed at the start of the Christmas holidays
3	06/01/2021	Schools closed

1.7.3 Bubbles in Schools

During the COVID-19 pandemic, U.K. schools introduced the concept of "bubbles" as a precautionary measure to curb the spread of the virus and streamline contact tracing. These bubbles were groups of students and staff who interacted solely with one another, reducing the risk of infection. The formation of these bubbles was based on various factors, such as the size and structure of the school, and they could be organised by class, year group, or shared spaces. By striking a balance between in-person education and safety precautions, these bubbles effectively aided in identifying close contacts and managing potential outbreaks within school communities, thus helping to contain the spread of the virus (GOV.UK, 2020).

As an additional factor to consider, when bubbles were introduced as a part of the safety measures in school, Kim, Fields and Ashbury (2023) found that the implementation of such a measure created more stress for teachers as this added to their workload, difficulties in managing student behaviour and stressors related to organising and planning lessons and assessments. Similarly, Maitland and Glazzard (2022) found that using bubbles negatively affected teacher wellbeing and increased stress due to the additional responsibilities and complexities associated with such a safety measure. Alternatively, Maitland and Glazzard (2022) and Simpson (2023) found that when participants felt that teaching-related changes were clearly communicated (such as bubbles), some teachers reported positive attitudes toward change.

1.7.4 Adaptation of Teaching Practice in Response to the Pandemic

The teaching profession as a whole was heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic owing to the disruption to teaching practice (Avgerinou & Moros, 2020), changes to teachers' familiar routine (Midcalf & Boatwright, 2020) and adding additional responsibilities within their job roles (Beames et al., 2021). In addition, teachers were required to adapt and adjust to the 'new normal' of working from home (including, in some cases, caring for their own children and vulnerable family members), adapting their teaching materials to online platforms, becoming familiar with technology as well as finding ways to manage their stress.

While there have been long-standing and widespread calls for adopting online and blended teaching (Ferdig & Kennedy, 2014), many teachers were ill-prepared to address the challenges of digital learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Hodges et al., 2020). Further, as key workers were required to work, students from those families attended school. A report by the OECD (2020a) found that due to the differing levels of access to remote teaching by students and their engagement in learning, challenges faced by teachers have been further intensified (König et al., 2020). As such, teachers had to consider numerous factors within their role and require emotional and social competence to cope and support students with the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Chen and Miller's (1997) study provides useful insight, especially when applied to the pandemic context, as many of the major stressors found are consistent with emergent research during the pandemic, with most stressors occurring simultaneously. Specifically, excessive paperwork, changes to workload, and changes in school policy appear particularly important when considering pandemic-related stressors; this will be discussed more comprehensively in the literature review.

Research is also emerging around the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on teachers' mental health and wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, the increased workload is one of the biggest contributors to negatively impacting teachers' mental health (Walker et al., 2020). Furthermore, considering the magnitude of the changes that required

teachers to adapt, teachers were exposed to new challenges regarding their teaching practice (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; Reimers & Schleicher, 2020), creating additional challenges that contributed to increases in teacher stress (Petrakova et al., 2021).

Along with an ever-evolving education system and teacher's job role, the tension of balancing academic and pastoral needs for teachers has been acknowledged by various studies, and as the Green Paper (Department For Education, 2022) emphasises, schools and, by extension, teachers, need to support children's social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH).

During the pandemic, based on the guidance provided by the Sutton Trust (Montacute, 2020), teachers faced heightened expectations to prioritise the wellbeing of students. This added to the increasing pressure on teachers, especially in light of new research suggesting a rise in mental health issues among students, most notably during lockdown periods (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021a).

The novelty of experiencing such an event, coupled with the simultaneous development of government guidelines, would inevitably create a sense of uncertainty for teachers regarding their job roles. Emerging research (Myburgh, 2021; Knapp, 2022) concerning ambiguity during the pandemic suggests that this is rooted in conflicting information and expectations among various school stakeholders, such as senior leadership, parents, teachers, and students.

1.8 The Theoretical framework utilised in the current study

The bioecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) was adopted as the theoretical framework underpinning the current study to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the systemic factors surrounding teachers impact job-related stress. However, given that the central tenant of this thesis surrounds teacher stress, the model has been adapted by placing the teacher at the centre of the model.

The Bioecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) is based on the understanding that different systems around an individual's environment impact several factors such as their perspective, behavioural responses and overall experience. Further, the model explains how the systems around the person interact and influence one another. Subsequently, it demonstrates that a person's experience is immersed within various hierarchical systems that are proximal and direct (such as the home or workplace) and some that are distal (such as political systems or economies). It has been argued that all levels can impact the individual at the centre of the model, with proximal systems being the most impactful. As such, proximal processes are identified as the engines that drive an individual's experience, including having the most impact on an individual's wellbeing, influenced by the quality of the interactions with these processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The following section will provide a brief overview of each layer of the model.

1.8.1 An Overview of the Bioecological Systems Model

Microsystem

The first level of the bio-ecological systems model is the Microsystem, which encompasses the immediate environment around the person where they have sustained direct contact with members within that system. So, for example, with the teacher in the centre of the model, this may include colleagues, students, family, parents, and wider staff (i.e., SLTs and teaching assistants).

Mesosystem

The second system within the Bio-ecological systems model is the Mesosystem. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007) describe a system made up of interactions of members from the Microsystem. Essentially, the mesosystem exists to understand the relationships between the different microsystems and the interconnectedness amongst those within the Microsystem. One way to conceptualise the Mesosystem is to consider it a system exploring social networks within the Microsystem.

Therefore, within the context of this thesis, it may include interactions between members from the Microsystem and the teacher; it is important to note that the interactions and relationships described above are bi-directional and, therefore, influence one another. Consistent with research, teachers are exposed to and are subject to building rapport, relationships and networks around members in their immediate environment to support student learning (Department of Education, 2020a).

Exosystem

The third layer within the Bio-ecological systems model is the Exosystem, which consists of formal and informal social structures. Bronfenbrenner describes this system as indirectly impacting the person in the centre of the model. This system may include the Government, the Department for Education (DfE), the Local Authority (services within the L.A. such as the EPS), Mass Media and the local community around the school. It is important to acknowledge that this particular system is significant to explore as different legislation or guidance put forward by some of the Exosystem structures can impact the teaching practice and the school (such as the DfE).

Macrosystem

The fourth layer within the bio-ecological systems model is the Macrosystem, which considers the attitudes and ideologies of the person's culture. However, it is important to note that their attitudes and ideologies are not based on their own beliefs but rather the attitudes and ideologies of the society they belong in. This may include societal

attitudes, legislation, teaching practice, government guidance and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chronosystem

The final layer within the bio-ecological systems model is the Chronosystem, which consists of the different environmental changes that occur over time. In the context of this thesis, the pandemic, including the three national lockdowns, is a significant influence on the teachers and their experience of stress. Additionally, it explains how different support systems evolve.

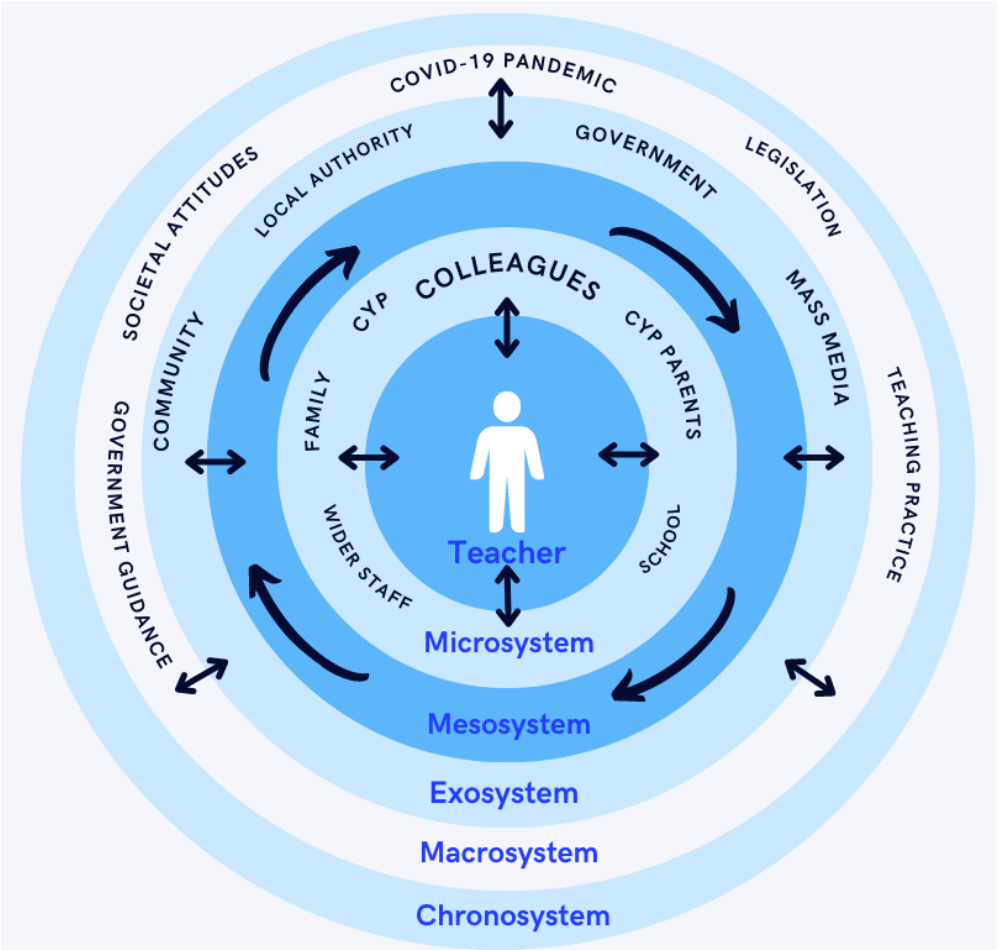


Figure 3: This figure shows the adapted version of the Bio-Ecological Systems Model

1.8.2 The use of the Bronfenbrenner model to gain insight into teacher stress.

According to Montgomery and Rupp (2005), stress related to teachers has been associated with individual and environmental factors. These factors include workload,

lack of control over work, time constraints and a lack of support from colleagues. They concluded that in order to explore and understand teacher stress, a multi-level, systemic approach should be adopted. By extension, interventions and support for teachers also require adopting a systemic and holistic approach to address organisational and individual challenges. Alarcon et al. (2015) share a similar conclusion from their research; they found that teacher wellbeing was associated with contextual (work environment) and personal factors (self-esteem, emotional intelligence), and therefore, interventions should consider both individual and contextual factors. Hence, when the teacher is placed at the centre of the bioecological systems model, the model allows for exploring the complex interplay between different factors surrounding the teacher. For example, stress experienced by teachers can be understood by exploring the micro-system (e.g. the class and school), mesosystem (the interactions between those factors), Exosystem (e.g. Local Authority), Macrosystem (societal, political and economic factors) and chronosystem (changes over time).

In summary, when adapted for teachers, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems model provides a thorough framework to understand the job-related factors contributing to teacher stress. This model sheds light on the intricate interplay between teachers' social, cultural, and environmental contexts, helping to better understand the origins and dynamics of job-related stress. It is, therefore, essential to emphasise a person-centric approach in this research, acknowledging that these systems comprise individuals, their relationships, and the broader structures they operate within.

1.9 The Current study

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound implications for societies worldwide, affecting every sector, including education. The virus's rapid spread led to a global health crisis unprecedented in modern times. As a response, governments worldwide implemented lockdowns, which led to the closure of schools, impacting millions of students and teachers alike.

Research before the pandemic provides valuable insights into teacher stress, mental health, and wellbeing. Studies have consistently found teaching to be a demanding profession, often marked by high levels of stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Johnson et al., 2005). This stress can stem from many sources, such as workload, student behaviour, and lack of resources or support (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Prolonged exposure to such stressors has been linked to mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, and a reduced sense of wellbeing (Kidger et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2005).

However, much of this research has been conducted in a pre-pandemic context, and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to rapid changes across the educational landscape, likely intensifying existing stressors and introducing new stressors. Thus, a critical knowledge gap exists in our understanding of teacher stress in the context of a pandemic. More specifically, the impact on teacher stress due to the evolution of their roles during the pandemic and the transition to innovative teaching practices has yet to be fully explored. This thesis aims to address this gap by exploring teachers' unique challenges and stressors during this unprecedented crisis.

Given that teaching is already a stressful occupation, the additional responsibilities and role changes brought about during the COVID-19 pandemic need to be further considered. Teachers were particularly vulnerable to the additional psychological pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic as they needed to act as first respondents to students' socio-emotional and learning needs whilst considering factors such as inclusion and the health and safety of students. Multiple factors were at play during the pandemic, and teachers had to consider new teaching approaches. Therefore, ensuring that the systems around them supported teachers in managing stress and avoiding exhaustion were important factors for fostering teacher and student mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore, as the pandemic is no longer considered a global health emergency (Wise, 2023), support systems need to be available for teachers in the aftermath of the pandemic. However, there is an emergent literature concerning the impact of COVID-19 on teacher stress, and it has yet to be fully considered; therefore, it represents the current research's central tenet.

Furthermore, the unique context of London as a significant and influential global city further highlights the importance of the current study's findings. London, with its

diverse and densely populated nature, experienced unique challenges during the pandemic, including significant disruptions to its education system and the implementation of unprecedented public health measures. The focus on London allows the study to delve into the specific impacts of COVID-19 on an influential urban education system, providing insights that may be applicable to other global cities facing similar crises. By examining the stressors, challenges, and adaptations of teachers in London, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the pandemic's impact on education, offering valuable lessons for future crises and underscoring the importance of supporting teachers through global health emergencies and beyond. Highlighting London's role as a microcosm for global urban centres can underline the wider applicability and importance of the study's findings.

1.9.1 Thesis Overview

The structure of the present thesis is designed to systematically address the central research objectives. Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive and critical appraisal of the literature concerning teacher stress. It examines the pedagogical repercussions of historical pandemics, thereby providing a contextual foundation. Furthermore, it evaluates emergent literature that delineates teacher stress's nuances amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, setting the stage for subsequent investigation.

Chapter 3 highlights the study's research paradigm, offering a detailed exposition of the methodologies adopted. It encompasses discussions on research design, participant selection, instruments of data acquisition, and analytic techniques. The justification for each methodological choice is presented, underpinned by relevant academic rationales.

Subsequently, in Chapter 4, a thematic analysis of the findings was carried out, all within the context of established research and theoretical models. The four emergent themes are described and evidenced. Finally, Chapter 5 offers reflective insights on the study's broader pedagogical implications. It delineates actionable recommendations in terms of practical pedagogical interventions, potential future research avenues, and the role of E.P.s in supporting teachers. The intent is to equip educational stakeholders with informed strategies and depict prospective research trajectories.

2. Literature Review

The following chapter will provide a critical overview of the research on teacher stress in the context of past pandemics and COVID-19. A literature review was conducted using the following digital databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, PSYCH Articles and PsycINFO. To search for literature on past pandemics/ epidemics regarding teacher stress, terms such as "teacher pandemic", "teacher epidemic", and "school pandemic mental health" were used. To search for literature on Covid-19 concerning teachers, the following key terms were used across the same databases as above: "COVID-19", "COVID-19 pandemic", and "pandemic 2020 schools U.K.," "teacher stress Covid-19 pandemic" "teaching practice covid-19" "teacher stress U.K. and Covid-19" "Covid-19 support teachers" "Bioecological systems model Covid-19, teachers". Key search terms used for this review were: “stress”, "teacher stress", "teacher stressors", “wellbeing”, “well-being”, "teacher psychological well-being," "teacher mental health," and "secondary school teacher." Exclusion criteria included non-English language, non-school education articles, and articles published earlier than 1990. Furthermore, several official government reports and statistics were included in the review.

2.1 Impact of Pandemics on Education

Research on past epidemics and disasters (see Neria et al., 2008; Qin & Jiang, 2011) demonstrates how negative events can impact the teacher's job role and their overall stress, mental health, and well-being. Research on past pandemics highlights that their impact extends beyond the immediate health implications to influence various psychological and professional dimensions (Kuntz et al., 2013; Welby, 2019). Consequently, teachers often find themselves on the frontline, managing personal stressors with professional pressures, compounded further by the bidirectional nature of these stressors. Additionally, the literature frequently highlights that a lack of preparedness often leads to increased emotional exhaustion, burnout, and job tension among teachers (Pas et al.,2012; Izquierdo et al., 2021). Furthermore, people who support others who have experienced trauma are particularly vulnerable to a type of stress referred to as secondary traumatic stress (STS; Figley & Kleber, 1995). This is significant to note as, excluding parents and guardians, teachers are often the key members of society that support students (Rothì et al., 2008). Regarding the COVID-

19 pandemic, teachers were considered frontline key workers and played a central role in supporting students with their academic and pastoral needs. It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that teachers were at a higher risk of experiencing STS. While the effect of STS has been investigated by medical professionals and other frontline staff (e.g. Bride, 2007), the manifestation of STS in teachers has received less attention (Schepers, 2017).

As COVID-19 is a global concern, the short-term and long-term effects may have significant implications on institutions such as schools and their members. In order to provide further context regarding the concerns surrounding teacher's stress related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the following section will provide an overview of the research that has emerged within the last three years, which explores the impact that the pandemic has had on the teachers' context (the school) and therefore their practice and stress.

2.2 COVID-19, School Closure and Its Implications on its Members

While the decision to close schools appears logical to combat the spread of disease, there are also potential adverse effects of school closure on students and teachers that need to be considered (Kneale et al., 2020). For instance, potential negative effects for students include poorer nutrition due to missed school meals (Jackson et al., 2013) and increased exposure to unstable and dangerous home environments (Stratil et al., 2020). In addition, school closures also impact students' educational progress, disrupting the delivery of teaching and learning (Colao et al., 2020), which in turn impacts teachers and their practice. The pandemic fundamentally changed how teachers performed their jobs, and it is becoming evident that almost every aspect of those changes could have caused an increase in the amount of stress felt by teachers.

2.2.1 Impact of School Closures on Teachers

While emerging research highlights that teachers had to adjust the way they work due to school closures, there is also a need to consider the additional challenges teachers faced as schools reopened to combat the negative effects of school closures highlighted above. The following section will explore the impact of school closures in the U.K. and the different factors that emerged due to school closures.

In 2020, UNESCO (2020a) published a report which explored the negative consequences of school closures on teachers. The report found that confusion and stress were central factors in increasing teacher stress. In addition, the abruptness of school closures, including the uncertainty of closure duration and the novelty of remote education, further exacerbated the challenges experienced by teachers.

Considering each factor further, the ambiguity created by the abrupt nature of school closures meant that teachers faced the challenge of quickly adapting to unfamiliar teaching methods and technologies while lacking the skills to utilise them efficiently (UNESCO, 2020a; Hodges et al., 2020). This led to increased confusion and stress among teachers related to their teaching practice and further increased difficulty in meeting their students' academic and pastoral needs (Bao, 2020). Other factors highlighted above, such as uncertainty regarding the duration of school closures, meant that teachers could not plan for future lessons. Consequently, many teachers experienced a lack of clarity regarding their teaching practice, leading to increased job-related stress (Crawford et al., 2020). In addition, the 'digital divide' emerged, which resulted from the rapid shift to remote learning and highlighted a divide across many students and teachers who lacked access to technology and the internet.

The widening of the attainment gap

Evidence from other studies of school closure (e.g. teacher strikes, snow days) suggests that students may fall behind roughly the equivalent of between 20% to 50% of a standard deviation in the distribution of achievement when schools are closed for ten or more days (Baker, 2013; Belot & Webbink, 2010). In the context of the

pandemic, nationwide school closures were expected to further widen the attainment gap between students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). For example, Van Lancker and Parolin (2020) found that the widening of attainment gaps caused by factors such as access to technology and resources for remote learning led to teachers being faced with additional challenges of having to adapt learning for students who did not have access to the internet, a place to study or a laptop. Further, they highlight the need for local and national legislators to face the challenges that will present themselves once the pandemic subsides. Research carried out by the Sutton Trust (2021) confirmed that students in state schools in the most deprived areas were less likely to have access to digital devices relative to students in private schools (Montacute & Cullinane, 2021). The study also reported school-level differences in how remote teaching was taking place. For example, it was found that 86% of private schools were using live video conferencing compared with 50% of state schools. Furthermore, similar to the findings from UNESCO (2020a), the rapid shift to remote learning had a negative impact on teacher stress as they felt additional pressure to address those gaps and support students who may be struggling. Recently, Vigevano and Mattei (2023) argued that the lack of attention to the struggles of children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds regarding digital education was a failure of the Government.

Inequalities

Additionally, school closures have been reported to impact young student's social and emotional development (Buheji et al., 2020; Giannini et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020b), and schools, specifically teachers, were at the frontline in offering emotional support to and security to students during times of crises (Keefe & McNally, 2020; Peek & Stough, 2010; Le Brocque et al., 2017; Mutch, 2015; Skovdal & Campbell, 2020; Shen & Sink, 2002). These challenges have impacted teachers as they have been faced with additional challenges, such as the inequalities in home learning and schools' provision of distance teaching (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020) and increasing child poverty (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Bayrakdar and Guveli (2020) used a mixed methods approach consisting of surveys, interviews with teachers, and observation of practices (remote education) to gain insight into teachers' experiences during the pandemic. They found that discrepancies between access to technology, varying technological

competency and levels of support from schools to teachers created additional stress and workload for teachers. In support of this, a number of studies carried out during the pandemic (Education Support, 2020a; Walker et al., 2020) state that pupils' learning loss and behaviour issues were among the most common COVID-19-related causes of teacher stress. There is also a need to consider that students with special educational needs encountered additional challenges in online education, negatively impacting their learning experiences during the pandemic (Bachtsis et al., 2024).

2.2.2 From Challenge to Adaptation: Teacher experiences of change and coping

A number of studies carried out since the onset of the pandemic highlight that teachers' role was impacted globally as school closures happened quickly (Shin et al., 2022). All emerging studies reported below investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' stress and mental health in different settings, though each focuses on a slightly different facet.

The emerging literature highlights a profession under tremendous pressure, grappling with many new stressors and challenges. A common theme across most articles is the increased stress levels and the negative impact on well-being that educators have experienced during the pandemic (Santamaría et al., 2021). This has been attributed to the sudden transition to remote teaching and its associated challenges. Additionally, many studies highlight that workload increases, feelings of incompetence (Cheng & Lam, 2021), lack of self-efficacy (Rabaglietti et al., 2021), and difficulties connecting with students were major stressors. For example, Hascher et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative investigation exploring Swiss primary teachers' professional well-being concerning school closure. The study found a generally negative evaluation of the transition to distance teaching, while medium to high levels of teacher well-being could still be maintained. The study identified high workload, social distancing, and feelings of lack of competence and self-efficacy as significant stressors. However, the study's methodological limitations, such as the use of retrospective interviews, might impact the participant's reconstruction and recall of events and experiences. Additionally, Chan et al. (2021) carried out a cross-sectional survey of 151 primary teachers in the

United States and found that the majority of teachers were emotionally exhausted, suffering from high levels of stress and feelings of job ambiguity.

Further studies reported that increases in school-closure-related teacher stress were driven by technostress (due to remote teaching) and inconsistent guidance regarding school policy (Yin et al., 2012; Okilwa & Barnett, 2021). In this context, technostress is the negative psychological state associated with information and communication technology (Salanova et al., 2003). Kundu and Bej (2021) reported that during the pandemic, teachers highlighted that the absence of preparation, training and infrastructure were obstacles related to online, remote teaching during the pandemic. Additionally, remote teaching practices within the U.K. exhibited a marked heterogeneity. Locally, there were pronounced disparities in how schools transitioned to and implemented online education: while some schools adeptly navigated the digital transition, establishing efficient and engaging online platforms, others struggled significantly (Andrew et al., 2020). These variations contributed to challenges such as limited access to technological resources among families. Following the conclusion of the pandemic, recent research highlights that teachers reported experiencing more burnout during (vs. before) the COVID-19 pandemic, with low perceived proficiency for online teaching identified as a key factor (Gutentag & Asterhan, 2022). In line with this, numerous studies have highlighted (Klapproth et al., 2020; Eickelmann & Drossel, 2020) that the increase in hours spent in distance learning was associated with higher stress. However, more recently, Bleck and Lipowsky (2022) found that the extent of distance learning was not related to changes in emotional exhaustion. The authors postulated that high distance learning levels may only cause stress under certain conditions, highlighting teachers' perceived technological competencies as one of the conditions.

Additionally, the presence of parents working from home, coupled with a potential lack of digital literacy, further complicated the situation (Coleman, 2021). In line with Bailey et al. (2021), there is a need to better understand the impact of these factors, as both have long-term implications on teachers' job-related stress. The need for more localised studies is highlighted as challenges associated with remote teaching variability are emerging globally (Hossain, 2021). Therefore, localised studies provide a nuanced understanding of remote education dynamics while considering individual

communities' unique challenges and strengths. The specificity of the current thesis, grounded in the local context of London during the pandemic, seeks to address and unpack these nuances.

Furthermore, many teachers faced the added pressure of managing their own children's education and well-being (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021b) or providing care for a family member with chronic conditions during lockdowns (Santamaría et al., 2021). Both studies highlighted the importance of attending to teachers' mental health, particularly those with children and those with a family member with a chronic condition. More recently, a study carried out by Jerrim et al. (2024) found that pandemic-related increases in work-related anxiety were most frequently associated with headteachers and female teachers – most notably those with young children.

Based on the emerging evidence, it is evident that professional support for teachers in the pandemic era is needed. Furthermore, these findings reflect the multifaceted nature of teachers' stressors, spanning both professional and personal domains.

Several studies also highlight the resilience of teachers and the crucial role of support mechanisms in helping to mitigate stress and maintain well-being during this period. For instance, a number of protective factors like ICT self-efficacy and positive attitudes towards online teaching were associated with lower stress levels and better coping. A study by Rabaglietti et al. (2021) in Northern Italy found that teachers' ICT self-efficacy positively affected the stress levels experienced within the school system during the pandemic. This aligns with research highlighting that low self-efficacy increases teachers' stress perception (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Greenberg et al., 2016). This also parallels previous research that more broadly examined curriculum change stress and found that it was negatively associated with teachers' work-related stress and self-efficacy (Putwain & Von der Embse, 2019).

Similarly, other studies highlight the importance of coworkers, administrators, and leadership support. For example, Collie (2021) explored the role of school leadership on teacher stress and reported that autonomy-supportive leadership was associated with lower stress related to change and emotional exhaustion. In contrast, autonomy-thwarting leadership was positively associated with emotional exhaustion. In

extension, Fox and Walter (2022) found that teachers who perceived that they were supported by colleagues or had networks of support outside of school tended to report better overall well-being. The study also found that teachers who felt they were part of a team were less likely to rely on individual coping mechanisms in response to stress. Likewise, research carried out before the pandemic also highlights the protective effects of colleague support (Renshaw et al., 2015), and emerging studies from the pandemic suggest that factors associated with school connectedness, such as leadership, collegial relationships, and the school's organisational culture, mattered most to teachers (Kraft et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2023). Finally, a number of studies carried out during the pandemic suggest that administrative support was significantly related to teacher efficacy and burnout (Sokal et al., 2021). The synthesis of these studies suggests that by providing extra resources, promoting teacher success and limiting the amount of extra work, school administrators can partially offset the stressors of the pandemic (Bottiani et al., 2019; Pressley & Ha, 2022).

Several studies also note the value of parental recognition and the benefits of remote work, such as the ability to work at one's own pace. For instance, Haines et al. (2022) reported that efforts to foster relationships between educators and families could aid educators in mitigating pandemic-related stress. Overall, the studies above highlight the importance of supportive leadership, colleagues and families in reducing teacher stress and promoting well-being. In terms of implications, many studies underscore the importance of providing necessary resources, support, and training to support teachers. They emphasise the need for strategies to enhance educators' well-being and stress management.

As discussed in the literature, teacher stress increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and research is emerging on its negative impact on teacher well-being (Alves et al., 2021). With the sudden need to transition to remote teaching and navigate through technological challenges, being faced with an increased workload and the challenges related to student engagement are contributory factors towards the increase in teacher stress (Pressley et al., 2021). Along with the stated factors, inconsistent guidance has further led to teachers feeling uncertain and powerless when faced with the challenges brought about by the pandemic (Kim et al., 2020).

Equally, the literature has also highlighted the importance of supportive leadership (Collie, 2021) and positive relationships with colleagues and student parents (Chen, 2020), which have been shown to mitigate stress and promote teacher well-being. Other protective factors that further support teachers in their job role include providing sufficient resources and training (Wray et al., 2022); teacher stress and their well-being should be prioritised by supporting teachers to access all the named factors.

Many teachers had competing responsibilities, such as home-schooling their children, caring for vulnerable family members, and maintaining their teaching responsibilities (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Using a reflexive thematic analysis, Kim and Asbury (2020) identified six themes from a cohort of 24 teachers during the first six weeks after the national lockdown was announced: (1) uncertainty, (2) finding a way, (3) worry for the vulnerable, (4) importance of relationships, (5) teacher identity and (6) reflections. Using a self-determination framework, they explored the challenges to teachers' psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness during the partial reopening of schools in mid-June 2020.

Briefly, the findings of the study highlight some of the challenges teachers have faced and lessons learned during the earliest phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first theme of uncertainty was generated through teachers' reports of feeling confused and apprehensive during the first national lockdown. They described that a lack of clarity and guidance around remote teaching, the unpredictability of the pandemic and worrying about students' academic and pastoral needs were the causes of their sense of uncertainty.

The second theme, "finding a way," encompasses the teachers' context of the necessity of learning to use online platforms to teach and communicate with students and adapt their assessment materials. Meanwhile, teachers display resilience and are resourceful by exploring different tools to support their lessons; they were able to find creative ways to engage and teach their students.

The third theme captures teachers worrying for vulnerable students such as those with SEN or students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and how this impacts students' ability to access remote learning. As described by the report, lockdown highlights and

exacerbates existing inequalities for their students and leads to additional barriers. Therefore, teachers felt an increased sense of responsibility to support vulnerable students.

Theme four encompasses the value of relationships for teachers during the national lockdown. For example, teachers emphasised the importance of building and maintaining strong connections with students, their families, and their colleagues. Specifically, teachers felt that fostering trust, collaboration and building a sense of community was necessary to counter the challenges of remote teaching.

The fifth theme centres around teachers re-evaluating their professional identities and teaching practices in the face of changes to teaching and learning. Kim and Asbury (2020) reported that while many teachers felt disconnected from the profession, others evaluated changes more positively, finding opportunities for growth and development.

Finally, the sixth theme, reflections, highlights lessons learned during lockdown. The study found that most teachers used lockdown to reflect on their teaching practice and reported a renewed appreciation of face-to-face teaching, while others reported the potential use of remote teaching as a complementary process to traditional teaching approaches.

In summary, the research above indicates that the pandemic has significantly impacted teacher stress, with changes in their roles and responsibilities, increased workloads, technostress, and uncertainty being major contributors. The studies above also emphasise the importance of support systems, strong relationships, and a sense of community among teachers and highlight the need for clearer guidance and consistent policies to alleviate teacher stress.

2.2.3 Additional Responsibilities and Challenges for Teachers During the Pandemic

Remote teaching: A series of case studies from the Department for Education

Engaging in remote teaching has been highlighted as a stressor for teachers during school closures (Department for Education, 2020b). This stress is thought to be compounded by students' varying levels of access to online learning technology (OECD, 2020). In addition, the Department for Education (2020b) explored how teachers engaged in remote education practices during the pandemic.

After conducting a series of case studies, they identified several ways to improve remote education during the pandemic. Some of these areas of improvement were around equitable access to technology for students, providing ongoing professional development for teachers such as training teachers to use different digital tools and online learning platforms, as well as engaging and supporting students in a remote learning environment. Another finding was around providing bespoke support for students with additional needs, thinking specifically about how they can access remote learning and maintaining communication and engagement with students and parents.

Perceived powerlessness

While there has been limited research concerning teacher's perceived powerlessness, the growing sentiment of perceived powerlessness among teachers (Ferdig et al., 2020) warrants further consideration. Perceived powerlessness is a complex and multifaceted concept and is thought to be partially driven by the intrinsic characteristics of the teaching profession (Short et al., 1999). For example, Smithers and Robinson (2003) found that teachers reported feeling a lack the autonomy and influence to make decisions about their classrooms, curriculum, and teaching methods. Additionally, Galton (2007) highlighted that the rise in standardised testing and assessment-driven education in the U.K. has been linked to this perceived powerlessness due to the loss of teachers' creativity and innovation in the classroom. Linked to this, as Kyriacou (2001) indicates, the increasing paperwork and non-teaching duties can divert

teachers from their primary role of teaching and can lead to increased stress and burnout. While the pandemic likely impacts the above factors, there is currently a lack of studies concerning this area.

Related to the pandemic, Ferdig et al. (2020) focused on teachers' experiences during remote learning and emphasised the importance of combating powerlessness by providing teachers with appropriate resources, training, and support. Relatedly, Teng & Wu (2021) also explored the dynamics of online teaching during the pandemic, shedding light on teachers' proactive and passive agency and found that the transition to digital platforms has necessitated a re-evaluation of pedagogical approaches and has influenced teachers' perceptions of their roles.

In light of these findings, there is a need to explore strategies for empowering teachers and the role of school leadership in fostering teacher well-being; the second research question of this thesis aims to address this.

Uncertainty

In the U.K., a survey was conducted by YouGov (2020) aimed at gaining the perspectives of teachers and leaders. Of the 820 respondents, 46% were uncertain of what may happen in the new school year in September, 43% of secondary teachers had higher levels of anxiety than normal related to student exams, and 31% reported that they had concerns about supporting families who required both emotional and financial support. Additionally, Kneale et al. (2020) explored, among several other topics, the impact of school closure on teachers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper highlights that increased workloads and stress during school closure were central concerns. This is in line with research that highlights the negative effects of teacher workload on wellbeing (Zeibell & Roberston, 2021) document. Also, there were increased concerns over job losses for school staff on precarious contracts and interruptions to teacher training.

Worried for students

A survey of 1,653 primary teachers in mainstream schools in England (Moss et al., 2020) explored the factors teachers identified as a high priority during the national lockdown. The study found that teachers' chief concern at the start of the lockdown centred around student welfare and involved checking how families were coping regarding basic food, health and emotional needs (72%) and providing support and advice for learning (63%). Further, the study highlighted that teachers planned to prioritise students' psychological wellbeing in a safe environment. As such, educational concerns related to catch-up and transitioning to the next academic year were reported low regarding teachers' priorities.

In a similar finding in the U.K., only a minority of teachers (40%) reported feeling prepared to meet the challenges to students' emotional and mental health (Lundie & Law, 2020). The survey also found that most teachers (79%) were concerned about the lack of available resources to address these challenges, and over 90% reported that they believed students would require more pastoral support than before. However, while covering the whole of the U.K., 80% of responses were from teachers in Scotland, and as such, the findings of the study mentioned above are a likely reflection of the attitudes and beliefs of the geographic area in question. With teachers' growing concern for students, it is important to consider teacher well-being and anxiety during the pandemic. More recently, Trauernicht et al. (2021) highlighted the negative impact that a decrease in wellbeing and empathy had on meeting students' needs. In post-pandemic research, when asked to reflect retrospectively on the pandemic, teachers reported a decrease in teaching quality in terms of cognitive activation, classroom management, and learning support compared to pre-pandemic times (Sacré et al., 2023). The study also reported that teachers expressed that teaching quality did not return to its original state when schools reopened but did not find a relationship between teaching quality decrease and teachers' wellbeing.

Exam cancellations

The pandemic has significantly affected students and teachers due to the cancellation of exams. In England, Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) replaced exams and were evidenced by grades, including mocks, tests, and coursework already been completed, and questions provided by exam boards (Ofqual 2021a; Kippin & Cairney, 2022). The decision to rely on predicted grades and teacher-prepared assessments has increased stress levels for students and teachers, as indicated by Wang et al. (2021) and Woolf et al. (2021). Similarly, Walker et al. (2020) report that 36% of teachers found that being responsible for students' exam grades was a significant additional pressure of the pandemic.

In the context of Kyriacou's teacher stress theory (2001), teachers' stress increase can be attributed to several factors. First, the cancellation of exams created heightened anxiety and stress for students (Wang et al., 2021). As a result, teachers may have felt an increased sense of responsibility for their student's well-being and academic success, which can create additional stress for teachers. Second, Woolf et al. (2021) reported notable differences in the confidence levels of BAME students regarding their teachers' ability to accurately assess and grade their work. Consequently, the revised assessment process was a source of stress for teachers who wanted to ensure that grades and evaluations were fair and accurate. Ultimately, in England, there was a 17% point gap (up by 2.27 % points since 2019) between students eligible for free school meals and those ineligible to receive grades seven and above (Lee, 2021). Finally, the design and implementation of alternative assessments meant that teachers had increased workloads. According to Kyriacou's (2001) theory of teacher stress, teachers may face stress due to the expanded workload and additional duties, such as creating new materials or becoming skilled in online evaluation tools. The transfer of responsibility from conventional exams to teacher-prepared assessments may have aggravated these stressors, resulting in feelings of incompetence or uncertainty.

Furthermore, teachers were faced with the added responsibility of making decisions based on students' previous performances on exams and new grades generated from assessments they had to assess. There needs to be more acknowledgement of this responsibility's impact on teachers. Previous research has reported that teacher stress

increased when teachers were held accountable for student grades (Rimfeld et al., 2019). Another study by McGloin (2022) found similar results as teachers reported feeling increased stress due to the responsibility of teacher-assessed grades by questioning the fairness and accuracy of the grades given to students. They also found that the cancellation of examinations caused teachers to feel stressed as it created a sense of uncertainty and a heavy workload.

2.2.4 Summary

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to shift to remote teaching and learning amplified the stress experienced by teachers. The recognised stressors from several studies provide an understanding of the factors specific to the teachers' context. Whilst some factors were related directly to the microsystem (such as workload) within the Bio-ecological systems model, other stressors extended to the interactions (mesosystem) between different microsystems (such as SLT and workload). Further, the exo and Macrosystem (such as the L.A., Exam boards and Government) all played a part in adding stress to the teaching profession due to their communication and guidance for schools.

Nonetheless, recognising and acknowledging the influence of the different systems on teachers' perception of stress and their job roles allows support systems to be fostered and generated to support teachers.

Studies from the U.K. and the U.S. have shown that many teachers felt powerless due to the changes induced by the pandemic. Further, teachers felt anxious and uncertain about the school year. They had concerns about their workloads, potential job losses, and disruptions to their familiar routine and teaching practice (as shown in YouGov, 2020).

Finally, exam cancellations and the need to rely on teacher-led assessments significantly increased their stress and, in line with Kyriacou's stress model, having an increased sense of responsibility whilst tackling workload, incompetence, or uncertainty exasperates teacher stress. Further research is needed to explore the impact of the identified stressors in the teacher's context, especially in the aftermath

of the pandemic. The following section will explore and critique the support available for teachers during the pandemic.

2.3 Support Systems for Teachers During the Pandemic

The literature review to this point has focused on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on schools, students, teachers, and teaching practice. Following this, the support mechanisms in place during the pandemic for teachers were explored. Next, it would be useful to explore what research tells us about what protective factors have been found to reduce teacher stress. Therefore, this section will begin by presenting information about support for teachers during the pandemic, followed by research that identifies factors that influence teacher well-being and reduce teacher stress.

2.3.1 Government/ Institutional Level

Support for the teaching practice

The Government published guidance around remote teaching in October 2020. This guidance referred to another publication, "Actions for schools during the Covid-19 outbreak, published in July 2020." (Gov. UK, 2020) The first document provides some guidance around good practices related to teaching online and which online platforms to use to deliver lessons and ensure access to remote provision. The latter document offers guidance around safety measures and non-pharmacological interventions such as face coverings and general advice on hygiene measures. However, several reports exploring teachers' views of national guidance found that they lacked clarity and detail (Asbury & Kim, 2020; Bailey & Gibson, 2023).

Furthermore, the delayed nature of communication with schools likely exacerbated the effects on teachers' morale and efficacy. As a result, teachers reported feeling overlooked by governments and were given little time to plan for coordinated action in response to ongoing policy changes (Fray et al., 2023). Further, the Government also referenced different resources teachers could use to support their teaching practice.

For example, they referenced the Education Endowment Foundation (Higgins et al., 2020) when presenting information about how remote teaching could be effective if teachers provided clear explanations, used scaffolded practice, supported the application of new knowledge and skills, and enabled students to receive feedback.

Additionally, while the Government website provided helpful resources for teachers, it is important to note that these documents were made available significantly after the decision to transition to online learning. Further, as shown in Appendix A, Government announcements and guidance were being updated and therefore required schools to review and revise decisions, causing changes to the teaching practice. For example, the initial guidance around remote teaching was published in October 2020, seven months after the initial decision to close schools and move to learn online. However, Bingham (2022) noted that teachers' perceptions of Government effectiveness and support to enable schools to cope were poor. Adding to this argument, the Teacher Wellbeing Index (2020) reported that the highest levels of teacher anxiety coincided with government announcements such as the reopening of schools. As shown by Kim and Ashbury's (2021) study, teachers had reported that the repeated sense of uncertainty had negatively impacted their mental health and well-being across three time points directly related to the government guidance (T1: six weeks after the partial school closure, T2: two weeks before the end of the academic year and T3: nine weeks into the new academic year in 2020).

Williams et al. (2021) found that the Government provided different forms of support for school staff during the pandemic. This included financial support through the furlough scheme, published documents on health and safety for schools and training and support during remote teaching. They found that the Government provided additional aid for schools regarding safety and preventative measures against the virus. Although some of the support provided by the Government helped alleviate teacher stress by addressing financial and safety measures, additional support was and is needed to support teachers through challenges in their job by providing additional resources for teachers to access services such as counselling and support groups (Robinson et al., 2023).

As shown from the studies above, the Government can play a central role in supporting teachers in their job role and managing stress by providing schools with more funding and access to resources and services. When considering the bioecological systems model, the Government, located in the Macrosystem within the Bioecological systems model, can influence the microsystem, directly impacting the teacher's jobs and their experience of stress (Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

Referenced by the Government, Education Support (2020) published a video that presented seven strategies to reduce anxiety. Working with a consultant psychotherapist, this video was intended for all teachers and educational professionals. The seven strategies were: 1. Manage worries 2. Manage your information. 3. Communication with friends and family 4. Shift your perspective. 5. Establish a routine to beat isolation and loneliness. 6. Manage relationships 7. Accept Uncertainty. The following section will map the seven strategies to Kyriacou and Bronfenbrenner's theoretical frameworks to better understand how teachers' job-related stress can be understood and addressed with psychological theory.

According to Kyriacou's stress theory (2001), (1) worries and anxiety about teaching-related demands can lead to negative psychological and physiological reactions. Within Bronfenbrenner's systems model, individuals can proactively manage their worries by seeking support from peers and supervisors within the microsystem or collaborating with professional organisations in the exosystem.

The second strategy highlights the importance of the management of information (2). Related to this, Kyriacou (2001) argues that teachers can reduce stress by focusing on reliable information sources and filtering out unnecessary or misleading information, which helps maintain a balanced perspective and reduce anxiety related to teaching demands. Information management is particularly pertinent when considering how information moves within and between various systems following the Bioecological systems model. For example, the mesosystem is directly related to the interactions between all the different systems surrounding teachers, and therefore, the flow of information depends on the bi-directional effectiveness of communication between people in varying systems.

Additionally, utilising the Bioecological systems model provides insight into how the microsystem (friends and family) influences the individual in the model's centre. In the context of the teacher, the microsystem provides insight into how support within the microsystem can alleviate stress (3). Similarly, Kyriacou's stress theory recognises the importance of support networks in mitigating stressors. Open communication with friends and family allows teachers to share their concerns and receive emotional support, reducing stress levels. As mentioned previously, the dynamic and reciprocal nature of the bioecological systems model states that communication is a function of the mesosystem, and this identified strategy relates to the interaction of the mesosystem with the other systems.

Similarly, both theories acknowledge the role of individual perspectives in shaping stress experiences (4). Shifting one's focus to the positive aspects of teaching and adopting a solution-focused mindset can help reduce stress in line with Kyriacou's stress theory. In the context of Bronfenbrenner's model, this can be achieved through self-reflection and guidance from individuals within the microsystem and exosystem.

Furthermore, routine and structure can help alleviate stress by creating predictability and stability (5). According to Kyriacou's stress theory, this may reduce feelings of being overwhelmed. In Bronfenbrenner's model, routines and habits can foster positive connections within the microsystem, such as establishing regular communication with colleagues and friends. In the context of the pandemic, this particular strategy is useful, as the pandemic caused major disruption to the teaching role, particularly concerning routine and structure. Further, as highlighted in the literature, much of the emerging guidance provided for schools was generated ad-hoc, causing uncertainty concerning communication within the micro and exosystem (Kidd & Murray, 2020).

According to both theories, healthy relationships play a significant role in mitigating stress (6). In Kyriacou's theory, positive relationships can buffer the impact of teaching-related demands, while Bronfenbrenner's model emphasises the importance of nurturing relationships within the microsystem and mesosystem (e.g., with colleagues, supervisors, and students) to create a supportive environment.

Finally, according to Kyriacou's stress theory, acknowledging and accepting uncertainty can reduce the stress of striving for control in uncontrollable situations (7). In Bronfenbrenner's systems model, accepting uncertainty enables individuals to adapt to changing circumstances within their environment, reinforcing resilience and reducing stress across the different systems (Boon, 2016).

While the above strategies promote self-care and resilience in the pandemic, some limitations must be considered. For example, all seven strategies place the responsibility of building resilience on the teachers. Some of the strategies suggest that teachers access different support systems in order to mitigate stress and anxiety. However, the strategies must consider that teachers may need help accessing some of those systems. For example, during lockdown, many teachers reported isolation from friends and family (Wong et al., 2022). Additionally, while there is value in person-centric approaches to promoting resilience, one must consider how the teachers' environment across different systems can further foster resilience building. According to research, individual and systemic factors must be addressed to best support teachers in managing their job-related stress (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020).

Published on 7th June 2020, the Government released documentation stating that staff may need mental and well-being support. They funded a pilot project of £95,000 in partnership with the Education Support partnership that focused solely on supporting teachers and school leaders with their mental health (Gov, 2020). The pilot project was designed to directly support teachers and school leaders through telephone supervision, primarily focusing on the microsystem. Its purpose was to positively impact mental health and well-being by fostering a supportive network within teachers' immediate environment. The project also aimed to connect multiple systems (i.e. micro and exosystems), such as the educational institution and external support services, to create a more supportive network for navigating professional challenges. The Government's involvement in funding the project reflected the exosystem's influence on individuals' well-being. The project addressed multiple layers of the Bioecological Systems Model, recognising the complex interplay between individual, environmental, and systemic factors contributing to teachers' and school leaders' mental health and well-being.

However, the Government has not directly supported teachers' mental health and well-being. The Government's support is a platform where teachers and school leaders can be signposted to other organisations that provide support. For example, the charity Mind was on the advisory board to inform and create a plan to support school staff with their mental health. However, it is not clear how this support has been implemented. The Chief Executive of Mind, Paul Farmer, said:

"*What is most important is that concrete action comes out of this when it comes to making sure mental health and well-being are prioritised within our education system…. the start of a sincere commitment to address issues like stress, and other mental health problems among school students and staff, helping make sure we build a fairer and kinder working and learning environment for everyone."* ***(Department for Education, 2020b)***

2.3.2 School-level

As each school differs greatly in context and financial circumstance, it would be difficult to outline what schools did universally to support teachers with their job roles and stress management. Therefore, this next section will focus on UNESCO's publication "Supporting teachers and educational personnel during a crisis" (UNESCO, 2020).

Supporting the teaching practice.

UNESCO made several recommendations to be implemented on a school level. First, they differentiated between short, and medium-to-long-term principles that can be applied. In the short term, they stated that having assigned online platforms to share resources would be useful for schools to collaborate with teachers to create different guidance on subjects and assessments during the crisis and provide clear guidance on how to use online platforms.

Related to the medium-to-long-term principles, they stated that schools must provide or develop teachers' competencies in using ICT for pedagogical reasons and buy into training for preparedness for future crises. They also stated that schools should

encourage teachers to adapt to new technologies and prevent, prepare and respond to crises.

The key recommendations by UNESCO (2020) can be reframed within both Kyriacou's model of teacher stress and Bronfenbrenner's model. For example, to tackle stressors like low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy, UNESCO suggests empowering teachers through financial security and professional development opportunities. This approach can boost their confidence and help them cope with their challenges. In Kyriacou's stress theory (2001), it is suggested that this can help reduce teacher stress by eliminating stressors associated with financial instability and feelings of incompetence. According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007), financial security can help alleviate stress at the microsystem level by reducing conflicts and worries associated with financial matters. Additionally, professional development opportunities can be viewed as support and resources provided by the mesosystem (such as schools and professional organisations) and exosystem (such as educational policy). This, in turn, can strengthen connections and collaboration within the microsystem and mesosystem, creating a more supportive and resilient environment for teachers.

Furthermore, in line with UNESCO (2020), Kyriacou (2001) suggests that providing adequate resources and equipment, facilitating access to health services and mental health support, and addressing excessive workload can help manage the effects of stress on teacher well-being. The incorporation of Bronfenbrenner's model allows for the recognition of the role of different systems in reducing teachers' stress. By ensuring support from the microsystem (e.g., schools) and exosystem (e.g., educational policy, professional organisations), an environment that enables teachers to fulfil their roles can be established. Finally, workload reduction can be achieved through supportive policies, enhancing teacher well-being across different layers of the bio-ecological system. Collaboration and sharing best practices also foster positive connections within the microsystem (e.g., with colleagues) and mesosystem (e.g., between schools), ultimately creating a more resilient and supportive environment for teachers.

In summary, UNESCO's recommendations align with key aspects of both Kyriacou's model of teacher stress and Bronfenbrenner’s model. By addressing stressors and

promoting effective mediators, a supportive environment for teachers across different layers of the bio-ecological system can be created. While Kyriacou's stress theory and Bronfenbrenner's systems model provide valuable guidance for addressing teacher stress, there are potential limitations and challenges when translating these theories into effective interventions catering to diverse contexts and individual needs. For instance, the effectiveness of the proposed interventions depends on the resources available to schools and educational systems, which can vary significantly. For example, as countries differ economically, governments may not have the necessary resources or funds to provide teachers with financial or resource support. Another critique of the recommendations is that improving working conditions depends on the pre-investment for resources, infrastructure and support services available for teachers, especially when stakeholders could oppose such urgency in supporting teachers. Furthermore, ensuring that the collaborative process does not inadvertently contribute to increased workload or unrealistic expectations for teachers is also important.

Supporting the mental health of teachers

UNESCO stated several recommendations for schools to put in place to support teacher well-being and reduce teacher stress. For example, they stated that research has consistently found that teachers must build on their social-emotional competencies to build resilience during a crisis (UNESCO, 2020). Further, they stated that professional debriefing and counselling services would help teachers navigate the anxiety and uncertainty of the pandemic. They highlight the importance that inexperienced teachers may suffer worse than more experienced teachers, which may result in them feeling burnout and fatigue. Therefore, collaborating with colleagues and other professionals would support their ability to cope during a crisis. Other examples include using online platforms to speak with other professionals for professional and psychosocial support and mentoring. They stated that schools should encourage such initiatives to support teachers' mental health. However, research carried out in England during and following the second lockdown suggested that "organisational wellbeing" (the environment in which they work and their relationship with colleagues) was among the most important challenges to address during the pandemic (Jellis et al., 2021).

Another method of supporting teachers is by implementing inclusive education systems. Both students and teachers should be involved in decision-making, as they are influential drivers of positive educational reform. Further, they also state that teachers require schools and wider organisations to adopt a humanitarian approach that considers teachers' safety, physical and mental health, and emotional well-being. What is clear is that due to the unprecedented pandemic, the Government and, therefore, schools depended on other organisations and charities to provide useful information on what could be done to support teachers during the pandemic. In 2020, the emergent context of the pandemic highlighted the overdependence of schools on the exosystem, such as the Government, Local authorities and third-sector organisations (charities).

Additionally, it should be acknowledged that schools differ in their capacity to receive dense and varied guidance. Consequently, due to the timing and volume of guidance, school leaders were challenged with implementing guidance with a degree of ambiguity. Due to time constraints and other competing factors, not all schools likely had the opportunity to explore the different guidance available.

Student-teacher relationships

Having meaningful relationships in the workplace has been found to positively impact an individual's well-being (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005; Arnold et al., 2007).
As Lavy and Naama-Ghanayim (2020) state, the teaching profession intrinsically nurtures students. Therefore, teacher-student relationships are key to their job and how meaningful they find their job (Grant, 2007). Furthermore, research has shown that teacher-student relationships can impact the teacher's level of motivation, stress and job satisfaction (Traves, 2017; Skalvick & Skalvick, 2011; Klasen et al., 2012). Consequently, the relationship between the teacher and the student also impacts students (Roorda et al., 2011). Equally, a lack of student-teacher relationships can negatively impact students (Klem & Connell, 2004), such as low motivation and achievement (Gehlback et al., 2012).

Further, teachers' relationships with their colleagues and parents are a significant factor in teaching (Hargreaves, 2001). The literature suggests that feeling connected

to and supported by colleagues at work has been found to contribute to well-being and satisfaction (Renshaw et al., 2015). For instance, when teachers report positive relationships with colleagues, they also report stronger occupational well-being (Renshaw et al., 2015). In contrast, those who reported experiencing friction in their community reported lower levels of well-being (Bower & Carroll, 2017). Closely related to this is the concept of horizontal forms of communication and support (Bernstein, 1999), which highlights the flow of information or support between people within the same hierarchical level of an organisation. This type of communication can foster collaboration and improved understanding among team members (Crews et al., 2019).

In the context of the pandemic, as previously stated, changes to the teachers' role, including remote working/ teaching, have unquestionably impacted their relationships with members in and out of school. Emergent studies of teacher experiences during the onset of the pandemic highlight that collegial relationships were considered important to teachers (Kraft et al., 2020). As shown in research (O'Conner, 2008), one of the core reasons teachers stay in the profession despite the hardships of the job is the teacher-student relationship. Similarly, Hargreaves (2000) found that when interviewing 60 teachers, teachers' relationship with their students was the most important source of enjoyment and motivation in their job.

Teacher self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is another factor that impacts teacher stress (Skaalvik, M, & Skaalvik, S, 2016; Putwain & Von der Embse, 2019). Teacher stress and self-efficacy are predictors of engagement, emotional exhaustion, and motivation to leave the profession. Teacher stress and self-efficacy are predictors of engagement, emotional exhaustion, and motivation to leave the profession (Skaalvik, M & Skaalvik, S, 2016). There are several ways to define self-efficacy, but Giallo and Little (2003) provide a useful definition. They explain that self-efficacy can be understood as an individual's confidence or ability to employ an action or behaviour that produces a chosen outcome. Applying this to teachers could relate to their ability to support students (Herman et al., 2018) and fulfil their role as teachers (Yu et al., 2015).

Self-efficacy is a useful way to understand work-related stress. For example, Brouwers and Tomic (2000) found that low self-efficacy indicates teacher effort and persistence and Giallo and Little (2003) found that low self-efficacy could lead to work management strategies that are not useful in their job.

Regarding teaching practice, Brown's (2012) systematic literature review found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy were less likely to experience emotional exhaustion. In the context of the pandemic, teachers were likely faced with difficulties and challenges associated with supporting students; therefore, this is an important area to consider.

Teacher self-efficacy and the pandemic.

A study by Wray et al. (2022) aimed to examine the impact of the pandemic on teacher-self-efficacy. They found that teachers felt overwhelmed by the shift to online teaching and a lack of training and support from schools, resulting in teachers experiencing a lowered sense of self-efficacy. This was also compounded by teachers feeling more stressed and increased workload. This was a similar finding to Soncini et al. (2021), with teachers having a decreased sense of efficacy, increased stress and burnout. Although self-efficacy is a concept that is internal to individuals and, in this case, teachers, such studies show how external factors outside of a teacher can impact their internal state. Related to this, Daniel and Van Bergen (2023) explored the relationship between emotion regulation and pandemic-related burnout in teachers. The study found teachers' burnout to be significantly related to instructional self-efficacy but not to emotion regulation and recommended further research into cognitive reappraisal and burnout under highly stressful conditions.

While a thorough examination of teachers' self-efficacy is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the research on self-efficacy as an internal and external factor impacting teacher stress. Further, professionals such as Educational Psychologists can offer support to teachers dealing with multiple competing demands; these issues can be addressed by supportive work environments and by developing teachers' self-efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

2.4 Aims of the research

This thesis explored teacher perceptions of their work-related stress within the context and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a qualitative approach, this thesis aimed to provide a platform for teachers to voice their perceptions and reflections on the subject matter. Specifically, the thesis explored how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their experience of stress and what they believe is needed to support them with their job during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. This thesis provided an opportunity to gain direct insight into teachers' contexts by utilising teachers' perceptions.

To understand the factors identified by teachers regarding their perception of stress and the support required, this thesis utilised the Bioecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) as a theoretical framework to explore and map the different factors onto the framework. The significance of using such a framework supports identifying which systems are impacting teacher stress and which systems may require additional focus to support their role and stress. The adapted version of the Bioecological Systems Model will be explained in detail in the Methodology chapter of this thesis.

The current study adopted the Bioecological systems model to further understand and consider the multiple systems at play, as it suits the social constructionist perspective adopted within this research. The model has been adapted to place the teacher at the centre of the model (Figure 4). Further exploring teachers' perception of their stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent relevance to their job role will allow a deeper understanding and mapping of the different factors that they believe are significant to contribute to or protect them against teacher stress.

The current qualitative research study explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher perception of stress. Additionally, the current study considered the support teachers identify as needed in their job role in the context of secondary schools in England. To explore these topics, teachers were asked to describe and identify factors influencing their stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, teachers were

asked to highlight different ways teachers were supported in their job roles and how they would like to be supported in the aftermath of the pandemic.

To further understand how the secondary school context can support or hinder perceived teacher stress, including the support they received and would like to receive, this study used an adapted version of the Bioecological Systems model created by the researcher, which placed the teacher at the centre of the model. The intended purpose of identifying the different factors at play through the teacher's lens and mapping them onto the model allows the opportunity to gain a holistic view of teacher stress within the context of the pandemic. Findings from this study are intended to inform further research into perceived teacher stress and Educational Psychology (E.P.) practice.

The research questions for the current study were:

Research question 1:

What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on secondary school teachers' perceptions of their stress?

Research question 2:

What did teachers perceive to be supportive of their stress management and job role during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what support did they identify as needed in the aftermath of the pandemic?

3. Research Methodology

This chapter will begin by explaining the chosen research design. The chapter will then explore the philosophical stance and epistemological position adopted for the current research. Next, the researcher's positioning and interests will be stated to support the notion of reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Then, further details of the research design, data collection method and analysis will be presented. Finally, this chapter will describe the steps taken to ensure research integrity, rigour and ethical considerations were accounted for in the research design process.

3.1 Research design

A research design must “fit” with the research questions and correspond well with the purpose of the overall research project (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Wiling, 2013; Levitt et al., 2017). As described by Brown and Bullitis (2006), exploratory research designs "tend to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done" (pg. 43) and therefore, considering the novelty of the Covid-19 pandemic relative to teacher stress, the current study can be best described as having the characteristics of a small-scale exploratory research design. Using a semi-structured interview to explore teacher perceptions of teacher stress and understand the support they require in the aftermath of the pandemic, this project used open-ended questions to address the research questions.

3.2 Philosophical Stance and Epistemological Position

The current research study aimed to increase an understanding of the experience of teachers related to the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher stress and the support they require in the aftermath of the pandemic from their subjective perspective. Therefore, an interpretative social constructionist research paradigm was adopted for this study.

However, in order to choose an appropriate qualitative approach and epistemological position, one must recognise and consider different approaches available to

understand if the chosen approach is the most appropriate. With the acknowledgment that qualitative research provide an inherent flexibility and subjectivity, it also provides the opportunity to explore research questions from a rich and detailed position, especially when exploring a complex phenomena such as perceived stress. This poses a strength and challenge to the researcher, as it is vital to ensure vigilance in both their methodological and interpretative approach.

Qualitative approaches, ranging from narrative and ethnographic, provide subtle expectations and norms. For example in narrative approaches, the expected approach to understand research entails taking into account individual stories and experiences whereby the researcher builds rapport with the participants. Further, it involves adopting strong narrative analytical skills to interpret the stories of participants within cultural and social contexts. On the other hand, ethnographic research requires the researcher to be immersed and engaged with the community being studied which demands a high level of cultural awareness, sensitivity and adaptability from the researcher.

As the current study adopts a social constructionism approach through an interpretive framework, the following section will focus on the understanding of such approaches utilised in qualitative research. As an interpretive framework, social constructionism stipulates that individuals, in pursuit of understanding their world, develop specific meanings that relate to their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and interact with others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This framework differs from post-positivist worldviews such as critical realism, as critical realism argues that an objective reality exists irrespective of an individual's perspective, whereas the social constructionist perspective argues that all understanding of reality is socially and culturally constructed.

Therefore, open-ended questions were utilised in this study to gain their views, allowing participants to liberally share their experiences and the researcher to ask follow-up questions to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon studied (teacher perceptions). This study maintained the epistemological position that individuals co-create and share knowledge in line with the social constructionist framework (Crotty, 1998; Mertens, 2010).

Braun and Clarke (2021) discussed that the researcher's positioning and context are equally important when designing research. As described in their publication, the researcher's positioning and context can be framed as informing and drawing on the researcher's strengths to inform their research. Therefore, by adopting a social constructionist lens, the research not only aims to understand the teacher's subjective reality of their context but also acknowledges that the meaning and interpretations extracted from the interviews are co-constructed between the interaction of the researcher and participants.

Social constructionism posits that realities are constructed through social interactions and language; the researcher's role is also to understand how their interactions with participants and their interpretations construct the research reality. This demands a high level of reflexivity and an understanding of the subtle ways in which different qualitative approaches construct knowledge. Burr (1999) is a prominent psychologist within the social constructionism field. Their work primarily focuses on the implications of social constructionist theory across various aspects of human psychology and social interaction. She states and explores how knowledge of the world and people's experiences are constructed socially and culturally through the use of language and communication arguing that objectivity and our perceptions of reality are shaped through our interactions with one another. Similarly, Gergen (1996; 2018) emphasises that knowledge and truths are not discovered but instead are created through social interactions and language. He further argues this point by stating that what people consider as real or true are subject to historical and cultural contexts and are upheld through social practices and discourse (Gergen & Gergen, 2007).

In summary, Burr (2015) and Gergen (2018) both advocate a critical approach to understanding the meaning of reality, whether that be understanding the world or understanding oneself. Both emphasise how social processes and interactions continuously shape our understanding of ourselves and the human experience. In relation to using thematic analysis in the current study, a constructionist epistemology has implications on the meaningfulness placed on the development and interpretation of codes and themes (Byrne, 2022).

3.3 Personal Context and Positionality

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist with a background in Health Psychology, throughout my education and work experience, I have always been interested in supporting school staff with their stress management and overall mental health. Considering my intersectionality, within my culture, teachers are highly regarded as there is an acknowledgement of their influence on children and young people. Therefore, at the time of the emerging context of the pandemic, whilst working on placement and experiencing the emerging impact that the pandemic was having on my placement, schools and university, I decided to research the chosen topic.

My position and practice as a trainee Educational psychologist, working alongside schools, began to evolve as a direct influence of the pandemic. For example, my cohort and I were told that in line with UCL's policies and government announcements, we could no longer attend face-to-face meetings and conduct observations and assessments in school. In addition, almost all of my meetings with teachers, SENCos and families shifted online and would begin with a mental health check-in, asking how they were feeling, adapting to the "new norm", and suggesting activities and practices that would support their mental health. In some cases, meetings with SENCo's had adapted to supporting them by problem-solving logistical aspects of their work such as using technology, providing resources and facilitating conversations around the different needs of children and young people. Having worked with some of the schools pre-pandemic, I found it interesting to see a shift in the SENCo's and teachers' use of language, their sense of psychological and physical safety and their ability to cope under the emerging pressure from the pandemic.

To further this, on placement, I was able to attend multiple team meetings with other Educational psychologists, whereby we had to consider how we could support staff in their job roles. As one of the student representatives, I had to ensure my communication with my peers and university tutors was clear and considerate of all needs. Reflecting on the emergence of the pandemic now feels surreal, but at the time of the design of the research project, with limited research and a shared uncertainty that I experienced with my cohort, placement providers and university, it was certainly

a pertinent topic of discussion; how and what is the impact of the pandemic on teachers and what do they need.

At the point of the data collection for the current study, the U.K. had experienced a pandemic for a year and was still ongoing; therefore, the experiences, thoughts and feelings the teachers had shared were real and ongoing. As a part of reflexivity, I had to acknowledge that I was going through the pandemic, too, whilst doing my doctorate, supporting my family business and being pregnant; this provided me with a deeper understanding and insight into the stressors brought about by the pandemic.

As it stands, we are no longer in the pandemic, and I am now working full-time in a Local Authority; the impact of the pandemic has remained and evolved across the education sector. Since the start of the academic year of 2023, there have been a total of nine teachers' industrial action strike days, which underscores the deep-seated issues magnified by the pandemic; one could frame the strikes as not disruptions but instead, call for reform and therefore instils my passion in the current research topic.

It is worthwhile to note that at the onset of the pandemic, a decision was made to conduct the chosen research topic, and therefore, when I started my journey into the literature review in March 2020, there was very little literature and research into the chosen topic. However, due to my maternity leave, once I returned to my doctoral studies, more than 10,000 research papers were published about the impact of the pandemic on schools and their members (e.g. Children, young people and teachers). Whilst the uniqueness of the thesis was relevant and timely during the pandemic, the thesis remains an important topic of discussion. This is because 1) the participants were interviewed during the pandemic, 2) the second research question relates to the aftermath of the pandemic, and 3) there is little qualitative research that looks into the perceived stress of teachers who work in secondary schools based in London and 4) there is a possibility that pandemics may become more common in our generation (Marani et al., 2021) and therefore exploration of such topics relates to the sense of preparedness of schools and teachers.

3.4 *Procedure*

3.4.1 Selecting secondary school teachers

To recruit participants, the researcher chose to use an opportunistic sampling method. The researcher utilised their professional networks to approach potential participants rather than selecting schools first. The researcher approached two teaching assistants within the Outer London Borough from two different schools and provided a brief overview of the nature of the research project. Those who had shown an interest and wanted to learn more about the research project provided their email address to the researcher's professional network to share with the researcher. A table which outlines the reasons for choosing the sampling method has been provided in Appendix B.

3.4.2 Consent from participants

All participants were provided with an electronic information sheet detailing the nature of the study. Following this, participants were provided with an electronic consent form if they showed interest in the study. Finally, all participants were asked to reply to the email with the signed consent form. A copy of the consent form is attached in Appendix C.

3.4.3 Participant information (teacher characteristics)

In total, there were seven participants (four women and three men) who took part in this research study. Of the seven participants, three were from School 1, and four were from School 2. All participants were teachers within a Secondary School and had more than one role. Table (2) below highlights information concerning each participant's job title and role, years of experience in teaching and the number of years they taught in the current school.

Table 2 provides brief information about each participant's job role/s in the school, the number of years of experience in teaching, and the number of years in the current school they were working in.

School Label	Participant Label	Role Title and other roles within the school	Year's experience in teaching	Number of years in the current school
1	A	● Business studies teacher ● Head of Year 12 ● Safeguarding lead for 6th form ● On the Board of Governors ● Football Coach for year 7.	6	6
1	B	● Head of English ● English teacher	9	2
1	C	● English Teacher ● Literacy coordinator across the school within every department	6	4
2	D	● Head of Chemistry ● Chemistry teacher	7	5
2	E	● Maths Teacher ● Coordinator of Maths for years 9 and 11 (Oversee key stage 4 mathematics in school)	5	5
2	F	● Science teacher ● Head of Key Stage 3 Science	5	3
2	G	● NQT PE teacher ● Assistant Head of Learning (In charge of Pastoral support for year seven and planning form activities)	2	2

3.4.4 The Context of Schools 1 and 2

As discussed in the introduction, this thesis utilised an adapted version of the Bioecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) as a framework to understand the teachers' context and the structure of each school to provide some contextual information that lends to evaluating the transferability of the current study's findings. Hence, Table 3 below presents brief contextual information about some of the school's characteristics. Both schools are located in a borough where 28.7% of the families of the children and young people earn below the Living Wage, which is lower than the average London Borough wage. Further, according to the 2021 Census

(Office For National Statistics, 2021), the borough's population is 52.1% white, while 47.9% are non-white. The highest minority group in the Borough are Black, followed by "Other." Both schools followed the Government announcements on school closures, as referenced in the introduction chapter of this thesis, and online platforms such as Google Meets, Zoom and Microsoft Team to teach students.

Table 3 provides information about the schools in which the participants are working.

School Label	Type of School	School category	No. of students	No. of Senior Leadership Team members	No. of teachers in school	Ofsted Rating
School 1	Secondary Comprehensive school	Academy Converter	1023	8	70	Good
School 2	Selective school	Voluntary Aided School	1384	6	86	Outstanding

3.5 Research tools

Interview Schedule- Design and development

To develop the interview schedule, five steps were implemented.

Step 1: Mapping interview questions onto the research questions

Firstly, the researcher developed interview questions that mapped to this current study's two research questions (Appendix E).

Step 2: Literature, context and teaching practice.

Next, to ensure the consideration of existing literature and the current context of teachers (pre- and during the pandemic), the researcher examined the literature

regarding teacher stress, the emerging research on COVID-19 concerning teachers' mental health, and the published guidance for schools regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, this was mapped onto each question. For example, Table 4 below shows how the researcher could map emerging literature with guidance from the Sutton Trust.

Table 4: This table shows an example of mapping some themes from the literature and guidance from the Sutton Trust with the interview and research questions.

	Literature themes	The Sutton Trust guidance	Interview question	Research question
Overlap between different resources	● Workload Stress ● Remote teaching ● Uncertainty ● Change	● Online teaching ● Remote working/ teaching ● Safeguarding ● Time allocated to teaching.	● What changes, if any, have there been to your teaching due to the pandemic?	● What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on perceived teacher stress?

Step 3: Feedback on Interview Questions

The following step was to draft the interview schedule and seek feedback from colleagues from the DEdPsych programme. Six colleagues on the programme who were all Educational Psychologists in training (and had previously been teachers) were emailed. This process was adopted to gain diverse perspectives on the research questions. Appendix E shows the development and revision of the interview questions, and Appendix F shows the final interview questions, including how they map onto the research questions.

Step 4: Pilot interviews

Two pilot interviews were conducted with two teachers who work in London but do not attend the same school as the recruited participants. The pilot interviews allowed the

researcher to trial the questions and examine the interview flow. In addition, the pilot interviews allowed the researcher to practise responding to the interviewee using follow-up questions when vague responses were given. After trialling the two interviews, a final structure and content of questions were formed resulting from notes taken from the pilot interviews (See Appendix E & F). The researcher noted that the interview took an average of approximately 47 minutes.

Step 5: Supervision and final interview schedule

Finally, after collating information from the above procedure, the researcher reflected on Steps 2 and 3 to refine and finalise the interview schedule. Below is a table of the changes made due to the above 5-step process described.

Table 5 shows the changes to the interview schedule and structure resulting from feedback, pilot interviews and supervision.

Lessons Learnt	Changes made
Use more open-ended questions	Changing the wording of the questions from
The order of the questions impacts the flow of the interview.	Change the order of the questions to target research question 1 followed by research question 2
Keep the questions broad to not introduce bias, such as questions that frame stress as a negative experience.	Ask participants to describe their experience.
Ensure that each question contributes to a unique response from other questions.	Remove a question that asks the same response as another question
Consider adding prompts to questions	Plan for short responses such as “What else…anything else.”

3.6 Interview- Data collection

3.6.1 Online Interview Platform

To conduct each interview, Microsoft Teams® (M.T.) software was utilised. Although online video conferencing platforms have previously been critiqued (Krouwel et al., 2019), emerging research has indicated that, compared to face-to-face interviews, videoconferencing can also have its benefits (Bernatrand & Bourdeau, 2010). In addition, as the context of the interviews took place during the pandemic, all participants were familiar with using the software. This was convenient for the researcher and all participants regarding the interview set-up, availability, organisation and predictability. Notably, the use of teams was also utilised due to UCL's restrictions to conduct face-to-face interviews due to the pandemic after March 2022.

3.6.2 Video Recording

Within the Microsoft Teams software, there is an option to video record the interview. The video recording captures the screen comprising both the interviewer and interviewee. This current study utilised this tool to video record the interview to later be used during the transcription and data analysis step within this methodology. Appendix D shows that Microsoft Teams provides an option to record the interview.

3.6.3 Transcription

In addition, the Microsoft Teams software has an option to "enable transcription." This tool transcribes the interview whilst it is being conducted; the interviewee and the researcher can view the transcription as it is generated. The tool was very useful as it can differentiate between each speaker. It was also useful as it saved the researcher much initial transcription time. This tool was used in every interview.

However, it is important to note that whilst the transcription tool was very useful to the researcher, it was not entirely accurate. However, as the transcription differentiated between speakers and provided a timestamp for each response, it was easier for the researcher to check, correct and compare the transcription with the corresponding video recording. To facilitate transparency in the current study, Appendix D shows two images highlighting the option to record the interview and enable transcription on Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft Outlook

In order to organise and synchronise the planning of each interview, Microsoft Outlook was used. As Microsoft owns both Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Outlook, when an online meeting is scheduled (either via email or M.T.), the scheduled meeting is automatically synchronised with Outlook.

NVivo

To supplement the data analysis process, each interview's transcripts were imported into NVivo for Mac version 12 (QSR International, 2018) qualitative data analysis software. The data analysis process will be further explained in the data analysis section of the Methodology.

Before each interview, the researcher would check that the audio, inbuilt microphone, and internet connection were working. In addition, before each interview, the researcher ensured that each participant had sent a signed consent form via email. Once the participants connected online, before starting the interview, the researcher would check in with them (such as asking them how their day was going). Next, the researcher re-alliterated that the interview would be recorded and explained the online interview process. The researcher then enabled the recording and transcription function on Microsoft Teams, and the interview was conducted.

3.6.4 Transcription accuracy check

The transcription file from each interview was then examined and edited to ensure accurate transcription was recorded. This was accomplished by opening each transcript file with the video recording. Finally, all transcript documents were then exported to NVivo for data analysis.

3.6.5 Ethical and Professional Practice

In line with UKRIO (2009; 2010), the "dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants" were a priority during the current research. Furthermore, as the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing at the time of the recruitment of participants, utmost importance was given to ensure that the participants felt comfortable participating in the research.

The Department of Psychology and Human Development at the Institute of Education, UCL, granted this current study ethical permission. The current research project adhered to the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct and GDPR. To view the ethical document, please refer to Appendix G.

Clegg and Slife (2009) suggested that it is important to consider ethical considerations throughout the research study. As the current study required participants to discuss their perceived stress related to their job role, some themes and questions that emerged from the interview were considered sensitive topics that could have made participants experience anxiety, discomfort, or embarrassment. To minimise this, the researcher explored the protocols and guidelines within the school for staff members to access pastoral support (if they required additional support). Further, the researcher identified the safeguarding lead of each school and noted their contact details. In addition, the information sheet provided for participants also outlined the participant's rights, such as having the choice to withdraw from the study, wanting to take a break or choosing not to answer questions without explaining them to the researcher.

Moreover, the electronic debrief document (Appendix H) provided the participants with signposting information, which gave them additional ways to receive support if required. Furthermore, the researcher is also a mental health first aider, which means they are trained to support people by signposting them to the necessary people if they require additional support. Lastly, the researcher is a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) with a background in Health Psychology. Therefore, consultation skills such as listening and responding appropriately to distressed people are competencies developed through their studies and experience.

Participants were also reminded that except for any disclosures made relating to safeguarding issues, the interviews would remain confidential and that there would not be any identifiable information relating to the school or the participant.

3.6.6 Confidentiality and Data Protection

As stated on the Microsoft website (Microsoft, n.d.), Microsoft Teams adheres to GDPR. In line with ethical compliance, after each interview, the video recordings and transcriptions were downloaded from the individual Microsoft Teams chat, stored onto a password-protected laptop, and transferred into an encrypted folder. In addition, all consent forms were stored in a different encrypted folder within a password-protected laptop.

3.6.7 The timeline of the research

In order to offer a transparent overview of the research process utilised in the current study, table 6 below provides the timeline of the research from initial design through the process and the changes made throughout.

Table 6: Timeline of Research for the current study

Date:	**Research process:**
June-August 2020	Initial literature Review and research design and interview schedule.
September 2020-March 2021	Refining research design, interview schedule and ethics
End of March 2021-September 2021	Maternity
October 2021- Mid-November 2021	Interviews
Mid-November 2021- May 2022	Transcriptions (Familiarising with data) Generating Initial codes Reviewing themes Search for themes Defining and naming themes
June 2022- ongoing until thesis completion	Updating Literature review on COVID-19 and thesis completion
September 2023-March 2024	Producing the report.

3.7 Data Analysis

The seven interviews were analysed using a six-step process of thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). As stated by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning" ('themes') within qualitative data (pg. 175). This method was chosen because of its interpretative and inductive approach to qualitative data analysis. In addition, as Braun and Clarke (2021) have stated, T.A. allows the researcher to acknowledge the context in which meaning from experience develops.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was important to incorporate the environment as the basis of the interpretation of the findings. In addition, both research questions include the contextual situation around teacher stress; the research aims to understand how the pandemic has impacted teacher stress and what teachers will find supportive in the aftermath of the pandemic.

As this thesis uses the Bio-Ecological Systems Model as a theoretical basis to explore the research questions, a deductive and inductive approach was used to analyse the data. In line with this, Braun and Clarke (2021) state that researchers cannot truly be inductive in their approach due to their pre-existing understanding and adoption of epistemological positions and pre-existing knowledge of the appropriate literature. In order to avoid being overly deductive in the analysis process, the researcher adopted the use of reflexivity and bracketing. Additionally, the development of codes and themes followed an iterative approach, which included several re-readings of transcripts, codes and themes, and adopting a curious and open approach, facilitating the natural emergence of codes and themes.

The transcripts were imported into the NVivo for Mac version 12 (QSR International, 2018) qualitative data analysis software. The transcripts were then coded in two ways: first, from a data-driven perspective (bottom-up) using an inductive approach (Frith & Gleeson, 2004), and second, from a theoretical standpoint (top-down) to evaluate the adequacy and consistency of the data in addressing the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998). Further, it is worth noting that codes were generated through the data by capturing both semantic and latent interpretations of the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Table 7 shows the six steps from Braun and Clarke's 2006 publication.

Phase		Description of the Process
1	Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, and noting initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work concerning the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts relating to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

As a part of the data analysis process, the different phases of data analysis were repeated several times to ensure that the researcher captured the findings by developing the most appropriate codes and themes. In order to support transparency within the data analysis process, Appendix I shows photos from the different analysis phases for this study. Further, Appendix J presents the initial codes derived from all the transcripts. Further details relating to theme development derived from codes to theme development can be found in Appendix _

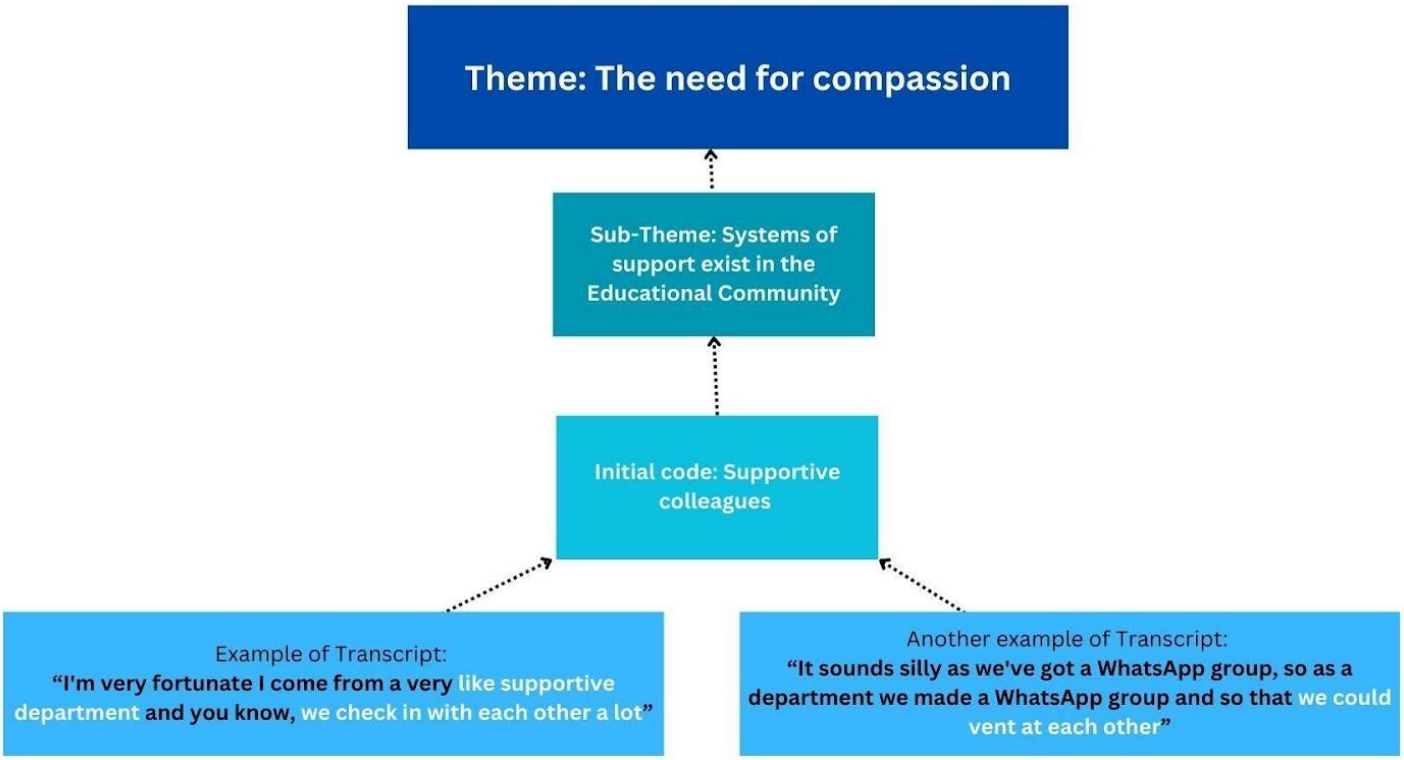
3.7.1 Examples of a merged code

In some cases, the codes generated from the seven transcripts were similar and overlapped in meaning, so the researcher merged the two codes. For example, the codename: "workload" and "added workload" became: "increase in workload." Another example of two merged codes was "Learning new skills" and "new use of technology."

3.7.2 Exclusion of some codes in the final analysis and a worked example for theme development.

It is important to note that some codes generated from the transcripts did not fit the final findings as they were irrelevant to the research question (Appendix J; highlighted in red). For example, the code "School Environment" did not make it into the findings as participants described that they were away from the physical school due to working remotely. However, this code appeared consistently when asked about the changes to their teaching practice.

The figure below shows an example of transcript extractions from initial code to subtheme and theme development.



The above shows a worked example from two transcript extractions to theme development. More details of contributing codes to theme development can be found in Appendix J.

3.8 Research Integrity

3.8.1 Consideration of Integrity and Rigour of the Research

Yardley (2000) suggested four criteria when designing a research study to overcome some of the 'dilemmas' when using qualitative methods. The four criteria are sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. Table 8 indicates how the research process design considered the four criteria.

Table 8: This table shows the steps taken to meet research integrity by considering four criteria Yardley (2000)

Criteria (Yardley, 2000)	Steps were taken to address the criteria
Sensitivity to context	● Keeping up to date with the emerging literature on COVID-19 and its impact on schools and its members. ● Developing research questions and designing methodology through supervision. ● Mapping each interview question into the two research questions ensures that each question is purposeful. ● Peer reviewing interview schedule, seeking and receiving feedback and making the necessary adjustments. ● Piloting two interviews and refining some questions or removing ‘repetitive’ questions.
Commitment and rigour	● Using consultation skills to create a containing and safe space for participants and asking for clarification to ensure participants felt understood. This was aimed at providing a “contemplative and empathetic exploration of the topics discussed (Yardley, 2000, p. 222) ● Interviews were transcribed and re-checked by watching recordings to ensure they were accurately transcribed and recorded.

	● Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's framework for Thematic Analysis. ● Codes and themes that were generated were re-checked later to help the research reflect and absorb the emerging data.
Transparency and coherence	● Providing details on every aspect of the research methodology design and data collection process. ● Using reflexivity in the research project when designing the methodology to help overcome potential influencing factors, for example, communicating directly with teachers rather than through the school for participant recruitment, thinking about power imbalances and my position as a trainee E.P. ● Ensuring that the method chosen is well suited to the nature of the research topic and epistemological perspective.
Impact and importance	● Choosing to use semi-structured interviews to provide the opportunity for teachers to have a “voice” related to the research question. ● Finding a gap within the literature and considering research-in-context fit for purpose within the U.K. ● Considering the implications of the findings and future research projects related to this topic.

4. Themes and Discussion

Four main themes were identified from the seven interviews (three participants from School 1 and four from School 2). Relevant to the first research question (RQ1), these themes are (1) The need for compassion, (2) Connections, Communication and Consistency, and (3) Evolving professional competencies: Bridging the gap between teacher skills and student needs. Finally, relevant to the second research question (RQ2), the final theme is (4) Fostering a supportive ecosystem in education. Notably, within the themes, the word "systems" is related to the different systems within the adapted version of the Bio-Ecological systems model. It is important to note that whilst there are four main themes, each theme can be interlinked.

To ensure clarity around the themes generated and their relevance to each question, this chapter will first present three themes related to RQ1, followed by the fourth theme related directly to RQ2.

The present study aimed to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on perceived teacher stress in secondary school teachers. It also aimed to explore the types of support teachers received during the pandemic and the support they perceived as needed in the aftermath.

This chapter of the thesis will discuss the study themes and research within the literature explored and consider how the identified factors (stressors and forms of support) fit into the Bioecological systems model. In doing so, the teacher's environment in the context of the pandemic is considered and accounted for within the findings. The chapter will begin by discussing the current study findings, followed by a critical evaluation of how the current findings sit within the literature. Using the adapted version of the Bioecological systems model and Kyriacou's stress model, the current findings will be discussed concerning the research questions. Finally, this chapter will also reflect upon the strengths and limitations of the study along with the implications of the findings related to Educational Psychology practice and education policies.

Research question 1: How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact perceived teacher stress?

As will be discussed in this chapter, the themes suggest the complex interplay between the different systems within the bio-ecological systems model that impact teachers' perception of stress and the support they received and would like to receive in the aftermath of the pandemic. Further, Kyriacou's model of stress provides a theoretical framework to interpret why the complex interplay between systems may cause stress. The importance of considering such interactions provides an understanding of how teachers could be supported in their role. While some of the themes are novel to the teacher's experience of the pandemic and teacher stress, many are consistent with the literature on teacher stress pre-pandemic. Therefore, many of the themes in the current study demonstrate how the already existing stressors within the teaching profession are further exacerbated during the pandemic.

The structure of the current chapter includes the themes that emerged from the study and are embedded within the discussion to support the process of mapping the themes with the literature and theoretical framework.

4.1 Theme 1: The Need for Compassion

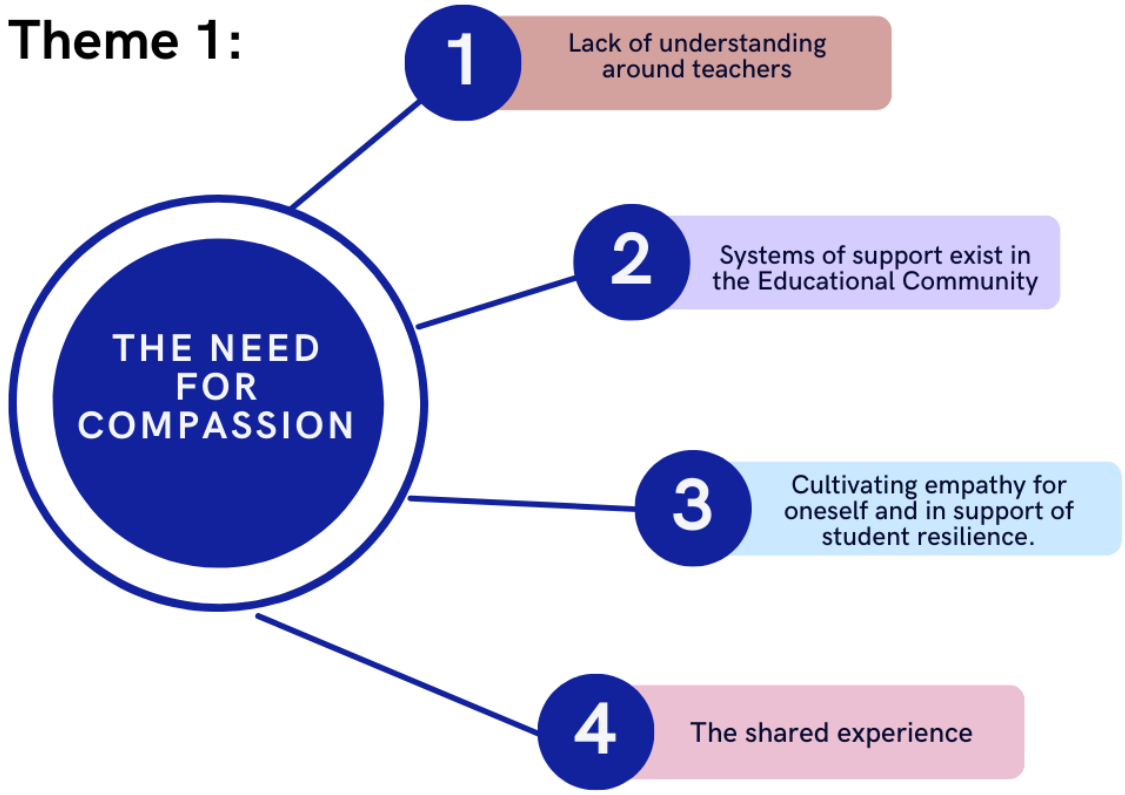


Figure 6 shows the theme of compassion and the four subthemes.

The first theme encompasses teacher perceptions relating to their experience of compassion to and from others. Participants described various examples of increased awareness and understanding of different people's contexts, such as students and colleagues impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, they provided perceptions around having more empathy and responsiveness towards themselves regarding the demands of their job role and experience of stress. Further, participants shared insight into experiencing heightened stress when members from other systems lacked compassion and understanding about their job role amid the pandemic. Conversely, participants also provided insights into feeling supported in their job role and management of stress by utilising and building on the existing relationships they had in school. Finally, participants revealed that the event of the pandemic created a sense of a shared experience, bringing people together.

Subsequently, the responses of the participants fell within the four subthemes: ”lack of understanding around teachers,” “Cultivating empathy for oneself and in support of

student resilience," "Systems of support exist in the Educational community", and "The shared experience."

4.1.1 The need for compassion

Beyond the practical difficulties teachers reported were impacting their stress, such as technology competency and sudden changes to the teaching practice and workload, many participants shared that the lack of understanding and acknowledgement from people around them made them feel more stressed than usual. One way to conceptualise their explanation of feeling stressed due to a lack of support is by considering the concept of compassion. Compassion can be defined as empathy in action or, as defined by Lilius et al. (2003), "a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it" (p. 926). When teachers shared examples of the lack of understanding and acknowledgement from the systems around them, such as SLT members and the educational authorities, they were referring to not having systems to support their stress management or fulfilling their job role during the pandemic. Within the context of the current study, several examples highlight the relationship between workload and support from SLT members. For example, one teacher described workload as being high during the assessment period of the academic year, and the teacher reported feeling more stressed than usual when the senior leadership team did not acknowledge or have any flexibility in expectations of meeting deadlines. In other words, when the workload was compounded by a lack of compassion and understanding from others, they felt more stressed. The second example is a positive experience where a teacher described that when the workload was high, and a senior staff member acknowledged their workload and gave an extension for a deadline, they felt less stressed, supported and understood.

As an acknowledgement of the context of the study by Lilius et al. (2003), it provides evidence of the benefits of having compassion at work; however, the study's participants were healthcare professionals. Nonetheless, as acknowledged previously in this thesis, teachers worked as front-line staff, similar to healthcare professionals, during the pandemic. Further, many studies that examine compassion related to teachers either focus on self-compassion (although research is limited; Roeser et al.,

2013) or compassion fatigue (Hoffman et al., 2007). Therefore, research into compassion and teachers is an area that would need to be researched further.

Research has shown that compassion can support people when stressed (Dutton et al., 2014). In addition, research shows that when employees receive compassion from supervisors, they are less likely to experience burnout and have increased work engagement (Eldor, 2018); people who are the beneficiaries of compassion cope with stress and workload (Davenport, 2015; Dutton et al., 2014) better than those who do not. The findings from this study exemplify how compassion can work as a buffer for teachers in the workplace.

Dutton et al. (2014) provided evidence that showing compassion can positively affect an overall workplace. For example, they found that when people in a workplace from various levels exhibit compassion for one another, it nurtures job satisfaction and work-related burnout. This is an important factor to consider as both those factors also impact teacher stress and mental health (Van Dick & Wagner, 2001). Relatedly, Diliberti et al. (2021) and Sorensen and Ladd (2020) found that many teachers left the profession before their scheduled retirement due to the pandemic due to the build-up of stress in their workplace and lack of support from the school. Further, both studies highlighted that teachers felt the stressors of working during the pandemic and dealing with personal stressors led to teachers concluding that the best way to protect themselves was to have an early retirement. As a plausible alternative, many might have stayed in the profession if teachers had been consistently and significantly supported during this time.

Dutton and Frost (2006) describe another example of the importance of compassion in the workplace. They describe the concept of 'compassion organising', where organisations respond to the suffering or pain of people within the workplace in an organised manner. They argue that compassion organising is utilised when organisations make employees feel noticed, understood and heard. In line with the current study's findings and Kyriacou's stress model and the bio-ecological systems model, if the teacher's immediate environment (the school) engaged in compassion organising, where teachers were offered support for technological challenges, providing mental health resources and acknowledged their workload with the means

to reduce it, teachers may have reduced stress. Further, Kyriacou's model emphasises teachers' perception of a threat towards their self-efficacy and well-being, and so creating a culture within the workplace where the school responds to the needs of the teacher can increase teachers' sense of competence (Howard & Johnson, 2004) and control in work (Crothers et al., 2010), thus mitigating the stress they experience.

4.1.2 Subtheme 1: Lack of understanding around teachers

Of the seven participants, six described different examples of the lack of understanding and acknowledgement of the teacher's context from different people within the systems. This sub-theme captures, more specifically, adaptations not made by people around them and the lack of importance given to teachers (as perceived by the participants). Further, this subtheme highlights the need for greater empathy matched with reasonable action to address the challenges teachers faced during the pandemic in their job roles and the stressors they were exposed to. Finally, every participant describes feeling pressure from multiple fronts directly related to their job role and, in turn, making them feel stressed during different points of the academic year.

Participant 1, School 1:

> *“I think they [SLT] forget what it's like for classroom teachers to have a full day and they want instant responses or things to be done.. You know like give you a day or two to complete an activity when for those two days you're teaching every lesson."*
>
> *Page 31, Line 1347-1351*

4.1.3 Relationships are found to be a key buffer against teacher stress

The relationships that teachers form within the school environment play a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of teacher stress. Specifically, the interactions and bonds teachers form with their peers, mentors, and supportive administrative staff are crucial (Traves, 2017; Skalvick & Skalvick, 2011; Klasen et al., 2012). As shown in previous

studies (Hargreaves, 2001), when teachers face stressful situations, they often turn to colleagues and proximal networks to support them through their job role and experience of stress. The findings from the current study indicate that teachers relied on relationships with their colleagues as forms of support in their job roles and stress management. All participants mentioned and described examples of utilising peer support throughout the pandemic. This is also consistent with research that examines people seeking support in the workplace for stress management (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005; Arnold et al., 2007) and research that explores how teachers are supported in school (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017); relationships with colleagues are key in supporting people to cope with stress.

In line with the Bio-ecological systems model and the current study, the reported lack of support received from government bodies (Exosystem) could be compensated by the teacher's immediate environment, such as colleague support (Micro-system). This validates the model's emphasis that a teacher's immediate environment can impact their stress most. For teachers, building, maintaining and utilising relationships in school is also related to communicating their needs and wants (Nias, 1998). According to the current study's findings, some teachers could utilise existing relationships in school with colleagues to exchange ideas and queries about their job roles' practical and logistical aspects.

4.1.4 Subtheme 2: Systems of support exist in the Educational community

All seven participants described feeling supported in their job and stress management due to the relationships in their immediate circle of school support. This included colleagues, line managers, heads of departments and students. Specifically, teachers described moments of mutual support and leaning into existing relationships within the school to support their stress management related to their job role throughout the pandemic. Finally, where participants described supportive relationships in their workplace, they also expressed the importance of having those relationships in school.

Participant 2, School 2:

“I've got one person in my department who is, she is, a support You know she's quite nice to talk to…Uhm, that was great so it's more so you know from a colleague…So anything that you’re struggling with, you know, I think you need a couple of people in school that you feel comfortable with that you can talk to…”

Page 16, Line 682-685

4.1.5 Subtheme 3: Cultivating empathy for oneself and in support of student resilience.

This sub-theme focuses more on a positive outcome of the pandemic relating to increased understanding and compassion towards students. All participants mentioned how the pandemic exacerbated student hardships, and although most reported knowing that students went through hardships before the pandemic, they understood and empathised with students more as a result of the pandemic. Further, some teachers reflected on their practice and management of stress and described a new appreciation of their efforts to look after themselves by acknowledging the stressors that coexisted with the pandemic and the stressors within their role that previously existed (pre-pandemic). Finally, to clarify this subtheme, quotes representing "increased empathy for others" and "Increased empathy for self" have been presented separately.

4.1.6 Student resilience

This sub-theme encompasses a new appreciation of students' home and school circumstances. Specifically, teachers described how the pandemic amplified student hardships and exposed the different (and varying) experiences that students went through during the pandemic. Overall, teachers felt they were more understanding, considerate and mindful, making them more empathetic towards students. This will be discussed later when theme three is introduced.

Participant 1, School 1:

"So now I think I'm trying to be more empathetic with students with all the situations they're going through. I think the lockdown has let us see a lot of the time, a lot of their home situations, or what they're going through stuff you wouldn't necessarily see before." Page 26, Line 1134- 1136

4.1.7 Teachers showed self-compassion where there was a lack of compassion from others.

Another important finding within the study is that many teachers showed self-compassion. In various examples, teachers felt that although they felt unacknowledged by others and did not necessarily feel valued, they chose to show self-compassion. For example, many reported reflecting on their hard work before the pandemic and going "above and beyond" for students but felt that during the pandemic, all they could do was try their hardest and be understanding to themselves. To further this, many participants spoke about self-compassion when they initially felt doubtful about their capability and capacity to fulfil their expectations of being a teacher. Further, teachers described celebrating small victories such as becoming more technologically competent, finding creative ways to teach and adapting their communication styles to meet student needs.

According to Hwang et al. (2019), self-compassion can reduce teacher stress and positively impact teaching efficacy. Hwang et al. (2019) aimed to explore the relationship between self-compassion alongside teacher stress, job satisfaction and burnout. By surveying 386 teachers in South Korea, they found that self-compassion directly impacted teacher stress and indirectly reduced burnout through its effect on job satisfaction. The findings from this study suggest that if teachers are supported to engage in self-compassion, the promotion of self-compassion can support their reduction of stress and burnout.

Further, the study highlights the importance of teachers' well-being and their ability to execute their duties as teachers within their jobs. However, it should be noted that as this study was conducted in South Korea, the results may not be generalisable to other

countries and contexts. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted in the U.K. to understand how self-compassion within the teaching role influences teacher stress and burnout in the U.K. schooling system.

During the pandemic, Postareff et al. (2020) conducted a study in Finland using a survey to explore the role of self-compassion in teachers' psychological well-being in face-to-face teaching during COVID-19. They found that although teachers experienced challenges in online learning, self-compassion was present in their practice, which mitigated teacher stress and resulted in higher levels of well-being. Further, the researchers highlighted the importance of strengthening teachers' use of self-compassion to further support well-being as it supported teachers' resilience when faced with the challenges posed by the pandemic. Their study concluded that Educational Psychologists could play a significant role in supporting teachers to practise self-compassion to alleviate stress and enhance well-being. This is a similar viewpoint from Hashem and Zeinoum (2020), as they argue that the role of self-compassion among teachers is an important factor to explore.

4.1.8 Empathy for oneself

This sub-theme represents how teachers reflected on the experiences that arose from the pandemic and described ways in which they have, as a result, become kinder to themselves, relating to meeting the demands of their jobs. Specifically, participants discussed knowing their limits, being okay with not meeting a deadline and taking regular breaks throughout the day to support their mental health.

Participant 7, School 1:

> "I know what my limits are now, and I try my hardest kind of respect, those limits and not take too much to heart if I can't do something and 'cause you know I can always come back to it I have and always try again next week and so I think yeah, prioritising my mental health and physical health is a big thing I've taken away from this."
>
> Page 39, Line 1712-1714

4.1.9 Subtheme 4: The shared experience

This sub-theme captures teachers' descriptions of having a shared experience of the pandemic with students. Particularly, they emphasise the positive aspects of collectively going through the experience of a pandemic and the significance it has had on understanding one another better. Further, participants described a sense of unity between themselves and students and how the sentiment of going through the pandemic together has created a stronger bond among themselves students.

Participant 5, School 1:

"But also there seems to be like an environment of people being feeling together like it's an experience that everyone experienced together And that's not something that we usually experience in this country or come from different backgrounds, but this was something that affected everyone."
Page 6, Line 248-255

4.2 Theme 2: Connections, communication and consistency.

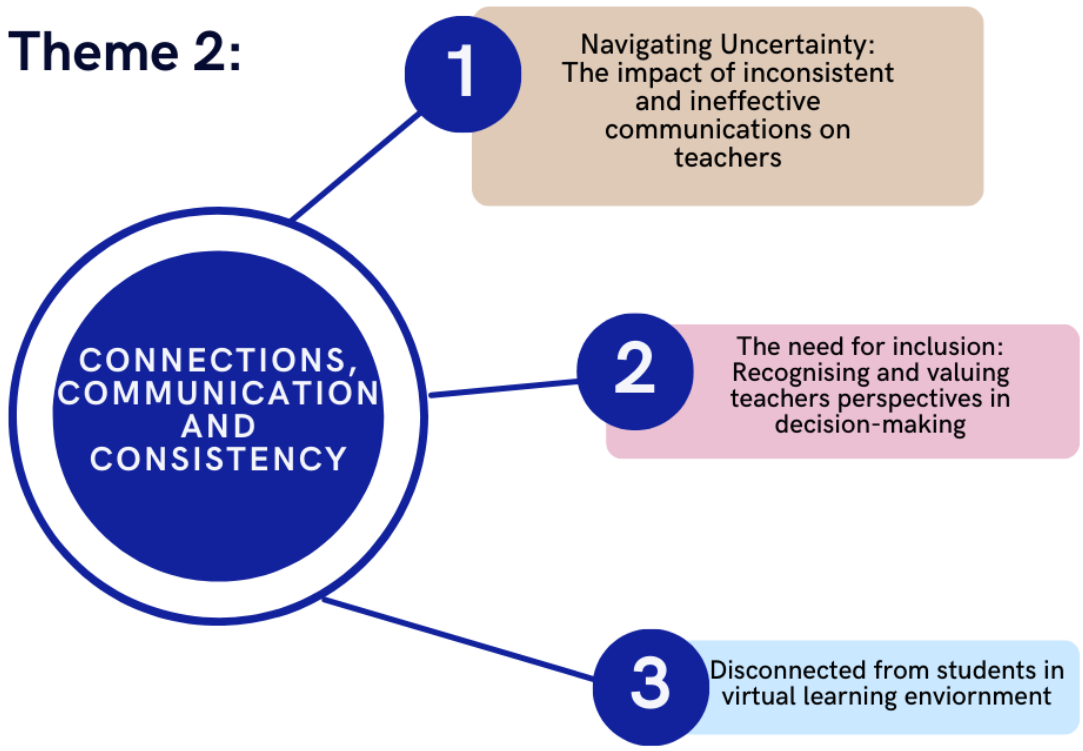


Figure 7: This figure shows the theme of communication and the three subthemes.

The second theme encompasses teachers' perceptions of the communication between different systems around teachers during the pandemic. Further, it represents how teachers felt concerning the transparency, clarity of information and communication related to the decisions made across different systems concerning the teaching practice, the changes in assessment/exams and school closures. Finally, this theme captures the impact that communication had on their experience of stress and their job role and the resulting resentment and challenges teachers faced as a direct consequence of communication during the pandemic.

4.2.1 Subtheme 1: Navigating uncertainty: The impact of inconsistent and ineffective communication on teachers.

All seven participants described different examples of how their job and perceived stress were impacted by the communication (or lack of communication) from different

systems around the teacher. They described that communication from different systems had a ripple effect on the school, the students, and their understanding of the "plan" in terms of their role in a school. Specifically, they provide examples of a lack of timely, clear and consistent guidance from the exam board, the Government and SLT. Further, they explain how the lack of communication made their job and management of stress harder as it created a sense of uncertainty within their roles and for other school members.

Participant 1, School 1:

> "I think the guidance from the exam boards and the Government as well was not very clear about exactly what they wanted, and that made it more difficult, I think, for schools in general…
>
> Page 14, Line 593-595

4.2.2 Changes in the Microsystem

Consistent with research, every teacher in the current study mentioned feeling stressed over the course of the academic year concerning the pandemic and their job role (Santamaría et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021b). Expectedly, many participants referred to several factors impacting their experience of stress directly related to the changes in the teaching practice. For instance, the present study found that moving teaching and learning online, including creating new learning materials and initially navigating through (never before utilised) online platforms, was a stressful experience for all. On the surface, the stressors described by teachers focused on the practical and logistical aspects of these changes. However, as shown from the findings, many participants described a sense of unpreparedness and uncertainty around delivering such teaching, especially at the start of the pandemic. This is represented in Subtheme 1 of Theme 2:

When considering the Bio-ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007), not only did this mean that there were changes to the microsystem for teachers, but it also highlights the need for teachers to receive clear and consistent guidance and

communication from the Macro, Exo and Microsystem in order to fulfil their job role and reduce a sense of uncertainty amongst teachers. For example, as highlighted in the findings, teachers reported that the lack of clear guidance from the Government (situated in the Exosystem) immediately impacted the microsystem (their teaching practice and students). In addition, the findings further highlight the significance of the chronosystem at play as participants reported that their sense of uncertainty and unpreparedness changed throughout the pandemic.

Although this change over time did not emerge as a theme, it is worth highlighting as it feeds into the framework of the Bioecological systems model. This builds further evidence on current literature concerning the impact of uncertainty and unpreparedness amid the pandemic and how it negatively impacts teacher stress. In light of the current literature concerning the causes of teacher stress during the pandemic, Kim and Ashbury (2020) found that many teachers reported that the pandemic had a significant impact on their mental health; they reported increased levels of stress, anxiety and burnout. The key sources of their stress were found to be the rapid shift in remote teaching and the challenges of adapting to new technology and teaching methods.

4.2.3 Horizontal and vertical forms of communication and support

The current study and literature highlight that communication can significantly impact psychological well-being (Madlock, 2008). As described by Sollitto and Myers (2015), there are both horizontal (co-workers level) and vertical levels (organisational-related information) of communication. If the current study utilised the same conceptualisation of communication, the findings could be interpreted as the horizontal form of communication supporting the reduction of stress concerning receiving support from colleagues. In line with this, positive horizontal forms of communication and support, such as collaboration and support among teachers, have been shown to help reduce stress and burnout. For example, Duyar et al. (2013) found that higher levels of collaboration and social support among teachers were associated with lower levels of depersonalisation, a dimension of burnout. They suggest that collaboration provides

opportunities for teachers to share experiences, provide empathy, and engage in problem-solving together, alleviating stress (Duyar et al., 2013).

On the other hand, the current study's findings also highlight that inadequate vertical communication and support from school leadership can contribute to increased teacher stress and be attributed to the need for teachers to wait for guidance and information that informs their teaching practice. Similarly, De Nobile et al. (2013) found that communication openness between leadership teams and teachers was negatively related to teacher stress.

Vertical support refers to the support provided by senior leadership teams and supervisors, while horizontal support refers to the support provided by colleagues and peers (Van Dick et al., 2018). Research shows that teachers require both forms of support to effectively reduce teacher stress, and effective communication plays a role in facilitating the support received. To further this, Crews et al. (2019) stated that effective communication that is transparent, consistent and respectful can foster a positive work environment that promotes teacher well-being. Further communication that successfully fulfils the above factors builds trust, facilitates cooperation and creates a sense of shared purpose amongst teachers. Specifically, as explained by Crews et al. (2019), horizontal support creates a shared experience among teachers and, therefore, allows an exchange of practical tips to manage their stress, whilst vertical support provides access to information and resources for the teacher.

As acknowledged in the literature review, teachers are exposed to various factors that contribute to their stress experience. Therefore, they require both forms of support to successfully navigate the different stressors. Kraft and Dougherty (2013) argue that bespoke professional development programs that strengthen communication skills can reduce teacher stress and promote positive job attitudes.

In the current study, both forms of support were utilised by teachers during different stages of the pandemic; hence, when teachers were asked about their stress, they provided examples of mitigating stressors by reaching out to colleagues, line managers and senior leadership members. Equally, when teachers expressed feeling stressed during different stages of the pandemic, they highlighted a lack of support

from SLTs around deadlines and a lack of compassion (n.b. Empathy in action) and from the Government (such as providing guidance in a timely manner and sufficient recognition of the hardships that teachers were going through) and Government bodies such as Ofsted (lack of clarity on exams). When comparing the findings from this study to the above literature, this current study's findings support the position for the need to foster open, supportive communication channels both horizontally and vertically, which in turn help promote teacher well-being and support teachers in successfully navigating through the stressors that co-occurred during the pandemic.

4.2.4 Exosystem: Government bodies and Ofsted

The findings also suggested that some teachers were dissatisfied with Governmental bodies and organisations such as Ofsted and their communication towards schools and teachers. Almost all teachers reported that information was provided too late to schools, and this caused teachers to feel more stressed. Specifically, they mentioned the uncertainty, timeliness and clarity of the guidance those institutions and organisations provided.

Research indicates that when people experience unpredictable and uncertain situations, it causes them to feel more stressed (Michie, 2002). In this study, teachers explained that it was not only provided too late but also that the information needed to be clearer and consistent. Schools and, therefore, teachers found themselves in a position where they had to make decisions that were in line with the guidance provided by government bodies such as the Department for Education as much as possible.

Research consistently finds that communication is vital for organisations such as workplaces like schools to run smoothly (Grates, 2020). Grates (2020) found that effective communication aids psychological wellness, even if employees face uncertainties; this study was conducted during the pandemic, so the uncertainties they refer to are the unique and unprecedented factors resulting from the pandemic. They describe internal communication as a dynamic process where there is communication on different levels within an organisation, both formal and informal.

Within this study, many teachers described uncertainties, including information overload and unclear and late communication. In addition, many schools were waiting for the Government's response and guidance to inform teachers on action plans and ways to practise. Therefore, as reported by the teachers, as schools were provided with unsatisfactory information from Government bodies, this had a ripple effect on how well the school could communicate information to teachers. Relevant to this, as previously stated, the different systems, such as the micro and mesosystems in the Bio-eco-logical systems model, can impact one another. Relevant to this study, the Government, the L.A., Schools and teachers are all interlinked, reflecting the complexity of the factors contributing to teacher stress.

4.2.5 Subtheme 2: The need for inclusion: Recognising and valuing teachers' perspectives in decision-making.

This subtheme denotes teachers' perceptions around feeling excluded from the decision-making process related to cancelling exams and school closures. Specifically, of the seven participants, six described how the lack of communication between the Government and schools resulted in teachers feeling that they did not have any opportunity to shape educational decisions or communicate back what their insights and experiences related to what they felt was needed to support schools and its members.

Participant 3, School 2:

> "So when the Government's making decisions, they should consult teachers before making a decision. So then there should be some sort of input from teachers rather than…It's from the Government…
>
> Page 12, Line 528-529

4.2.6 Perceived lack of teachers' voices

Many teachers felt that from vertical levels of communication with senior members of staff, their perspectives and voices should have been considered in the decision-making process. This is also similar to the examples shared by teachers regarding

Government body decisions made regarding the operation of learning and assessments of students. Many teachers shared that this negatively impacted their stress and caused teachers to not feel valued.

Literature highlights that when people work in an organisation whose voices and opinions are not considered, they experience lower job satisfaction and self-efficacy (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). Related to teachers, this is significant to highlight as previous research has shown a significant relationship between job satisfaction and self-efficacy on teacher stress. In line with this, Kyriacou's model of stress highlights that teachers' experience of being faced with demand and their ability to cope impacts their stress. In the current study, the participants shared that not being a part of the decision-making process could relate to their perception of a lack of control and autonomy, which have also been shown in the literature to further exacerbate stress (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

4.2.7 Subtheme 3: Disconnected from students in virtual learning environments

This subtheme represents how teachers felt disconnected from students in their classes due to online/ remote teaching. Specifically, they mention the lack of interaction with students who cannot pick up on in-person cues and traditional classroom dynamics. Further, they describe the resulting challenges of the inability to foster student engagement and not 'truly' capturing how students were feeling, engaging and progressing in school.

Participant 3, School 2:

“The kids never really had cameras or microphones on, so again, you got really little interaction with the kids... Obviously, when they're at home, I don't really get much feedback from the people that want teams Page 3, Line 69…135

4.2.8 Concerns for and communication with students.

Participants also reported feeling concerned about the lack of engagement from students as they could not monitor their progress and determine whether or not they were learning; this included describing presenteeism amongst students. Concerning these findings, a study conducted by Hermanet et al. (2021) explored teachers' views regarding the impact of COVID-19 on students. They found that teachers had concerns for students about accessing the learning resources provided by themselves, and this caused teachers to report higher levels of mental health symptoms compared to students. The findings from this study suggest that these additional considerations during the pandemic resulted in teachers feeling additional stress. They also concluded that teachers received inadequate support and resources during the pandemic to mitigate teacher stress and poor mental health outcomes.

Related to the concerns and the implications that COVID-19 had on students, the current study found that teachers felt stressed concerning similar factors to what students felt stressed by. For example, teachers shared not knowing how to engage students with learning and how to address the possible widening gap in their attainment. Many reported that they were unable to gauge student learning. In one instance, a teacher described being unable to reach the screen and helping a student when they found the work difficult. As shown in the literature review, the findings from the current study as consistent with research that emerged during the pandemic. For example, in Bayrakdar and Guveli (2020), the challenges of dealing with the widening gap between home learning and school provision of distance learning created additional challenges for teachers.

Relevant to the Bioecological Systems Model, the above concerns, although situated within the microsystem, can be influenced by the guidance provided by the Government (situated within the Exosystem). This highlights how interlinked the different systems are and the significance of research having to adopt a holistic approach to understanding the dynamics and context of teachers and their practice.

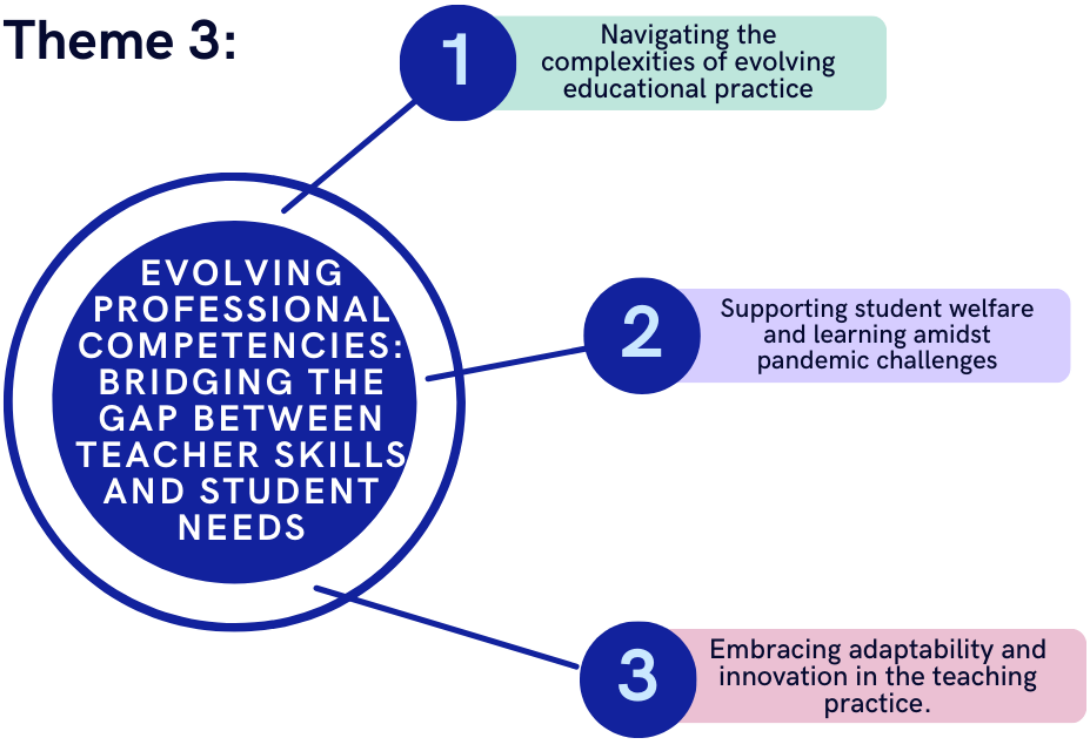


Figure 8 shows the theme Changes in the teaching and the three subthemes.

4.3 Theme 3: Evolving professional competencies: Bridging the Gap between teacher skills and student needs.

The third theme encompasses depictions of the changes in teaching that occurred due to the pandemic. Further, it represents the impact of the pandemic on teaching practice while navigating new and unfamiliar circumstances. Within this theme are three subthemes representing challenges faced amid the pandemic and the positive outcomes related to teaching practice.

4.3.1 Workload

All participants in the current study referred to an increase in their workload, and the term workload was used across almost all areas captured in the teachers' role in the interviews. For example, creating and marking assessments, developing new teaching

materials, increasing administrative roles (such as answering questions from parents and students), meeting several deadlines and having to manage multiple work-related stressors simultaneously. Another example of how the current study's findings concerning the changes to teaching affected teacher stress is a study by Hodges et al. (2020). They reported that teachers had an increased workload due to the requirement to adapt their materials to online platforms, the most consistently found factor to impact teacher stress during this period (Allen et al., 2020).

As discussed in the literature review, workload is a consistently identified factor that causes teacher stress (Catalan et al., 2019). Unsurprisingly, changes to teaching created more stress for teachers during the pandemic. This is consistent with the current and emerging literature on the increased workload and teacher stress during the pandemic (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Walker et al., 2020).

Concerning the Bio-ecological systems model, the increase in workload and challenges teachers faced during the pandemic could be linked to every system within the model. For example, on the microsystem level, teachers were faced with changing their teaching practice; on the mesosystem level, they were faced with balancing the competing demands within the microsystem (factors described above). Further, on the exosystem level, adhering to decisions and deadlines by educational authorities (such as exam boards, DfE) and on the Macrosystem level, the societal expectation is that teachers deliver teaching effectively online (Yang et al., 2023). Finally, on a Chronosystem level, teachers faced the fluctuation of workload throughout the year (such as assessment periods and marking).

4.3.2 Evolving Professional Competencies

All teachers reported having developed new skills in teaching owing to the need to teach remotely and navigate the challenges brought about by the pandemic. For example, many participants described learning how to use online platforms for video-conferencing, sharing screens of their teaching materials and sharing resources online, hence developing their competence in using technology in their teaching. In a similar finding, Holmes (2013) found that teachers who participated in CPD programmes felt more confident and competent in their technological skills. As a result,

they found that the participants increased confidence and competence led to decreased stress levels and improved job satisfaction. This is relevant to the current study as participants were not directly asked if they had learned new skills considering the context of the pandemic, but all participants mentioned that a positive outcome of the pandemic was the new skills they had learned. However, a difference between the current study and the above study is that many of the participants in this study did not have explicit training to navigate the use of online platforms. In line with the bio-ecological systems model, teachers reported a change in their competency in technology use, which shows the significance of the Chronosystem. To link this with teachers' reported stress, the findings suggest that, over time, teachers feeling more competent with technology and adapting their practice led to decreased stress. The following explanation can be linked to Kyriacou's stress model by highlighting that the teacher's perception and response to a "threat" decreased over time. To further this, initially, teachers may have perceived their lack of technological competence to reflect their lack of self-efficacy. However, exposure reduces the "threat" of navigating and learning new ways of working.

4.3.3 Subtheme 1: Navigating the complexities of evolving educational practices.

The first sub-theme represents teachers' experiences around challenges, responsibilities, and additional workload during a repeated transition period in the context of the pandemic. Specifically, this subtheme captures how the variety of tasks, adjustments, and responsibilities they faced throughout the pandemic meant they had to adapt their practice and manage multiple demands. All participants described various moments as above throughout the interview.

Participant 3, School 2:

> "There was the added sort of workload of we had to teach the lesson to the kids that were here but also the kids that were isolated in their homes. We had to set up teams so we were having to do sort of additional stuff, and because we were keeping them in year bubbles…."
>
> Page 2, Line 76- 79

4.3.4 Supporting student welfare and learning amidst pandemic challenges

As an additional contributing factor towards perceived teacher stress, teachers felt they had additional considerations related to student's welfare and academic progress. By "additional", this refers to teachers acknowledging that as a part of their job role, they must meet their student's social and emotional needs, but some of the concerns were new as they did not have to consider them pre-pandemic. For example, some teachers reported feeling stressed because they were concerned that vulnerable students could feel lonely at home (due to parents having to work) and were unable to socialise with friends, and finally, students falling behind in their work due to the lack of face-to-face interaction and learning. One participant shared that a student asked to remain online once the lesson was finished; the teacher sensed the student was lonely. This finding is consistent with the current literature that teachers were worried about student progress due to online learning and the lack of face-to-face interaction, which caused further stress to teachers (Niemi & Kousa, 2020).

4.3.5 Subtheme 2: Supporting student welfare and learning amidst pandemic challenges.

This sub-theme represents the experience of teachers concerning the challenges and concerns around student progress in school and overall welfare. It further demonstrates that teachers found that being unable to track student progress, the fact that exams were cancelled (and what this meant for students) and being unable to monitor student well-being caused teachers to feel stressed. Finally, the theme emphasises the teacher's acknowledgement of the need to meet student needs, such as engagement with learning and student well-being, while striving to create a sense of normality and inclusiveness. Of the seven participants, five described how the above factors caused them stress.

Participant 5, School 1:

“So that added to the stress load as well, and I was worried about students missing out that it wasn't teaching on, especially with teaching online as well that the interaction became less… not being able to see how well students are progressing and that was stressing me out 'cause I felt like I wasn't able to gauge where they were with their learning." Page, Line 102…155

4.3.6 Subtheme 3: Embracing adaptability and innovation in teaching practices.

This subtheme represents the different skills acquired due to the adaptations for teaching online/remotely. All participants reported that they felt that they had acquired new skills due to the effects of the pandemic on teaching. It particularly depicts positive experiences with becoming familiar and skilled at using online platforms to teach, increased skills in communicating remotely, and opportunities to access online training. Further, all participants reported an upskilling to become resourceful and creative and embrace technology within their teaching.

Participant 6, School 2:

..it made me actually have to engage with technology and try and think of Maybe more creative ways of delivering lessons. Page 8, Line 349-351

4.3.7 Teacher support begins within the Macrosystem.

The second research question explored teachers' perceptions regarding what they would find supportive in their job role and stress management during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. The final theme, which is directly related to the support that staff have identified, is captured across four subthemes: continuous professional development, a space to reflect, the need for financial and resource support, and the need for more time within their working hours. Although there is a golden thread throughout the findings around the types of support available and needed for the

teachers in this study, the four sub-themes of the findings are specific to research question 2.

To address these four areas, it is useful to consider these areas relative to which systems could provide this support.

Research question 2:
What did teachers perceive to be supportive of their stress management and job role during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what support did they identify as needed in the aftermath of the pandemic?

Figure 9 shows the theme "Fostering a supportive ecosystem in education and the four subthemes.

4.4 Theme 4: Fostering a supportive Ecosystem in education.

This theme encompasses the support required for teachers in the aftermath of the pandemic. In addition, this theme captures common ideas around different support systems that can promote their skills in teaching, such as technology competency, dealing with CYP mental health and managing teacher stress and overall mental health. Finally, they also provide insight into the impracticalities of having time to build on their skills and explore opportunities to enhance their teaching practice.

4.4.1 Subtheme 1: Continuous Professional Development: Equip teachers to support students in a post-pandemic landscape.

Almost all participants answered questions about how they wish to be supported in their post-pandemic role around receiving training in different areas. The responses emphasised the anticipation that students' mental health will be impacted and posed training addressing the challenges that may result from decreased student well-being. Further, of the seven participants, six participants mentioned how additional training on the different uses of technology and resources could strengthen their teaching practice. Finally, four participants mentioned the need for training around supporting staff mental health. This will be discussed further when discussing the Marco and Exosystem below.

Participant 6, School 2

> Getting more support and education on mental health in terms of students' mental health because I think a lot of students are having a lot more anxiety. How can we support students' mental health but also support staff members' mental health?...
> Trying to keep all the teachers informed of maybe new technologies or new activities or new resources that we can continue to use.
>
> Page 20, Line 849-854

4.4.2 A space to reflect

The findings from the current study suggest that teachers would like a platform to share ideas, discuss and problem-solve situations and get support for their job role and stress. One way this could be achieved is by receiving supervision or having a space to reflect on their experiences within their job role. For example, Hoyne and Cunningham (2019) stated that teachers could get support from supervision with Educational Psychologists. From this study, teachers reported that they felt that they did not have a protected, safe space to ask for support regarding the practicalities of their job role (delivering lessons in creative ways) and how to support children and young people when faced with difficulties situations (such as the child feeling lonely or when a child or young person is experiencing mental health difficulties).

As the Educational Psychologist role is constantly evolving, interventions such as consultations, group supervision and training can be offered to teachers to fulfil some of their needs within their role (Edmondson & Howe, 2019; MacKay et al., 2016). However, in order for teachers to provide quality education, their mental health and well-being must be a priority (Zee & Kooman, 2016). This includes acknowledging that their workload, feeling valued, and overall well-being can impact their teaching practice and desire to remain in the profession. Therefore, as mentioned previously, teachers' mental health and well-being must be prioritised throughout the different systems around them.

4.4.3 Subtheme 2: Prioritising teacher mental health in line with their job role: a space to reflect.

Three of the seven participants mentioned supporting staff mental health as a need to support them in their job role. Having acknowledged the challenges arising from the pandemic, many felt that to support teachers in their job role, having a space and opportunities to access counselling would support their job and mental health. For example, Participant 7 shares the view of having a safe space to talk and reflect upon their practice and mental health. Further, this sub-theme represents the importance of

addressing mental health concerns for teachers by providing them with different opportunities to foster a culture of open discussions about mental health.

Participant 7. School 1:

> Something as simple as kind of supporting the mental health of teachers in some way and maybe having some sort of counselling...Free counselling that's dedicated towards teachers that maybe led by people who used to be in the profession who actually know what it's like to be in the profession… counselling service for teachers to make them prioritise themselves a bit more…
>
> Page 47, Line 2080-2087

4.4.4 Macro and Exosystem

Training (CPD) and funding are fundamental in providing support for schools. As a result of the pandemic, the Government announced that they would invest £8 million to provide mental health training for school staff to benefit both the staff and students (Department for Education, 2020). They acknowledge that due to the impact of the pandemic, school staff, including teachers and support staff, will have additional pressures to support children and young people. Some of these pressures, they argue, are around accessing knowledge and resources to support children and young people in bereavement, stress, trauma or anxiety, and as such, a programme called 'The well-being for Education Return' was created. However, from the findings of this study, none of the teachers who took part in the study had any awareness or experience of such a programme, and many stated that there is a real need to provide funding and training for schools to build a stronger and supportive environment for both teachers and schools.

The Education Secretary Gavin Williamson stated that supporting children and young people back into schools would be a priority to ensure their developmental, educational and well-being needs are met (Department for Education, 2021). As published on the government website, the Government stated that this training would support teachers and staff in preparing them to have sensitive and open conversations with children and young people. However, again, the teachers who participated in this

study explained that they would like training to support children and young people with their needs, but there was no mention of the programme created by the Government. This programme was developed with health partners, mental health experts, local authorities, schools and colleges. It is important to acknowledge that the development of this programme demonstrates that the Government recognises that teachers require support within their job role. However, there is a disconnect between the two when examining the context of the Government's initiatives and the implementation of such programmes.

In line with Kyriacou's stress model, lacking resources to meet student needs and a perceived inefficacy could lead to further teacher stress (Betoret, 2006). Further on the Mircosystem level, teachers may find it difficult to support students without appropriate training and on the mesosystem level, the lack of implementation or at least an awareness of the existence of such programs could lead to tensions between different microsystems such as parents and teachers. As stated by the mental health minister Nadine Dories, the above programme is intended to empower parents and school staff to spot signs of CYP who may be struggling with their mental health. However, if Government bodies are not effectively communicating within the Exosystem and providing clear pathways for teachers to access such programmes, this will further cause stress for teachers. In turn, on a societal level (within the Macrosystem and legislation such as the Green Paper (Department For Education, 2022)), an expectation will create more pressure for teachers to meet the needs of CYP and overtime (considering the Chronosystem); this can create burnout amongst teachers (Leroy et al., 2007; Hadar et al., 2020). It is, however, important to note that the support around CPD is not limited to this programme as other organisations have worked closely with the Government to create others since then, such as "Senior mental health lead training" (Education and Skills Agency, 2023).

From the current study findings, it is possible to postulate that teachers could be supported in their job role and stress management on different levels. However, in line with the factors identified across different themes in this thesis, all systems must work in synergy and congruence to ensure teachers can be effectively supported. Through the Bioecological systems model lens, additional funding, access to resources, and training stem from a Macro and Exosystem, which could follow through into the

microsystem. Bronfenbrenner states that the significance of the different systems at play is also reliant on the Mesosystem; that is, the relationships between those systems and different microsystems must be strong and effective to have the biggest impact on the person at the centre of the model.

4.4.5 Subtheme 3: Financial challenges and resource constraints: resource management and optimisation.

Every participant mentioned financial or resource constraints in schools when considering the support needed for teachers in their roles and stress management. Specifically, some participants mentioned the need to support schools by providing them with extra funding, and some mentioned the need for more resources to support their roles. In particular, Participant 5 mentions that the pandemic has highlighted and exposed the need for school funding and its importance for students.

Participant 5, School 1:

> "Obviously, for extra funding which is being put into schools… the extra funding that's needed actually to catch up all students you know…stop taking away from schools budget and can keep adding to it because what we're realising this whole pandemic is that how important schools are to kids."
>
> Page 19, Line 817…826

4.4.6 Additional time is needed for teachers.

Another factor that teachers have identified as not only having an impact on their job role and stress is time. Teachers' use of time (or lack of time) allocated to their job role has often been an area implicitly studied when exploring teacher workload (Kreuzfeld et al., 2022). Consistently, studies have shown that teachers have a great amount of workload and that this impacts their overall stress and, for some, is a motivator to leave the profession (Marshall et al., 2022). For example, in 1999, a study by Malcolmson found that by asking teachers to record their time used daily, the time spent planning and preparing their lessons accounted for seven times more than the time spent working in a school. Further, they argue that teachers' lunch periods are slowly eroding due to time constraints and deadlines.

From the findings of this study, almost all teachers reported that as a form of support, teachers require more time to fit into the different responsibilities they have in their job role. These responsibilities include planning lessons, adapting the lessons for students and marking. Further, as identified across literature and in the current study, relationships with colleagues are a resource teachers access to support their stress management and job role (Kim & Ashbury, 2020). If staff have to reduce or sacrifice time spent in their staff room and maintaining relationships (Britland, 2013) to meet the demands of their job, this can create further stress in their job role and lower job satisfaction (Sousa-Poza, 2000).

Within the bio-ecological systems model, time is situated within the chronosystem. Firstly, when considering how time impacted teachers during the pandemic, many teachers reported the need to immediately adapt to a new mode of working and the rapid shift to online learning, in turn, caused further stress to teachers. To further this, teachers were required to go through a learning curve quickly to learn how to use online platforms for teaching, and many experienced a sense of uncertainty regarding the ongoing nature of the pandemic and the changes experienced within the teaching practice. Furthermore, from the teachers' interviews, many reported experiencing different stress waves throughout the pandemic. Considering Kyriacou's stress model, the above factors, concerning time, can cause teachers to experience a sustained perception of an imbalance between the demands of the job and their ability to cope (Kyriacou, 2000).

However, it is noteworthy that in the context of this study, many teachers also reported that one of the positive outcomes of the pandemic had been the opportunity to explore different ways to deliver lessons, use new resources, and develop their skills in technology competency. Many teachers reported having these opportunities only due to the pandemic, and most have yet to have dedicated opportunities to develop their teaching practice.

From the above speculations, it would be fair to say that more time is needed for teachers. There are several ways to incorporate protected time for teachers to use the extra time for their job role and overall stress management. For example, from a Macrosystem level, the Government could implement legislation that makes it

mandatory for teachers to have monthly protected time. This could allow teachers to catch up with work, develop skills in different areas, access one-day courses or have a well-being day. In addition, some international studies found that teachers require protected time to use as they wish (Lim et al., 2011) and have well-being and retreat opportunities (Jennings, 2016).

From an Exosystem perspective, the Local Authority, including the Educational Psychology Service, could also support schools by negotiating opportunities for teachers to be supported in any way they require related to their job role or stress management. In the U.K., as many of the Educational Psychology Services are traded or partially traded, this can create some challenges for L.A. to support teachers; however, if supporting teachers becomes a priority or if it is recognised as a statutory need by the Government, then teachers could finally get the support they require.

Finally, from a micro-systemic perspective, schools could (with L.A.'s support) prioritise teacher well-being and mental health and support teachers with their workload and job roles by reinforcing a culture where teachers are a priority.

4.4.7 Subtheme 4: The struggle with time: Balancing planning, learning and teaching responsibilities.

Two of the seven participants directly mentioned having more time. Specifically, they shared that they could work through their workload and have more opportunities to enhance their practice if they had more time to explore the available resources and opportunities. Although only two participants directly referenced needing time, all participants mentioned a lack of time when faced with challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Participant 1, School 1:

> Well, what I'm going to say in terms of support, I think the number one thing which is probably impossible, but it's more time, you know, 'cause I feel like there's always more and more things being put on us
>
> Page 29, Line 1245-1247

4.4.8 Chronosystem

As previously mentioned, given the pandemic being a time-related matter, it is significant to acknowledge how the Chronosystem has impacted teacher stress within this thesis. For example, teachers made several references to the change in teacher stress throughout the duration of the pandemic.

As the interviews were conducted at the beginning of the academic year 2021, teachers had experienced the pandemic's effects for almost a year. Therefore, by that point, teachers had an overview of the changes to their teaching practice. During the interviews, all participants referenced a change in their stress and teaching practice over time. In the first lockdown, participants felt stressed due to the unknown circumstances of the pandemic and the implications it would have on students and themselves.

However, participants noted that the second lockdown was the most stressful period of the pandemic as it became apparent that teachers had to make additional considerations of exams, assessments and marking. By the time the third lockdown occurred, teachers felt more prepared and understood what they had to do within their jobs. Further, teachers were familiar with the third lockdown and stated that they felt more adapted and knew what to expect from the impact of the pandemic.

Current research on the changes in teacher stress during the pandemic highlights that for many, during the early months of the pandemic, teachers felt an increase in their stress levels. Specifically, the rapid shift to remote teaching, school closures and the need to adapt to new technologies were primary contributing factors to teacher stress (Panisoara et al., 2020). In many cases, teachers felt unprepared and overwhelmed by the sudden changes in their job roles and questioned their ability to teach students effectively.

Another study conducted by Bryce et al. (2022) found that teacher stress was the highest during the start of the pandemic as they had to cope with uncertainty and adapt

to a new way of working. Nonetheless, a study by Stan (2022) found that as the pandemic progressed, there was a decrease in teacher stress as they became more technologically competent and received support from students and colleagues. For the most part, academic research suggests that teacher stress changed throughout the pandemic. However, more research is needed to identify which factors impacted the change in teachers experiencing stress throughout the pandemic. It is also important to note that the above studies were conducted outside the U.K. Therefore, the stressors or influencing factors can be different in the U.K. Furthermore, the above study findings differ in their depiction of teacher stress over time when compared to the current study, yet this could be due to the different contexts of the teachers from the current study.

4.5 The complexity of the use of the Bioecological system framework

Whilst the bioecological framework provides a clear framework of the different systems surrounding the teacher, it should be noted that the complexities of the different interactions between systems make it difficult to separate or categorise some of the findings from the current study. Further, although the framework provides an understanding of the multilayers of the environmental influence on the person placed in the centre, it only partially captures all the nuances of the different interactions between each system. For example, Figure 12 shows that although some factors exist within a particular system, the interaction between those systems significantly impacts one another.

Another difficulty in using this framework stems from categorising factors based on the framework's definitions without considering the possibility that one factor could co-exist in another system. Within the current study, the framework is useful to utilise when adopting a social constructivist perspective; however, constructs such as teacher stress are not limited to environmental factors, and personal characteristics also have a role to play in teacher stress.

4.6 The use of social constructivism in the current study.

Applying a social constructionism approach is well suited to the current study as it focuses on understanding how the norms and discourses within society can shape individual perceptions and experiences. In relation to the themes in the current study, it provides the opportunity to explore how educational structures from different systems within and around the two schools contribute to teacher stress from each teachers perspective. Understanding the social processes involved in influencing the teaching profession and perceived teacher stress in the context of the pandemic, further provides how and who can support teachers in navigating and resisting the pressures of their profession during the pandemic. In relation to the second research question, the latter provides further understanding of how different systems surrounding the teacher can work collaboratively and in conjunction to reduce perceived stress among teachers.

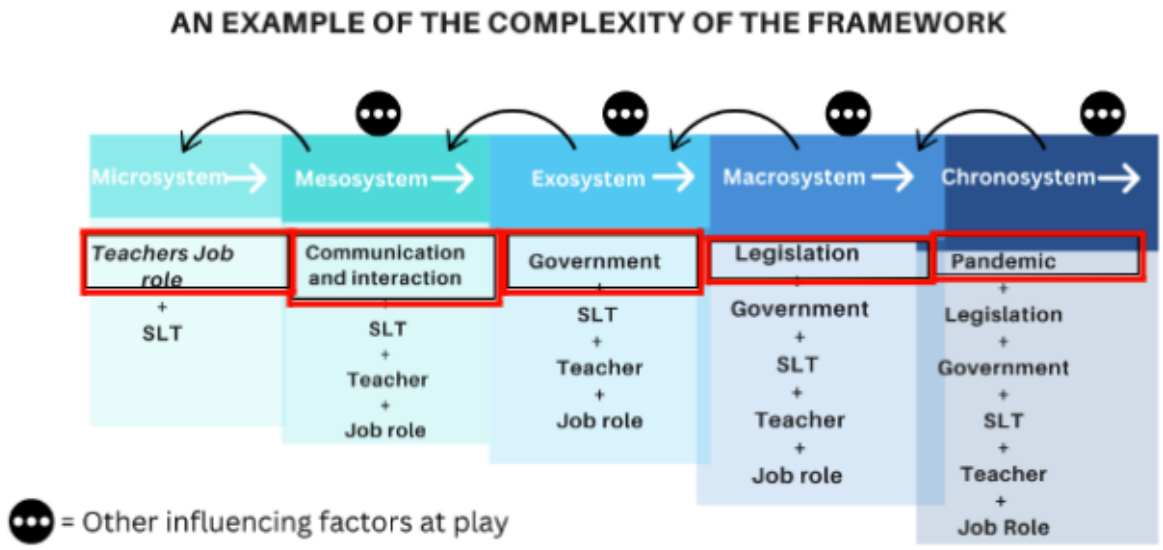


Figure 10 shows an example of the teacher's role being influenced bidirectionally and simultaneously by several factors in different systems.

An explanation of the Figure above

At the microsystem level, teachers interact with their immediate environment, which includes students, colleagues, and senior leadership teams. Teachers experience direct support at this level, such as receiving compassion from the senior leadership

teams (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This support can alleviate stress by fostering a sense of belonging and connection, which is essential for teacher well-being (Roffey, 2012).

The mesosystem comprises the interconnections between microsystems. Here, the relationships between teachers and senior leadership teams become crucial, as clear communication can help navigate the challenges of the pandemic (Fullan & Fullan, 2012). For example, senior leaders can provide timely updates and transparent decision-making processes to reduce uncertainty, which can lower teacher stress levels (Hadar et al., 2020).

The Exosystem encompasses the broader social settings that indirectly influence teachers, such as school policies and community attitudes. Supportive policies, such as professional development opportunities and flexible work arrangements, can facilitate teachers' ability to adapt to changes in teaching practices and learn new skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Furthermore, community attitudes toward the pandemic and public health measures can impact teacher stress, as societal expectations and reactions to school closures or remote learning can create additional pressures (Bubb & Jones, 2020).

Finally, the Macrosystem represents overarching cultural and societal influences, such as national and international policies and global economic trends. These factors can exacerbate teacher stress, as the pandemic has exposed and intensified pre-existing educational inequalities (UNESCO, 2020). However, the Macrosystem can also be a source of resilience, as global networks and international collaborations have fostered the sharing of best practices and innovative solutions to support educators during this challenging time (OECD, 2020).

The bioecological systems model helps elucidate the complex interplay of factors contributing to teacher stress during the pandemic. Considering the multiple levels of influence and their interactions, this model highlights the importance of compassion, clear communication, and skill development in alleviating stress. Policymakers and educational stakeholders must acknowledge and address these factors to support teachers' well-being during and beyond the pandemic.

From a reflexive perspective, while the Bio-ecological systems model is useful for an Educational Psychologist to utilise when working with schools, given the qualitative nature of the current study, the findings are limited to the specific schools that the interviewed teachers are working in. Further, from a social constructionist perspective, an argument can be made that the human experience of stress in the context of their work cannot be neatly categorised into the different layers and instead is much more dynamic and fluid. Through the reflection of the interviews, it became clear that the complex interplay between the teacher's environment and their role within their environment are intertwined. This links to an earlier point concerning teachers' characteristics (including but not limited to personality, coping, self-efficacy and resilience).

4.7 Strengths and Limitations of the current study

4.7.1 Strengths

One of the strengths of this study was the choice of using an opportunistic sampling method. As the study explores a sensitive topic (i.e. stress, COVID-19, support), all participants must voluntarily sign up for the study. Further, once participants showed an interest in the study, the participants were provided with an information sheet.

As none of the participants knew of or had ever worked with the researcher, this allowed the participants to decide to be a part of the study without feeling pressured. Another strength of using an opportunity sampling method was that the participants were not approached by an SLT member, which meant that there was no additional pressure from a senior member of staff to take part. Hypothetically, if the initial communication to recruit participants started by approaching a school (i.e. speaking with a SENCo or headteacher), there could have been a bias in selecting the teachers asked to participate who would respond more positively to questions.

Although research has shown that conducting interviews is most effective when face-to-face with participants, as the study was conducted in November 2021, all

participants were used to and familiar with online platforms. Therefore, some of the challenges of using online platforms were overcome due to the participant's experience using Microsoft Teams. Other benefits of using Microsoft Teams included video recording and activating live transcription during the interview. This made the process of recording, storing and transcribing more efficient for the researcher. Further, as the live transcription included a timestamp, it was easier to replay the video recordings to ensure accurate transcription and saved the researcher much time.

Using a semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions, ask participants to expand and clarify some responses, and allow the researcher some flexibility in the order of the questions. Further, it allowed the researcher to refer back to questions to gain a richer understanding that ties into other responses they provided. Additionally, conducting the interview allowed the researcher to gain a deep and insightful understanding of the participant's perspective and to notice changes in tone and non-verbal language (such as facial expressions). For example, almost all participants made distinctive facial expressions when asked about the Government's response to the pandemic.

One of the strengths of this research study was not only the novelty of the topic but also the very real experience of teachers working through the pandemic. One of the most consistent feedback the researcher received before and after the interview was that the participants felt it was a very timely and important topic to research. Further, the participants were interviewed in November 2021. This was an advantage as participants, without much prompting, could reflect and refer to a timeline of events. So, for example, participants spoke about the fluctuation of their stress concerning the three national lockdowns. This created a sense of storytelling and made it easier to pinpoint different factors that impacted their stress and understand their overall experience.

The interview allowed teachers to reflect upon their experiences throughout the pandemic. Two participants, in particular, shared that they felt they had been able to "rant" and "get things off their chest." Participants often require an incentive to participate in research, and although the participants were not given a gift or any form of reward to participate, it is possible that the teachers felt a sense of debriefing by

participating in the study. The researcher used their consultation skills to contain the participants' emotions and acknowledge their lived experiences. Once the interview finished, the researcher remained online to speak with each participant about how they felt the interview went and what services or support they could receive (including the role of an E.P.) and provided them with a debrief document.

As the researcher is a trainee educational psychologist, they were also impacted by the pandemic and its implications on their work. This was an advantage as the researcher could relate to and understand the participants' responses meaningfully. Further, it allowed the researcher to use their consultation skills and lived experience to ask participants to expand on some of their responses. In addition, the researcher was also exposed to the need to adapt their practice with remote working and learn about online platforms; therefore, when participants were sharing the difficulties or uncertainties about using an online platform, the researcher was able to show genuine and authentic responses to show that the participants were heard and understood.

In addition, when the researcher first connected online with each participant, before starting the interview, the researcher would often explain why they were conducting the research and was able to use terms like "we have all been living and working through the pandemic;" this was intentionally said to build rapport with participants and create a sense of togetherness.

4.7.2 Limitations to study

Although the study had many strengths, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, as there were seven participants, the findings from the study cannot be transferable to all teachers; however, qualitative research is not aimed at making it generalisable but aims to reflect and represent a subjective and insightful perspective from its participants. Further, as the study adopts the epistemological position of social constructionism, it is acknowledged that the participant responses are true and reflective of their construction of teacher stress and the support they have received. However, they only reflect some teacher perspectives and further would be needed to explore the transferability of these findings.

It is also acknowledged that the researcher's positioning can introduce their bias as the study's findings can be interpreted through the lens of an E.P. whereby systemic and holistic approaches are embedded into understanding people's perspectives. Further, by using the Bio-ecological Systems Model and examining the literature on teacher stress and COVID prior to the interview, the researcher may be biased when developing the interview schedule and interpreting the findings using prior knowledge (deductive reasoning). Although, as stated by Braun and Clarke (2021), a researcher cannot completely be objective in research due to the researcher's experience and exposure to the literature relevant to their study, they stated that this limitation should be re-framed as a strength of the researcher. To further counter the notion of bias, as the study adopted a social constructionist perspective, bias can be re-framed as the construction of understanding stems from the subjectiveness of the individual interpreting the data.

Notably, the researcher took notes of the interview experiences and found that some male teachers who took part not only conceptualised teacher stress differently but were also less likely to state that they felt stressed than the women who took part. However, when sharing their experiences of exam cancellations, they described factors associated with being stressed. For example, they felt overwhelmed, pressured, and worried for students. This could be due to my identity as a woman and other intersectional factors; they may not have felt comfortable expressing their stress.

The researcher found asking each participant how they would define stress useful. Although most participants reported a similar definition of feeling overwhelmed, unable to cope with the workload, and not having enough time, some participants defined stress as relating to psychological or physiological stress responses such as feeling fuzzy and lacking sleep. Therefore, the participants have differences in how they understand stress, influencing their responses to questions. However, this study does accept the position that every person has their reality and understanding of the world, and as such, the aim of this study was not to find a commonality between participants' understanding of stress but rather the experiences they had working during the pandemic.

It was also noted that almost all participants had to reflect upon the timeline of events. Although most participants could recall how they felt accurately (to their knowledge), they could have made mistakes when recalling how they felt. Some participants had to correct or reflect on the timeline of events which impacted their stress. Also, participants often compared how stressed they were about the three national lockdowns, which could undermine their stress level at one particular time. For example, many participants shared that the most stressful lockdown was the second lockdown because it was linked to preparing students for exams and marking, whereas they shared that they did not feel stressed when the initial lockdown came into place. Although this current study adopts Kyriacou's stress model (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978), it could also be argued that due to the different stressors that teachers were exposed to and the varying magnitude of stress experienced by the teachers, the blur of timelines can be attributed to the relationship between cognitive load and stress (Sandi, 2013). He explains that people exposed to high stress acutely impact and impair the formation of memories. That is, as a response to stress, the hormone cortisol is released in elevated amounts and has a well-documented negative effect on the encoding, storage, and recall of information.

4.7.3 What could have been done differently in the study?

A different research approach could have involved using a mixed methods approach. As the pandemic was a global concern, this study could have involved conducting a national-scale survey as an extension of local studies. Following this, focus groups could have been utilised to further explore the topic of interest. If the study had been conducted internationally, this would have allowed more triangulation of the different findings to explore the research questions whilst considering the differences and similarities between different countries.

The participants could have also been interviewed thrice during the national lockdown. This way, it could be another way to consider how the fluctuation of their stress changed over time and has allowed a more accurate report of their stress, the support they received and the support they would like to receive in the aftermath of the pandemic.

4.8 Implications for Practice

Both research questions inform the study's implications as they provide implicit and explicit insight into teachers' viewpoints on the different types of support needed in the aftermath of the pandemic. In addition, by interpreting the teachers' responses, some of the implications have been informed by the latent interpretations from the findings.

4.8.1 Developing bespoke support for teachers (the process)

Given that each teacher's context and perspective are unique to them, one way to address this complexity when thinking about the applications of the findings to the role of the E.P. would be their ability to incorporate teacher stress and well-being into the initial planning meeting that occurs during the start of the academic year.

Before the initial planning meeting, if the school agrees, a survey could be sent to all teachers in the school asking for their perspectives regarding the support they would like in the aftermath of the pandemic. Once the findings are collated, this information could be presented in the initial planning meeting with the SENCo so that collaboratively, bespoke support could be developed for teachers. Further, if teachers were available, it would be useful to involve them in the creative process of developing the different support systems around the teacher for their stress management and job role (such as action research).

4.8.2 Types of support that E.P's can offer for teachers

Training

As shown in the findings section of the study, teachers reported that they would like support related to training and supervision. These are two types of support that Educational Psychologists can provide. In addition, some teachers stated that they would like support in learning about and dealing with student mental health.

Educational psychologists can develop bespoke training materials that provide psycho-educational information that could develop and support teachers' understanding of how to prevent, provide support and tackle students' mental health difficulties. Further, Educational psychologists are perfectly situated to support SLTs in schools to promote understanding and compassion towards school staff. This can be achieved through annual training or ongoing supervision.

Another training that E.P.s could deliver is supporting teachers in developing self-compassion during stressful periods in the workplace. As discussed previously, self-compassion can promote teachers' well-being and protect them from experiencing high-stress levels. As this thesis explores how teachers self-report their stress, it is useful to acknowledge that targeting a healthy coping strategy for teachers can also be supported individually.

Supervision

Many EPSs already supervise schools and supervision can be delivered consistently for teachers to explore the current challenges within the teaching profession amid the pandemic, the aftereffects of the pandemic, and how these can be tackled. As stated by Participant Seven, teachers may require counselling support to support their mental health, yet the NHS counselling services are difficult to access. Therefore, E.P's can provide support by having regular and "fit for purpose" supervision for teachers whereby they can express how they feel and what systems support or hinder their stress management. The Educational psychologist can work as a facilitator and advocate for school teachers. Relevantly, Coppola et al. (2004) state that supportive supervision that provides a safe space for teachers to reflect on their experiences, discuss the challenges that they are faced with and receive feedback on their thoughts and experiences can not only reduce their stress, improve well-being and job satisfaction but also help teachers develop new skills and strategies to implement within their job role (Rae et al., 2017).

4.8.3 The role of the E.P. in systemic work.

In addition to providing direct support to teachers, educational psychologists can help address the systemic factors contributing to teacher stress. For example, they can work with school administrators and policymakers to develop and implement policies supporting teacher well-being and reducing burnout (UNESCO, 2020).

Educational psychologists can promote and advocate for provisions such as mental health support, continuous professional development opportunities and protected time for teachers to manage workloads, supporting teacher well-being and reducing teacher stress (Zins et al., 2004). Some of these provisions include encouraging multi-agency working where the educational psychologist facilitates the collaboration of professionals providing workshops or 1:1 support for teachers. For example, if a teacher struggles with student behaviour, the educational psychologist can liaise with a specialist teacher and identify ways to support the teacher. If teachers have concerns about a lack of understanding in a particular area, such as student mental health, the educational psychologist can co-deliver training with a clinical psychologist for a group of teachers that involves psycho-educational materials around student mental health and well-being.

Another way to support teachers and schools could include educational psychologists conducting research within a particular school to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress (La et al., 2020). This would allow schools to understand the current context of teacher stress and their job role and work collaboratively with schools to identify ways to support teachers. However, as it will be later mentioned, research that educational psychologists can conduct is not limited to one school and can include a wider sample.

E.P.'s are trained to consider systemic and holistic approaches to supporting schools. Through regular supervision with teachers, teachers and E.P.'s can collaborate to develop dynamic and purposeful support systems around teachers. By triangulating information from various school members, such as SLTs, teaching assistants and headteachers, E.P.s can learn more about the school culture and make positive changes to the work environment for teachers. For example, some participants shared the idea of having a well-being day for teachers to have a dedicated day to focus on their well-being and not work. However, implementing or dedicating such a day for

teachers requires the school culture to embrace, promote and protect teacher well-being. Therefore, the educational psychologist can collaborate with school members and other professionals such as clinical psychologists and MHST (but not limited to these professionals) to support school staff.

Participants consistently identified time as a factor that impacts their role and stress levels. Although Educational Psychologists cannot provide more time for teachers within their job, Educational psychologists can advocate for teachers to be prioritised within the school and encourage protected time for teachers (on a rota) to have some time to plan lessons and mark work, develop their skills and find creative ways to teach. Most participants shared that one of the pandemic's positive outcomes was the opportunity to develop their technology competency and explore different ways to adapt their teaching materials. Although this is a positive outcome for teachers, it should not take a pandemic for teachers to have the opportunity to develop their skills.

In summary, Educational Psychologists can play an important role in supporting teachers systemically to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their stress and job performance. By adopting different roles such as advocacy, training, research, and collaboration with school senior leadership teams, educational psychologists can help create necessary and bespoke support that helps teachers manage stress and perform their jobs effectively.

4.8.4 Legislation and Policy

Educational psychologists have a front-line view of the impact that COVID-19 and stress can have on teachers. Teachers worked as front-line staff during the pandemic to ensure that children and young people had access to education and had as much equal opportunity as possible for learning. As shown in the findings, teachers have consistently shared that they have had no voice in policy development throughout the pandemic. Decisions were made without consulting them, and all teachers were expected to follow instructions from the Government, LA and school even if they disagreed. So, to support teachers and school staff, an educational psychologist can advocate for teachers' voices to be heard. Although this particular support from E.P. may be too late in the context of the pandemic, this type of support is needed for the

future. The Government should consider and respect the teachers' voices and allow teachers to share their views and opinions about the needs of teachers and students in schools.

Educational psychologists can work as facilitators to support the development and outcome of teachers' voices being considered by different systems. One way to do this is to have a link E.P. in each L.A. that solely works on collecting and handling school data related to teachers' voices and reports it to the Department for Education. The information gathered can support further research as more exploration of the impact of the pandemic needs to be understood to inform legislation and policies for schools. In addition, this allows for the issues related to the lack of communication, compassion, and guidance to be addressed.

Educational psychologists can be involved in policy development with the Government (Swinson, 2023). This can be achieved by providing "expert opinions" and insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress through the experiences and perceptions they have as a result of being exposed to different schools and, therefore, by being able to provide some insight around the ways that teachers can be supported.

Another way that educational psychologists can work systemically is by collaborating with different stakeholders. This may include but is not limited to Government officials, senior leadership teams and teachers to ensure that policies are informed by several perspectives, which would allow for more collaborative, inclusive and informed policies to address teacher stress (Greene & Ondrus, 2021). Further, Educational psychologists can advocate for teachers by communicating that these policies must be a priority, including raising awareness of the current context (research evidence) and suggesting ways to combat teacher stress.

Finally, educational psychologists can conduct research which informs policy (Wang et al., 2021). This may involve action research where teachers actively design, implement and evaluate programmes to mitigate stressors and develop support systems.

4.9 Conclusion

This thesis explored the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teacher stress from their perspective. It also explored how teachers believe they could be supported in the aftermath of the pandemic. It is worth noting that some of the findings are consistent with findings from other studies before the pandemic (Teacher Well-being Index, 2018; 2019). To expand on this, although the pandemic is a novel experience for all the teachers who participated in this study, the different factors that impacted their stress, except for online working and creating assessments, have been found to impact teacher stress over the last few decades. However, these factors were exemplified and heightened, making teaching during the pandemic even more challenging.

Nonetheless, some of the positives of experiencing the pandemic include teachers having the opportunity to work on their skills, learn new ways of teaching and be compassionate towards themselves. Another positive outcome of the impact of the pandemic has been that although teachers have felt disconnected from students concerning their progress and engagement with lessons, in some way, teachers also felt closer to students by going through the pandemic together and having a shared experience with students.

This thesis provides a useful understanding of the factors that impacted perceived teacher stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlights the different ways in which teachers can be supported in the aftermath of the pandemic. The Bioecological systems model specifically shows how different systems can support teachers and highlights the need for the systems to work in synergy and collectively to support teachers' job roles and stress.

The limitations of this study highlight the need to explore the needs of teachers even further. For example, research can explore the teacher's voice supporting the teacher's role and stress management. In that case, teachers in the U.K. can be truly valued, protected and empowered to fulfil their job role. Teachers have also shown great resilience during the pandemic despite the factors hindering or impacting their job role and stress. Their care and desire to support children and young people impact

their stress and satisfaction with their job. Therefore, teachers must be supported by different systems.

Further, this study highlights the need to consider the teachers' voices when making decisions that impact their practice and stress. Communication between systems, including the teacher, must be transparent and clear to support teacher well-being and their job role.

Finally, acknowledging teachers' importance is not enough. Lilius et al. (2003) define compassion as "a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it" (p. 926). Therefore, to truly recognise teachers' needs, changes must be made to implement different interventions and support systems that can truly improve teachers' workload, stress, job satisfaction, and sense of belonging.

As previously mentioned, Educational psychologists are in the ideal position to support teachers, and therefore, Local Authorities and the Government must emphasise to schools and senior leadership teams the value of supporting teachers in their job role and stress management. Furthermore, in the busy, hectic, ever-changing landscape of schools, teachers need members from different systems to advocate for them by providing a platform for teachers' voices to be heard, sharing those ideas and implementing support systems.

Considering the bioecological systems model, Educational psychologists can work across multiple systems. Through facilitation, negotiating and advocating, Educational psychologists are fundamental in supporting teachers with their job role and stress management. By identifying individual and environmental factors, educational psychologists can work with teachers and systems to better support teachers by reducing their stress and promoting teacher well-being.

While the current findings may need a more generalisable consideration of the wider teacher population, it does provide the basis for transferability. Specifically, it provides a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences within two schools in the same Borough in London. Other researchers could explore the similarities and the variations that schools have to understand if and how the findings could relate to other contexts.

Through purposeful sampling, other researchers could explore whether the conditions or characteristics are similar in other contexts (such as other schools) and judge whether the findings from the current study could provide insight and transferability to those settings. Nonetheless, research is still needed to consider the implications of the pandemic on systems around teachers, and as we have only arrived at the end of the pandemic, the long-term effects of the pandemic are slowly emerging, but much is still unknown. Therefore, the time for systems to work together is now.

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Appendix A: Full Timeline of UK lockdowns and measures: Announcements and decisions

Appendix B: Justification for the chosen sampling method

was this sampling method chosen?
• This sampling method was purposefully chosen so that participants could voluntarily sign up for the research study without pressure from their workplace to participate.
• This decision was also based on previous experience of conducting research in schools; if the first point of contact is a member of the SLT or SENCo, there could be a bias in selecting teachers that may provide a more positive outlook on the systems or staff around the teachers. This is also consistent with research publications that examine potential biases when recruiting participants (Arcury & Quandt, 1999).
• Another reason behind this sampling method is the researcher's working context within a Local Authority. Potter and Wetherell (1995) stated that the study's design should consider the researcher's characteristics, and the researcher wanted to recruit participants from a different local authority so that the participants did not feel the researcher was connected to their school or Local Authority in any way.
• Furthermore, as a reflection point, the researcher's role (TEP) within the Local Authority could influence the teachers' responses that are associated with the services that the Local Authority can or do provide.
• The researcher was reassured by using an opportunistic sampling method after one participant asked whether the school would learn about their responses regarding the support they received from the school; they shared with me that they wanted to be honest in their responses but did not want the school to know what was discussed and shared.

Appendix C: Information sheet and consent form

Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress

Information sheet for secondary school teachers.

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress.

This research project aims to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary school teacher's perception of teacher stress. **Currently we know relatively little about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' stress levels.** This study is important as teachers are vulnerable to the additional psychological pressures during the pandemic, simply because their role requires them to adapt to the main changes in policy and practice and because they have a professional duty to support children.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted institutions such as schools, and as such, it is essential to explore the different ways it has affected its members. Teacher mental health and well-being have been an increasing concern for the U.K before the pandemic, and currently, there is a gap in research that explores how teachers feel concerning teacher stress. Whilst there is a significant amount of guidance available for schools to support the recovery curriculum, safe working and protective measures and many more, there is little guidance provided for schools to help staff members who may be experiencing increased stress due to the demands of their role.

Teachers often act as first respondents to students' socio-emotional needs. As schools begin to reopen, there is a need to understand how teachers perceive their stress and what they believe would support them within their job role.

This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Research Questions:

1. What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on perceived teacher stress?

2. What do teachers find supportive in managing their stress within their job role?

Who is the researcher

My name is Jale Salih, I am a third year Trainee Educational Psychologist at the UCL Institute of Education and I am currently working as part of the Educational Psychology Service in the London Borough of Islington.

Why am I being invited to take part?

You are being invited to take part as this study focuses on secondary school teacher's perception on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress. This study will invite secondary school teachers in different schools to take part. This will be helpful in understanding how teachers feel that the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting their stress levels and will help name ways in which teachers can be supported during this testing period.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you choose to take part, the study will consist of one interview lasting no more than 45 minutes. The interview will consist of questions relating to your perception of teacher stress and your perception on what you believe would be supportive to help manage your stress within your job role.

The interviews will take place virtually using an online platform (Microsoft teams) and will need to be recorded so that your responses to questions can then be transcribed by the researcher (Jale Salih). After all interviews are transcribed, the data will be analysed to identify themes that emerge.

Your participation in this current study will be anonymised and all data will remain confidential. Participants will not be identifiable from transcripts or any reports arising form the research.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

There are currently no anticipated risks or problems in taking part in this study. You have the option to withdraw from the study at any stage during the research process.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of the research project will be reported in the researchers' doctoral thesis. On request, a summary of the key findings will be made available.

Do I have to take part?

You are not obligated to take part in the current research study. Your participation is completely voluntary and very much appreciated. There will be no consequences for the school or for yourself if you choose not to take part.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can contact me via email at Jale.salih.18@ucl.ac.uk

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice

Appendix C cont.

Consent for Interviews: Teachers

	(tick as appropriate)
I confirm that I have read and understood this information sheet, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these questions adequately answered.	•
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	•
I know that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point.	•
I agree for the interview to be recorded, and that recordings will be kept secure and destroyed at the end of the project. I know that all data will be kept under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	•
I agree that small direct quotes may be used in reports (these will be anonymised).	•
I understand that in exceptional circumstances anonymity and confidentiality would have to be broken, for example, if it was felt that practice was putting children at risk, or there were concerns regarding professional misconduct. In these circumstances advice would be sought from a senior manager from another local authority who will advise us as to the appropriate course of action and as to whether we need to inform the authority of what you have told us.	•

Name:……

Signature: …… Date: ……..……..

Name of researcher:……..……..……..……..

Signature: ……..…… Date: ……..……..

Appendix D: A screenshot of the options to record and transcribe interviews on Microsoft teams.

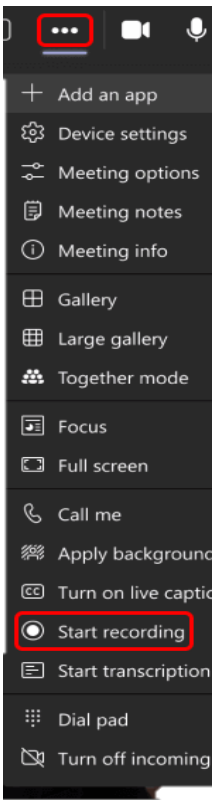
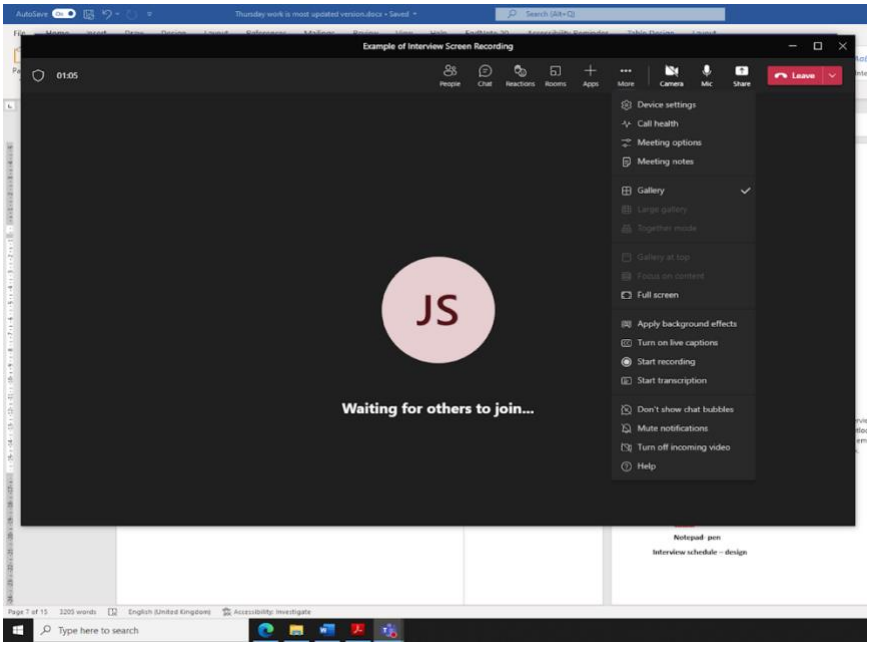
To transcribe the interview:	
To record the interview:	

Table shows the option for recording and transcription of the interview.

Appendix E: Pilot Interview Schedule development mapped onto research questions:

Research questions:

1. What is the impact of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic upon teacher perception of their stress?

2. What do teachers find supportive in managing their stress within their job role?

The interview questions are highlighted as yellow or green to indicate which research question is being explored. Purple = considering to remove.

Background information: Pre interview questions to be asked when consent is given:

As a teacher, how would you describe your role?

- How many years have you been teaching?
- How long have you been working in your current school?
- Do you have any other role? (Multiple roles?)

Question	Possible prompts and probes	Mapping questions to Bioecological Systems Theory /rationale for question Note: all questions are related to context across the Bioecological systems Theory
1. What does stress mean to you? How would you define stress? 2mins (Pilot)	Perhaps ask for an example of what stress may look like?	It would be useful to explore how teachers conceptualise stress as both the research project and interview is exploring teacher stress *Person*

1. Due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, how have the changes to your teaching influenced your stress levels? 5 (Pilot)	What about your wider job role?	*Process/Time/Context Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem
1. Since March 2020, what changes, if any, have you experienced regarding your stress levels within your job role during the on-going Covid-19 Pandemic? X		Planning to remove due to the overlap in response relating to other questions
1. What have been the biggest challenges for you with regards to the on-going pandemic and your job role? 5 (Pilot)	Workload Student engagement Remote working Anything else>	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem
1. What positive changes, if any, have you experienced as a result of changes within your job role during the ongoing pandemic? 4 mins (Pilot)	Ask for examples In and out of the classroom Skills and experiences?	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem
1. Can you describe a moment when you felt particularly supported within your job role? 6 mins (Pilot)	SLT Support staff such as TA's Whole school approach? Government DfE Training (for remote working)	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem

1. What barriers, if any, have there been, that have prevented you from receiving support related to your job role over the last academic year? 1. What type of support have you received regarding your role during the on-going pandemic? 3mins (Pilot)	How is this different from support that you may have received before March 2020? What barriers, if any, have there been, that have prevented you from receiving support related to your job role over the last academic year? These are potential questions that I could use to probe.	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem
1. Can you describe a particularly stressful moment within your job during the pandemic? 8 mins (Pilot)	Workload Student engagement Remote working	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem
1. Have there been factors that have influenced your stress levels during the pandemic? If so, could you please tell me more about that..	● How has this changed over the course of the pandemic? ● Thinking back to March 2020 when we entered lockdown for the first time, what did you anticipate the school year would look like in terms of your role? ● How did this impact your stress? ● How did this change over time? (Prompts- Lockdown, Remote teaching, Bubbles, Student engagement, Legislation, mass media, government policy	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem

9 mins (Pilot)		
1. How would you describe your school's response to the pandemic in general? 3mins (Pilot)	SLT Parents Clarity/Smooth/Transition to remote teaching to face to face teaching	Person/Process/Context/ Time Microsystem/Mesosyste m/Exosystem
1. How would you describe the Government's response to the pandemic in general? X		REMOVE- overlap with next question
1. How would you describe the DfE's response to the pandemic in general? 5 mins (Pilot)	And the Government's response in general? Guidance/information	*Person/Process/Context /Time Exosystem/Macrosystem
1. Looking forward, what will you be taking away from this past year in terms of your role? 2 mins (Pilot)	Achievements Proud moments Difficulties Reflection on job Reflection on stress	*Person/Process/Context /Time
1. What do you think are the biggest challenges in your role going forward? 4 mins	Thinking to September… Recovery curriculum/ student exams/ student or staff mental health organisation	*Person/Process/Context /Time Microsystem/Mesosyste m/Exosystem

1. How do you think teachers can be nest supported in the aftermath of this pandemic? 6 mins	Training- what type Individual/systemic level Support with management of stress/job role	*Person/Process/Context /Time Chronosystem
1. Could you describe a defining moment in your experience of the pandemic as a professional? 3mins	With student/parents/colleagues?	*Person/Process/Context /Time Microsystem/Mesosyste m/Exosystem/ Macrosystem
1. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding how you have felt over the past year within your job role and what support you think is necessary for teachers? 2mins (Pilot)	Reflection on the academic year/ future/ experience Job role Support wanted- importance of teacher voice.	*Person/Process/Context /Time Micro/Meso/Exo/Marco

62 minutes total

Appendix F: Final Interview Schedule

Research Questions:

1. What is the impact of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic upon teacher perception of their stress?

2. What do teachers find supportive in managing their stress within their job role?

The interview questions are highlighted as yellow or green to indicate which research question is being explored.

Pre interview questions to be asked when consent is given:

As a teacher, how would you describe your role?

- How many years have you been teaching?
- How long have you been working in your current school?
- Do you have any other role? (Multiple roles?)

Question	Possible prompts and probes	Mapping questions to Bioecological Systems Theory /rationale for question Note: all questions are related to context across the Bioecological systems model
1. What does stress mean to you? 2mins (Pilot)	Perhaps ask for an example of what stress may look like?	It would be useful to explore how teachers conceptualise stress as both the research project and interview is exploring teacher stress *Person*
1. Due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, have there been any changes to your teaching? -If yes, how has these changes influenced your stress levels? 5 (Pilot)	What about your wider job role?	*Process/Time/Context Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem
1. What have been the biggest challenges for you with regards to the on-going pandemic and your job role? 5 (Pilot)	Workload Student engagement Remote working Anything else>	Person/Process/Context/Time Micro/Mesosystem
1. What positive changes, if any, have you experienced as a result of changes within your job role during the ongoing pandemic? 4 mins (Pilot)	Ask for examples In and out of the classroom Skills and experiences?	Person/Process/Context/Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem

1. Can you describe a moment when you felt particularly supported within your job role? 6 mins (Pilot)	SLT Support staff such as TA's Whole school approach? Government DfE Training (for remote working)	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Marcosystem
1. What type of support have you received regarding your role during the on-going pandemic? 3mins (Pilot)	How is this different from support that you may have received before March 2020? What barriers, if any, have there been, that have prevented you from receiving support related to your job role over the last academic year? These are potential questions that I could use to probe.	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Macrosystem
1. Can you describe a particularly stressful moment within your job during the pandemic? 8 mins (Pilot)	Workload Student engagement Remote working	Person/Process/Context/ Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Macrosystem

1. Have there been factors that have influenced your stress levels during the pandemic? If so, could you please tell me more about that. 9 mins (Pilot)	• How has this changed over the course of the pandemic? • Thinking back to March 2020 when we entered lockdown for the first time, what did you anticipate the school year would look like in terms of your role? • How did this impact your stress? • How did this change over time? (Prompts- Lockdown, Remote teaching, Bubbles, Student engagement, Legislation, mass media, government policy	Person/Process/Context/Time Micro/Mesosystem/Exosystem/Macrosystem
1. How would you describe your school's response to the pandemic in general? 3mins (Pilot)	SLT Parents Clarity/Smooth/Transition to remote teaching to face to face teaching	Person/Process/Context/Time Microsystem/Mesosystem/Exosystem
1. How would you describe the DfE's response to the pandemic in general? 5 mins (Pilot)	And the Government's response in general? Guidance/information	*Person/Process/Context/Time Exosystem/Macrosystem
1. Looking forward, what will you be taking away from this past year in terms of your role? 2 mins (Pilot)	Achievements Proud moments Difficulties Reflection on job Reflection on stress	*Person/Process/Context/Time
1. How do you think teachers can be nest supported in the aftermath of this pandemic?	Training- what type Individual/systemic level Support with management of stress/job role	*Person/Process/Context/Time Chronosystem

6 mins		
1. Could you describe a defining moment in your experience of the pandemic as a professional? 3mins	With student/parents/colleagues?	*Person/Process/Context /Time Microsystem/Mesosyste m/Exosystem/ Macrosystem
1. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding how you have felt over the past year within your job role and what support you think is necessary for teachers? 2mins (Pilot)	Reflection on the academic year/ future/ experience Job role Support wanted- importance of teacher voice.	*Person/Process/Context /Time Micro/Meso/Exo/Marco

62 minutes total

Appendix G: Ethics Application Form

Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute of Education (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e., data from which a living individual can be identified **you must be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office before you submit your ethics application for review**. To do this, email the complete ethics form to the UCL Data Protection Office. Once your registration number is received, add it to the form* and submit it to your supervisor for approval. If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

Please note that the completion of the UCL GDPR online training is mandatory for all PhD students.

Section 1 – Project details

a. Project title: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress

a. Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678): Jale Salih. ID: 17061339

a. ***UCL Data Protection Registration Number: Z6364106/2021/03/202**

1. Date Issued: 30/03/21

a. Supervisor/Personal Tutor: Dr Amelia Roberts (Academic Supervisor) and Dr Jeremy Monsen (Educational Psychologist Supervisor)

a. Department: Psychology and Human Development

a. Course category (Tick one):

PhD ☐

EdD ☐

DEdPsy ☒

g. **If applicable**, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.

g. Intended research start date: February 2021

g. Intended research end date: December 2021

g. Country fieldwork will be conducted in: England

g. If research to be conducted abroad please check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be required before ethical approval can be granted: *UCL travel advice webpage*

g. Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?

Yes ☐

External Committee Name: Enter text
Date of Approval: Enter text

No ☒ ***go to Section 2***

If yes:

- Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.
- Proceed to Section 10 Attachments.

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.

Section 2 - Research methods summary (tick all that apply)

☒ Interviews
☐ Focus Groups
☐ Questionnaires
☐ Action Research
☐ Observation
☐ Literature Review
☐ Controlled trial/other intervention study
☐ Use of personal records
☐ Systematic review **– if only method used go to Section 5**
☐ Secondary data analysis ***– if secondary analysis used go to Section 6***
☐ Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups
☐ Other, give details: Enter text

Please provide an overview of the project, focusing on your methodology. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, data collection (including justifications for methods chosen and description of topics/questions to be asked), reporting and dissemination. Please focus on your methodology; the theory, policy, or literary background of your work can be provided in an attached document (i.e. a full research proposal or case for support document). *Minimum 150 words required.*

Purpose, Aims and Research Questions:

As a consequence of the pandemic, it has been reported by UNESCO (2020) that teachers experienced confusion and stress as the key negative consequences of school closures. In addition, stress has been further associated with the abruptness of school closures, uncertainty about the period of closures, and low familiarity with remote education (Goldschmidt, 2020). Research has already begun to shed light on some of the new challenges teachers face as a consequence of school closure. These include inequalities in home learning and schools' provision of distance teaching (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020), which are factors that teachers may be required to consider within their role. Teachers are particularly vulnerable to the additional psychological pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic due to their professional function in supporting children. They often act as first respondents

to students' socio-emotional needs and are regularly involved in delivering interventions in these contexts, often without adequate support or training (Wolmer et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2016).

As schools begin to reopen, there is a need to understand how teachers perceive their stress and what they believe would be supportive of them within their job role. Currently, there is a distinct lack of research concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher's stress.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress and to understand what teachers may find supportive of managing their stress within their job role. To address this topic, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on perceived teacher stress?

2. What do teachers find supportive in managing their stress within their job role?

Research design and research paradigm

The current study will adopt a small scale qualitative exploratory research design. By adopting a qualitative approach, the present study will attempt to better understand the world from an individual, subjective perspective. As such, an interpretative social constructionist research paradigm will be adopted for this study. The interpretative model focuses exclusively on the individual's subjective experiences. In addition, it maintains the epistemological position that individuals co-create and share knowledge in line with the social constructionist framework. As an interpretive framework, social constructivism stipulates that individuals, in pursuit of understanding their world, develop their specific meanings that relate to their experience (Creswell, 2013).

Sample

Participants

There will be eight (8) participants taking part in the study. All participants will be teaching staff members within two mainstream secondary schools in the London Borough of Islington.

Research tools

The data collection will be conducted using a semi-structured interview. To develop the interview questions, four steps will be taken.

Step 1:

The questions will be constructed based on themes emerging from the literature on the impact of COVID-19 on teacher stress. In addition, the DfE (Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance (applies from 8 March)) and BPS guidelines for schools (Back to school: using psychological perspectives to support re-engagement and recovery) will also be utilised to formulate specific questions regarding the role that staff will play in supporting the transition of students back into school and how schools will operate from day to day.

Step 2:

As a preliminary process, colleagues will be contacted to ask for feedback regarding the interview schedule. This process will be adopted to gain various perspectives on the choice of questions to address the research questions. An email will be sent out to six colleagues who have previously worked in a school environment and

are on the Educational Psychology doctorate programme. This will be a useful process as the document sent to the colleagues mapped each question to the research questions for the project. The researcher will also speak with their supervisors to receive initial feedback on the interview questions and schedule.

Step 3:

Following this, two pilot interviews will be carried out with two teachers who work in London but who do not attend the same school as other anticipated participants. The pilot interviews will allow the researcher to trial the questions and examine the flow of the interview. The pilot interview will also be an opportunity to use follow-up questions when vague responses are given. In total, it is anticipated that the pilot interview will last around 45 minutes, and feedback from the interview process will be sought to develop the interview schedule further. In the same context, the researcher will also adopt a reflective practice approach to review how the interview went.

Step 4:

Both Steps 2 and 3 will allow the researcher to reflect on the research questions, allowing further refinement before data collection occurs.

Reporting and Dissemination

Following the completion of the study, schools will have an opportunity to learn about the study's findings through a short presentation or a leaflet. This will include focusing on the main findings of the study identified themes from the interviews. Finally, there will be an opportunity for staff members to ask questions about the research project. Contact details of the researcher and/or research supervisor will be provided to the school if they wish to ask additional questions or discuss the research project.

Section 3 – research Participants (tick all that apply)

☐ Early years/pre-school
☐ Ages 5-11
☐ Ages 12-16
☐ Young people aged 17-18
☒ Adults please specify below
☐ Unknown – specify below
☐ No participants

Teachers working in mainstream secondary schools.

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC).

Section 4 - Security-sensitive material (only complete if applicable)

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

a. Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?
Yes* ☐ No ☒

2. Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?

Yes* ☐ No ☒

3. Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?
   Yes* ☐ No ☒

** Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

Section 5 – Systematic reviews of research (only complete if applicable)

a. Will you be collecting any new data from participants?
   Yes* ☐ No ☐
2. Will you be analysing any secondary data?
   Yes* ☐ No ☐

** Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) ***and*** *if you have answered* ***No*** *to both questions, please go to* ***Section 8 Attachments.***

Section 6 - Secondary data analysis (only complete if applicable)

a. Name of dataset/s: Enter text
a. Owner of dataset/s: Enter text
a. Are the data in the public domain?
   Yes ☐ No ☐
   If no, *do you have the owner's permission/license?*
   Yes ☐ No* ☐

4. Are the data special category personal data (i.e. personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation)?
   Yes* ☐ No ☐

5. Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?
   Yes ☐ No* ☐
6. **If no**, was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?
   Yes ☐ No* ☐
7. **If no,** was data collected prior to ethics approval process?
   Yes ☐ No* ☐

** Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

*If secondary analysis is only method used **and** no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to **Section 9 Attachments.***

Section 7 – Data Storage and Security

Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

a. Data subjects - Who will the data be collected from?

The data will be collected from participants (teachers) through semi-structured interviews. The main criteria for inclusion in the study will be teachers working in a mainstream secondary school. An opportunistic sample will be obtained from schools that the researcher is linked to as a Trainee EP in a Local Authority (LA) of an inner London Borough. Other local secondary schools will also be approached through their link EPs or through teachers who may know a school interested in taking part. Initially, the school SENCo or headteacher will be contacted, and if there is an agreement, information letters and consent forms will be sent to teachers via email (see Appendix).

2. What will data be collected? Please provide details of the type of personal data to be collected

Semi-structured interviews will be utilised in the current study. The questions asked will cover some aspects of the teacher's perceptions of stress within their job role, what they believe is impacting their stress and how and what they believe will be helpful for them within their job role. Some demographic data will also be collected, such as the number of years' experience the teacher has in their job role.

Is the data anonymised?	Yes ☒ No* ☐
Do you plan to anonymise the data?	Yes* ☒ No ☐
Do you plan to use individual level data?	Yes* ☒ No ☐
Do you plan to pseudonymise the data?	Yes* ☒ No ☐

** Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

3. **Disclosure –** Who will the results of your project be disclosed to?

The project results will be disclosed to my primary and secondary supervisor and the schools that have taken part in the research project. The results will be published within my doctoral thesis; however, anonymisation will be used so that teachers are not identifiable in the thesis or in any document produced for this study (e.g. leaflet or presentation to disseminate the results and study implications to school staff).

Disclosure – Will personal data be disclosed as part of your project?

No.

4. Data storage – Please provide details on how and where the data will be stored i.e. UCL network, encrypted USB stick**, encrypted laptop** etc. The data will be stored on an encrypted laptop using password protected files. The recording of the interview will be stored in an encrypted and password-protected folder on the researcher's laptop. No-one will have access to the laptop as the laptop will be stored in a locked cupboard in the researchers' house.

   *** Advanced Encryption Standard 256 bit encryption which has been made a security standard within the NHS*

5. **Data Safe Haven (Identifiable Data Handling Solution)** – Will the personal identifiable data collected and processed as part of this research be stored in the UCL Data Safe Haven (mainly used by SLMS divisions, institutes and departments)?
   Yes ☐ No ☒

6. How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format?

   Data will be retained for ten years in accordance with UCL Research Data Policy and will be kept in an encrypted file in the researcher's personal, password-protected laptop. The data collected from interviews will be stored in the researcher's NVivo account in the form of an anonymised transcript and a Microsoft Word document. The researcher's NVivo account will be only accessed through her laptop. I will delete any audio or video files as soon as the data are transcribed – this keeps the data anonymised and means that it would be difficult to link the anonymous transcripts to the person.

   Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area? (If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with GDPR and state what these arrangements are)
   No.

   Will data be archived for use by other researchers? (If yes, please provide details.)
   No.

7. If personal data is used as part of your project, describe what measures you have to ensure that the data is only used for the research purpose e.g. pseudonymisation and short retention period of data'.

In line with the UCL Research Data Policy, the study's data will be retained for ten years. All recordings and transcription files will be safely stored in a password-protected laptop and any recordings will be deleted as soon as the data are transcribed. This is to ensure that the data stored will remain anonymised and means that it would be difficult to link the anonymous transcripts to the person. Personal data collected from the participants, such as names, contact details, sex, years of service within the profession and name of the school, will be kept confidential. In addition, any identifiable data relating to the participants will be anonymised throughout the thesis and disseminated the findings by being given a pseudo name. Furthermore, pseudonymisation will be implemented when using direct quotes within the research project to avoid any participants' identifiable information.

The researcher will explain to the participants that confidentiality will be maintained throughout and after the study unless there is a safeguarding concern relating to the disclosure that there is an immediate risk to the participants or others. In this case, the researcher will inform their supervisors and follow the school's guidance on raising a safeguarding concern.

** Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues***

Section 8 – Ethical Issues

Please state clearly the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how will they be addressed.

All issues that may apply should be addressed. Some examples are given below, further information can be found in the guidelines. *Minimum 150 words required.*

- Methods
- Sampling
- Recruitment
- Gatekeepers
- Informed consent
- Potentially vulnerable participants
- Safeguarding/child protection
- Sensitive topics
- International research
- Risks to participants and/or researchers
- Confidentiality/Anonymity
- Disclosures/limits to confidentiality
- Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)
- Reporting
- Dissemination and use of findings

Methods, Sampling and Informed consent

In the current study, consent can be regarded as an ongoing process. Firstly, consent will be obtained from a headteacher or SENCo to approach teachers. Next, teachers will be contacted via email to ask whether they would be interested in the research. During this process, I will offer to talk on the phone, set up a meeting on Microsoft teams, or provide them with an information sheet to explain the study's details. Finally, if a participant

agrees, I will send a consent form via email to sign. I will arrange a date and time that will be suitable for them. On the day of the interview, I will ask if the teacher would start the interview and reassure the participant that they can withdraw from the study or interview at any point.

The information sheet provided for participants will also outline the participant's rights, such as having the choice to withdraw from the study, wanting to take a break or choosing not to answer questions without needing to explain to the researcher.

Finally, each participant will be debriefed. My contact details will be provided along with my research supervisors contact details if the participant has further questions or concerns regarding their participation in the study.

Risks to participants and/or researchers

As the current study requires participants to discuss their perceived stress related to their job role, some themes/questions emerging from the interview are considered sensitive topics that can potentially make participants experience anxiety, discomfort, or feel embarrassed. To minimise this, the researcher will explore what protocols and guidelines there were in place within the school for staff members to access pastoral support. The researcher will also provide them with a list of resources that they can access for free if distress is still experienced by the end of the interview.

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist, the researcher will draw on their consultation skills to recognise and address a particular situation if a participant becomes stressed during the interview; the researcher will be attuned to the participants' feelings and thoughts and provide unconditional positive regard during the interview. The researcher will adopt a respectful and curious stance in interviews and will withhold judgement during the interview. Furthermore, the researcher will seek supervision where necessary and will utilise supervision as a means of reflection to be aware of the researcher's personal biases of school systems and processes.

The researcher is also certified as a Mental Health First Aider and will use the skills and knowledge to support a participant if they become stressed during the interview.

In addition, the risk of lone working for the researcher will be mediated by the researcher utilising supervision with their research supervisor and educational psychologist supervisor. If necessary, a "check-in" system will be employed to have the opportunity to voice any concerns that the researcher may have. In addition, peer supervision with other members of the cohort will be utilised as a means of 'checking in.' The research also has access to a supervisor within the local authority whereby whom they can have a check-in with and seek support from.

Confidentiality and Anonymity and Safeguarding

The participants will be informed that any data collected will remain confidential, and each participant will remain anonymous. Any identifiable information such as which L.A the data was collected in, the name of the school, and the participants' names will be anonymised during the reporting and dissemination of the study. Each participant's name will be replaced with "Teacher X" (X will be a participant number). All data will be stored in an encrypted file on a password-protected laptop. Each participant's contact information will remain confidential and stored in an encrypted file on a password-protected laptop.

All interview transcripts will be anonymised and replaced with numbers so that there are no identifiable details of the participants.

The interviews will take place online using Microsoft teams; the researcher will ensure that the interviews and use of the laptop during the interview and transcription will be in the researcher's private study. The researcher will also use headphones so that no-one else can hear the interview.

The researcher will explain to each participant that any information shared that suggests safeguarding issues have occurred will be dealt with by following the school and Local Authority Safeguarding protocols and procedures (such as harm or danger to oneself or others).

Reporting and Dissemination

Following the interview, participants will be debriefed. The debrief will include thanking the participant for taking part in the study, details relating to how the data will be stored and used, and the researcher's contact information to allow the opportunity for participants to discuss any queries, concerns, or questions they may have. Also, participants will be given the option to take an additional information sheet which includes the signposting of useful communicative and self-help resources to seek information, advice and support regarding mental health. This will consist of website links and recommended apps by the NHS. The school will also have an option to learn about the results of the study through a leaflet or a short presentation.

Please confirm that the processing of the data is not likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual

Yes ☒

Section 9 – Attachments. *Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached*

a. Information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research (List attachments below)

Yes ☒ No ☐

Appendix A- Information sheet and consent form for teachers (participants)

Appendix B- Debrief form

Appendix C- Risk assessment

2. Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee Yes ☐
2. The proposal ('case for support') for the project Yes ☐
2. Full risk assessment Yes ☒

Section 10 – Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.
Yes ☒ No ☐

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.
Yes ☒ No ☐

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name Jale Salih

Date 02/02/20

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.

Notes and references

Professional code of ethics
You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:
British Psychological Society (2018) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*
Or
British Educational Research Association (2018) *Ethical Guidelines*
Or
British Sociological Association (2017) *Statement of Ethical Practice*
Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the Institute of Education Research Ethics website.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook.* London: Sage.
This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) What are Qualitative Research Ethics? Bloomsbury.
A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental use

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, the supervisor must refer the application to the Research Development Administrator via email so that it can be submitted to the IOE Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A departmental research ethics coordinator or representative can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. If unsure please refer to the guidelines explaining when to refer the ethics application to the IOE Research Ethics Committee, posted on the committee's website.

Student name		
Student department		
Course		
Project title	Enter text	
Reviewer 1		
Supervisor/first reviewer name	Amelia Roberts	
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?	No	
Supervisor/first reviewer signature		
Date	30th September 2021	
Reviewer 2		
Second reviewer name	Jeremy Monsen	
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?	No	
Supervisor/second reviewer signature		
Date	30th of September 2021	
Decision on behalf of reviews		
Decision	Approved	● ☐
	Approved subject to the following additional measures	☐
	Not approved for the reasons given below	☐
	Referred to REC for review	☐
Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC		

Comments from reviewers for the applicant	
Once it is approved by both reviewers, students should submit their ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team: IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk.	

Appendix H: Debrief document

Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher stress.

Thank you for your participation in this interview. I appreciate that talking about your perception of stress in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic can be a sensitive topic so if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Jale Salih via email: Jale.Salih.18@ucl.ac.uk

The data collected from the interview will be stored safely on a password-protected laptop. Information that may disclose your identity will be removed and will remain confidential.

I have also included a range of services freely available on the internet for your information.

Access to mental health services:

NHS:

https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/

Mind:

https://www.mind.org.uk/

https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/

Mental health support in schools:

https://www.annafreud.org/media/7653/3rdanna-freud-booklet-staff-wellbeing-web-pdf-21-june.pdf

Education Support Partnership- Looking after Teacher-well-being:

https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/looking-after-teacher-wellbeing

YoungMinds- Caring for the well-being of teachers and school staff:

https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/caring-for-the-wellbeing-of-teachers-and-school-staff/#how-to-support-wellbeing-in-your-school

24 hour availability to speak to someone confidentially:

https://www.samaritans.org/

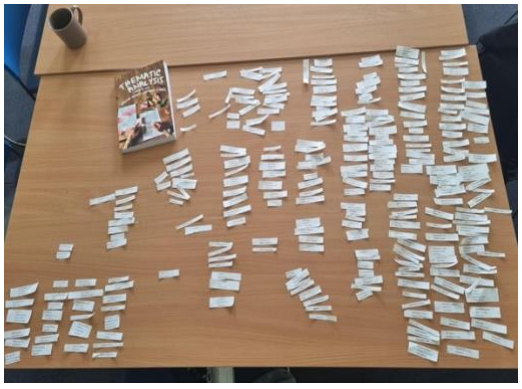
Recommended apps from NHS to support mental health:

https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/

Appendix I: Photos of the process of theme development after Nvivo:

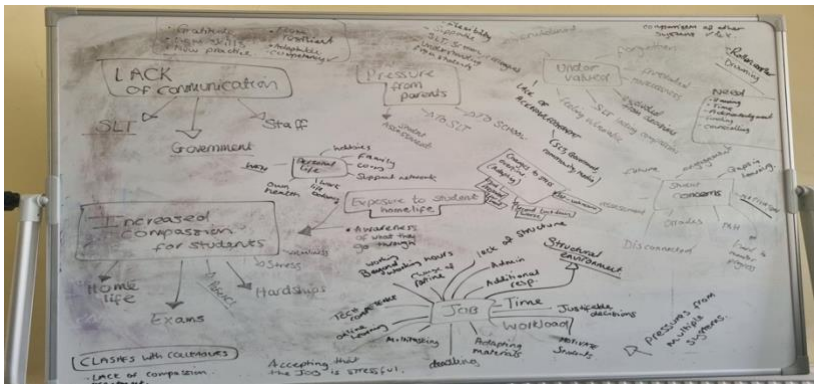
Step 1:

Step 2:



Step 3:

Step 4:



Appendix J: Contributing codes to subthemes and overarching themes

Theme 1: **The need for Compassion**

Subtheme:	**Contributing codes**
Lack of understanding from systems around teachers	· Unrealistic expectations · Lack of trust from SLT · Lack of adaptation to context · No change in schedules · No acknowledgement from government · Pressure from parents · Pressure from SLT · Lack of understanding around assessment workload · No action from sharing concerns · SLT can't relate to teacher context · Working during holiday · More time needed for deadlines and planning · Feeling unsupported by SLT and colleagues
Systems of support exist in the Educational Community	· Supportive colleagues · Supportive SLT · Supportive students · Staff relationships · Supportive school
Cultivating empathy for oneself and in support of student resilience.	· Empathetic stress for students · More patience towards students · Being kind to oneself · Knowing your limit · Stepping away to have a break · Acknowledging context · Increased awareness of student difficulties · Increased confidence in student abilities · Using humour to ease context · Understanding of student hardship · Ensuring students have access to internet and laptop · Having check ins with students
The shared experience	· Going through it together · Understanding one another · Lived through the pandemic experience – teacher student · Togetherness · Feel closer to students

Theme 2: Connections, Communication and Consistency.

Subtheme:	Contributing codes
Navigating Uncertainty: The impact of inconsistent and ineffective communication on Education	· Lack of clarity from Government · Lack of clarity from exam board · Lack of communication amongst colleagues · Lack of communication amongst SLT · Resentment towards Government · Government inconsideration · Late communication and decisions · Late guidance · Hypocrisy and conflicting information from Government · Lack of plan from government · Communication from government late and inconsistent
The need for Inclusion: Recognising and Valuing Teachers Perspectives in Decision-Making.	· Teachers' perspective not taken into consideration · Decisions made without consulting teachers · No platform to share opinions to decision makers
Disconnected from students in virtual Learning Environments	· Difficult "connecting" through communication · Lack of feedback from students · Lack of engagement from students · Uncertain how to engage students · Student cameras off · Lack of interaction during lessons from students

Theme 3: **Evolving Professional Competencies: Bridging the Gap Between Teacher Skills and Student Needs**

Subtheme	Contributing Codes
Navigating the complexities of Evolving Educational Practices	· Admin tasks · Assessment · Cancelling exams · Additional marking · Added responsibility · Multiple factors to consider simultaneously · Marking · Justifying grades · Remote teaching · Planning · Hybrid model of teaching · Check in with students · Answer student and parent questions · More Deadlines · Adjusting · Multitasking
Supporting Student Well-being and Learning Amidst Pandemic Challenges	· Access to resources · Student engagement and motivation · Student stress due to COVID · The need to be inclusive · Unable to track progress · Wanting to be clear to students · Managing student behaviour-virtually · Covid impacting morale · Student mental health · Students being a priority · Trying to create a sense of normality · Learning gaps amongst students
Embracing Adaptability and Innovation in Teaching Practices	· Adapting to online teaching and learning · Finding resources · Use of technology · Change of teaching practice · Learning to adapt · Becoming more organised · Being creative · New ways to share resources · New ways to train (for teachers) · Hybrid teaching

Theme 4: Theme: **Fostering a supportive Ecosystem in Education**

Subtheme	**Contributing codes**
The Struggle with Time: Balancing Planning, Learning, and Teaching Responsibilities.	· Not enough planning time · Lack of time for marking · Lack of time for learning about resources · Always moving forward- no time to go back · Prioritising time allocation · Space needed for quality lessons
Continuous Professional Development: Equip Teachers to Support Students in a Post-Pandemic Landscape.	· Training in technology · Training in how to support children and young people with mental health · Training in online platform-further resources · Aftermath of the pandemic support for CYP · Student anxiety · Support staff mental health · Learn about the long-term effects of the pandemic on children and young people · Some sort of CPD training in general)
Prioritising Teacher Well-being: Leveraging Educational Psychology to Support Teachers' resilience within their job role.	· Counselling support for teachers · Teacher's own health · Learning on the job- NQT · Wellbeing for staff (protected time) · Support for concerns around Covid · Encouragement to talk about mental health
Financial Challenges and Resource Constraints: resource management and optimisation.	· Resources needed · Money needed · Budget cuts · More teachers · Online textbooks

Appendix L: Example of a transcript

1. Recording started: 00.0 --> 002.1
1. Researcher
1. Alright, so I will thank you for taking part in this research.
1. Researcher
1. Uh, I wanted to ask by just firstly asking, I ask you how many years you've been teaching.
1. Participant 1
1. This is now my sixth year of teaching.
1. Researcher
1. Six
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, so I started in 2015.
1. Researcher
1. Oh wow, OK and how long have you been working in your current school?
1. Participant 1
1. Six years.
1. Researcher
1. OK and do you have any other roles within the school?
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, so teacher of business studies and also head of Year 12.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. OK, alright so you have quite a lot of responsibility as well. Then with them it's not just you 1. know teaching, you're also you know, yeah yeah, it'll be at all OK. So the first question that I 1. wanted to ask you really is. Uhm. What does stress mean to you?
1. Participant 1
1. To me, yeah, that's good.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm, I thought it's just to me means when I'm sort of unable to cope.
1. Participant 1
1. So I've got a lot on my mind, UM or I've got too much work to do and I feel like I don't have 1. enough time to do it.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm?
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, it was. Also I for me personally I associate over lack of sleep 'cause if I'm stressed I'm 1. always awake in the night.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.

1. Participant 1
1. Yeah so.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Let's say I think really, but yeah, we're not able to cope with my workload.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, now I can completely understand that. OK, that's a it's a very personable or give some.
1. Researcher
1. Definition UM so yeah, thank you for that and.
1. Researcher
1. So the second question I've got is due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, have there been 1. any changes to our teaching?
1. Researcher
1. And if yes, how these changes influence your levels of stress?
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, so there's been a lot of changes. Why don't we Boo had to get a lot better at using 1. technology and IT and stuff like teams. So here we use Google Meats so to be honest with you. 1. Gender person Lockdown RI personally was quite lucky because I had only sort of that. You 1. only had year 11,013's really on my timetable the two exam year groups and 'cause they just 1. got sort of given grades. I didn't have to do any teaching after that for them.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, although I think through stuff with my year group has had of year so there was a lot of I 1. don't know. I've done a lot of tried to do a lot of well being activities for them in terms of but 1. that was sort of just posting information online and stuff that they could access, whereas in 1. the second lockdown I sort of had to start teaching a lot more.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm online.
1. Participant 1
1. So this was in January. It wasn't it. The second lock then we add.
1. Participant 1
1. Ah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, just before do you mean just before Christmas?
1. Researcher
1. Oh, OK.
1. Participant 1
1. It was just after Christmas I think was we went into lockdown again, didn't we?
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, yeah, of course.
1. Participant 1

1. And this time I was actually teaching online which led to I didn't really enjoy doing because it 1. ended up being just like a lecture. I would have a PowerPoint up on the screen and I would do 1. a lot of talking and endured arts kids for their import or to get involved. But then you'll be met 1. with like silence.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Updated The OP School in particular, I don't think the boys really enjoyed them putting on 1. their cameras or talking a lot online, so it ended up just being sort of a lot of lecture based 1. lessons online.
1. Researcher
1. Uh-huh
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm, when we did come back to school it it was more stressful in terms of you have lots of 1. kids who are off because they were had to isolate if they knew someone who was.
1. Researcher
1. oh, this sounds weird.
1. Participant 1
1. Tested positive so we had that where you were sort of like in some lessons I was half teaching 1. online and half of them were in the classroom and that yeah, that was very difficult to cope 1. with one. I didn't like it I I that was I preferred it. Just having them all online.
1. Participant 1
1. Because there ain't trying to manage a classroom. And then you've got kids typing stuff in the 1. chat box or and some of them are being silly, making noises and all that sort of stuff it it 1. became a bit too much. So to be honest with you, after a few times of that I've I've generally 1. sort of stopped it myself. 'cause it was. I felt like it wasn't worth the time of trying to 1. implement it and you.
1. Researcher
1. What did you did you feel, uhm, you know, did you feel more stressed with that situation? Let's 1. say in comparison to like pre pandemic?
1. Participant 1
1. Yes, yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Say yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, definitely.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, because yeah, 'cause like I said 'cause I didn't persist with it very long 'cause I felt like it 1. wasn't working. But then you've got the other side of it where the kids who aren't in your life 1. lesson Now I sort of falling behind.
1. Participant 1

1. And I was posting. I was still posting work online like they'll have access to the PowerPoint and 1. any materials were used to merely in class, but it's still I wasn't understand. Sure how are they 1. getting on with that. And even though I'm, I'll be honest, I was someone who like I would ask 1. them for their work.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, cool.
1. Participant 1
1. So I they would all email me, but then it I didn't check it very well because you've got 30 1. different emails coming in and it's impossible to keep on top of all the time. So that felt like it 1. was adding to my stress as well. Because you're thinking, oh, I've got this where I shouldn't 1. market. But then you bring it back to like classroom situation where you can't mark every 1. piece of work that the kid does in the classroom. So I started looking a bit like that and forward 1. to myself. I'm not getting marked that I'd just get.
1. Participant 1
1. To send in to me so I can check that they're actually doing work.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, so well in a way you kind of manage your own, your own sort of trying to find your own 1. way around how to work the whole system and getting back the balance of your your own 1. work and your own stress and.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. So I would say yeah, definitely more stressful than usual.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm, since then, one thing that we've we've all been asked to do as an additional part of our 1. work is just to upload everything now so the kids always have access to it to Google Classroom 1. and everything which I tried to do on like a daily basis. At the end of the day, we're over 1. lessons. I've just thought I tried to go on to the Google Classroom and load it all up with all the 1. resources. But again, I put like sometimes you forget that. And then you've got kids messaging. 1. You still light, so as the work, and it's a bit like you give me a chance, you know, I mean.
1. Participant 1
1. Ray, expect everything in the second.
1. Researcher
1. Wow, OK and.
1. Researcher
1. So to be honest, you've kind of covered that a little bit, but.
1. Researcher
1. You know, upon reflection, what do you think has been the biggest challenges for you with 1. regards to the ongoing pandemic and your job role?
1. Participant 1
1. Move this up in terms of the big toy. The biggest challenge did you say?

1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, the biggest challenges so it can be more than one really, but you know what? The first 1. things, that kind of come to your mind.
1. Participant 1
1. The first is workload, definitely because as well 'cause of the situation moved the exam results. 1. So in for the so this year group that just went through year 11 and 13 in June, July. Again that 1. instead of.
1. Participant 1
1. Doing the exam and receiving grades, they asked us to do assessments in class.
1. Participant 1
1. And that would go towards their final grade so that half term between East the holidays and 1. may half term. I've literally spent the whole six weeks Mark in work.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Which would usually you know you do revision and you've marked some work, and then they 1. have to go do exam and then the examiner would market. I felt like I was marking exams at 1. every day non-stop for all my all my exam classes.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, and you do what you do. Get a lot of rest in that in that time as well then.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, it's interesting, yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. No, none whatsoever. It was like nonstop everyday all the time keeping on top of it. And I think 1. what I think what the score was really scared about to be honest, is the lack of that. They 1. wanted to make sure that they had evidence. So if like the exam boards or anyone came to 1. them and said, why have you ordered this? Great that they knew for sure. They could say 1. these are the reasons why, but I don't think I don't think from the schools perspective offered 1. them the government.
1. Participant 1
1. They realized the amount of extra workload on the teachers.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah oh wow OK uhm.
1. Researcher
1. So let's say we've so earlier you know you mentioned. Obviously, teaching online, did you find 1. things like student engagement or remote working difficult?
1. Participant 1
1. Ah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1

1. Personally, I found it very difficult. I'm someone who I hated working from home like other and 1. enjoy it at all. I'm someone who needs to get up, go out, socialize and see people which I 1. didn't get home. So I found myself quite the far jik when I was at home all the time.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, and some days I'll just come into school like and sit in an office box office or classroom just 1. to get out of the house for a bit. And in terms of from the kids in terms of engagement, it's a 1. lot less engagement than you would usually get in a classroom.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, yeah you have. You know the kids always putting their hands upon asking lots of questions 1. and stuff about like you got none of that online. Rarely every once in awhile you might get 1. something or what?
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. They'll never really do it in a group setting where you got the 30 clears under on client 1. classroom. What you'd end up getting his lots of emails after the lesson. They didn't have any 1. questions.
1. Researcher
1. Ah, OK.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. So I thought I'd pick something up. I don't know why they would be more shy online them they 1. would be when they're in the classroom, but it it feel that way.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Researcher
1. And so obviously, we've spoken about the challenges, but what would you say? Are the 1. positive changes if there have been any? Have you experienced as a result of the changes 1. within your job role during the ongoing pandemic?
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, I think the positives is definitely the use of Internet and technology for the students. 1. Even though I said like the online lessons didn't, I don't think worked really well. But what is 1. has worked well is we use Google Classroom and now the kids are very adept at using it as sort 1. of like a revision tool. So after there be less than our poster PowerPoint, you know.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1

1. Any bit act, not only stuff resource is reviews are you. We've used in the classroom, but I also 1. post extra resources as well that they can go away and do extra reading or learning for each 1. topic if they want to do so now and that I wouldn't of ever handed out or done before. But 1. with that and you know, especially the ones who really want to do well, they access that stuff 1. and use it too.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, to help themselves move forward and understand the content.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, and you know that they can all use it like you see it. So yeah, no, that's really good well.
1. Researcher
1. You know, just out of curiosity, I mean with children with the students accessing those 1. resources, UM.
1. Researcher
1. You know were there any? Did you find any?
1. Researcher
1. Challenges or you know, regarding their access to laptops or anything.
1. Researcher
1. I.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, we didn't really, 'cause, uh, I think the government handed out laptop, so there was no 1. anyone who needed. One could get one and that was always quite quickly and in terms of that 1. and that they've been handed out that Don calls and stuff that had the certain amount of 1. gigabytes on it. So I never if someone wasn't there, it could have been. For that reason. I don't. 1. I'm not understand. Sure, to be honest.
1. Participant 1
1. But other, as far as I know in terms of school up for my year group. In fact, I know that laptops 1. handed out to certain students we have Internet access quite quickly.
1. Researcher
1. Good, that's really good team.
1. Researcher
1. Can you say this one, you know, yeah, so sorry and can you describe a moment when you felt 1. particularly supported within your job role?
1. Participant 1
1. During the pandemic this is.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm?
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, you see the pandemic annual job growth so that you know having that going on at the 1. same time.
1. Participant 1

1. Yeah well, my my line manager is their head up six form and he was quite good in during the 1. pandemic. In keeping in touch with us as a team. So like once a week we would all have like a 1. Google meet like this and just touch base and keep in touch with each other and discuss any 1. things that we wanted to get done for the week et cetera. So that was quite good.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, just like? Especially if this was during this, but that first locked down when you know when 1. they were only allowed out for one hour work day and no one was really seeing each other at 1. all back then. So it was quite nice to just, you know, to start the week like that and give you 1. some sort of motivation and dumb.
1. Participant 1
1. So you know just to keep you on task and focused on what you wanted to achieve for that 1. week.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, well, so you know when you said like a check in do you mean is it almost like a well being 1. check in or is it like, uh, more is everyone OK getting on with their jobs like what was what was 1. the type of checking that you guys were doing?
1. Participant 1
1. It was a little bit of both to be honest. It was like he would check in on us and just say how you 1. all doing that personally and that would not just in a meeting with all the whole team but it 1. would bring up as well which is quite nice.
1. Participant 1
1. Yes, uh, but it was as well at the same time, like, uh, work, what these? What we want to 1. achieve this week and set some goals and targets.
1. Researcher
1. OK, OK.
1. Researcher
1. Did you have any training by any chance during this process?
1. Participant 1
1. In training.
1. Researcher
1. So let's keep it, let's say in terms of support, and were there any trainings offered about how 1. to deal with certain things or even the use of it or anything?
1. Participant 1
1. We
1. Participant 1
1. it definitely had training on Google Classroom. I'm just trying to think when it was. I can't 1. remember exactly when it was.
1. Participant 1
1. But I think for some reason I think it might have even been before the pandemic started, so.
1. Researcher
1. Uh-huh
1. Participant 1

1. Uh, I'm I'm someone to be honest. Who's quite tech savvy so I don't know even if there is 1. training on those sort of things I I don't pay attention COVID a lot 'cause I feel like anything I 1. want in that. Fine now I can find out myself.
1. Researcher
1. yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. And I've never had any.
1. Participant 1
1. Issues with using the software or anything like that, or some of the other teachers I know. They 1. struggle with it.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh.
1. Participant 1
1. But in terms of training, and that we definitely, after the first lockdown finished, and it was the 1. end of the school year, we came back in September. We definitely had training. Then on you 1. know how to use it in the classroom and stuff like that. And if kids are off, this is what we need 1. to. Yeah, we definitely received them at some then.
1. Researcher
1. OK, I'm out of curiosity, thumb.
1. Researcher
1. Within say, your online work, you know even for the whole you know pandemic. Did you have 1. the support?
1. Participant 1
1. I didn't, but I don't get any way generally 'cause I'm business studies. It will be mostly go to like 1. sort of English math science.
1. Researcher
1. Some of the cost jacks.
1. Researcher
1. Uh.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, so I don't know if they still received it or not.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Participant 1
1. I think they might have from just these based on what I've heard around, like people talking, 1. but I'm not understand sure.
1. Researcher
1. OK, OK.
1. Researcher
1. Uhm?
1. Researcher
1. This is, it was similar question here, 'cause of course, but if you know a bit previously I asked

1. you if you could describe a moment you felt supported.
1. Participant 1
1. Yep.
1. Researcher
1. And but are there other types of support that you've received regarding your role during the 1. the pandemic?
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm, specifically like not talking about and normal train in that order perceived anyway, just.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yes, I mean that's different than what would be before March 2020. 'cause obviously 320 is 1. when we went into lockdown. But you know, after that, the sort of support you may have 1. received that would be different than the usual.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Then not really to be honest. Like everything that everything I've received, these would be 1. usual day. Only difference is it's all done online now. Yeah, so yeah, but I haven't received any 1. sort of specific support pandemic for the pandemic.
1. Participant 1
1. Yep.
1. Researcher
1. And they make OK, OK.
1. Researcher
1. I'm sorry, could you describe a particularly at a moment that you felt particularly stressed 1. within your job role during this pandemic?
1. Participant 1
1. Man.
1. Participant 1
1. Stopping the mode the most stressful times for me definitely was that half term I was talking 1. about with all the marking up because it just felt relentless at the time like it was and you felt 1. under pressure 'cause you fool if it's not completed then you know the the deadlines. It seem 1. like from the school and obviously that comes from the government. Deadline seemed very 1. short.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. So you felt like you never sort of had a break from it and there was lots of different classes that 1. needed to be marked and given grades at that particular time.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, so for me that was definitely with that. Doubt the most stressful time.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh.

1. Researcher
1. Yes, Sir, that's quite interesting. 'cause rather than technically you're on holiday like you're on 1. half term, you're not, you know.
1. Researcher
1. That period.
1. Participant 1
1. No, not during the half term. It was like, Oh yeah, that period between. That's just after Easter 1. holidays up till may half term, so there's about six weeks there.
1. Researcher
1. RTK oh OK yeah yeah OK wow.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, and 'cause it was, I can't remember. I can't remember exactly how it worked. We must 1. have. So we went off in January, don't we? And then we came back to school in around March 1. and then pretty much straight away off the CarMax score. They went on Easter holiday so they 1. wanted their grades.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yep.
1. Participant 1
1. So be come from somewhere, some sort of assessment, whereas the year before we could just 1. sort of give the grades that we thought they were working now, whereas this year they wanted 1. evidence to go with that. And then I feel like that evidence was just now on the teacher to to 1. provide in one way or another. And if there was no fool about the impact on the teachers.
1. Researcher
1. So when you say they are you talking about both? So are you talk about the senior leadership 1. team or you're talking about both their senior lead like so? Basically both the school once a 1. day at the senior leadership team, but also just in case if external like the Examiner boards can 1. come in and say, come?
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. So.
1. Researcher
1. But justifications, let's trade.
1. Participant 1
1. It was from the senior leadership, but I think that ball from the fact about that you know the 1. examples of the government, one that information, and I think the the guidance from the 1. exam boards and the government as well wasn't very clear about exactly what they wanted 1. and that made it more difficult. I think for schools in general 'cause they're those you know, I 1. know. RSLT was definitely worried about any kickback if they're too lenient.

1. Researcher
1. Of course.
1. Participant 1
1. With payment start appealing and stuff like that. So obviously that puts pressure on them and 1. they put that pressure on to us, which makes it which made it a very stressful situation.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah OK, I get that.
1. Researcher
1. I have there been factors that have influenced your stress levels during the pandemic, so.
1. Researcher
1. If I give you 7 to, you know a couple of thoughts so.
1. Researcher
1. Uhm?
1. Researcher
1. You know, in in general, in Jen, in your job.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, in life.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, it's life.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, so I'll say as well. Last year was the base chessel year in life.
1. Participant 1
1. So obviously you know we got married.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, congratulations.
1. Participant 1
1. But also the the moving house was very very stressful. I found probably more stressful than the wedding.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, because all throughout that time because of the pandemic, 'cause we'll have the kick back 1. on that. It took us about 10 months to finalize the whole House moving and stuff, and during 1. that time I was very stressed about losing the House 'cause there was talk about our people 1. get pull out and stuff like that. So that made life more stressful as well. And then we moved it 1. in November. And then we decided we want to get married so that boot on a different type of 1. dress. It wasn't as stressful. Where's the move in house to be honest.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Well, I think everything just sort of stuck was adding up and took its toll.
1. Participant 1
1. Up on top of everything else that's that was going on.
1. Participant 1

1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, well it has. It's almost like a ripple effect, doesn't it? It's yeah, I get that, UM.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. I mean it. So thinking back at let's say March 2020, right when we entered locked down for the 1. first time, what did you anticipate the school year would look like in terms of your role?
1. Participant 1
1. So I think we broke up about a week or two before Easter. Where was the date of when the 1. lockdown began and are just in my head, but I think I would have thought you would be off for 1. about a month and then come back and then.
1. Participant 1
1. And then I'm not sure.
1. Participant 1
1. I've never. I never realized the seriousness of the situation to be honest, especially when it was 1. first starting up.
1. Participant 1
1. I yeah, I assume daughter come back off the eastern life would have got on like normal. 1. Obviously that didn't happen and.
1. Participant 1
1. Then if we you know when the school year ended, I would have expected that like this. Oh, 1. where is it this year or last academic year? I would have expected that to go ahead like normal 1. as well.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, so more. I'm someone who is always thinking, you know this ain't get lost Dave. You will go 1. back to normal soon, but obviously it doesn't always turn out that way.
1. Researcher
1. No, no, no. I completely get that. What seen as you kind of thought that he would only happen 1. for about a month.
1. Researcher
1. Do you feel like that had an impact on your stress as well?
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm?
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. I do not know, not not with the original lock down to be on this because I like 'cause. Like I 1. said, I didn't have to do much online teaching that oh so if I'm being honest with you Jelly 1. between me and you, there was a lot of days playing war zone.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, do it.
1. Participant 1

1. Yeah, I'm not doing much work at all because, you know, like I said, I find it very hard to 1. motivate myself at home, and especially if I had no lessons. I would find that even more 1. difficult, I think because you know, if you have a lesson you might not be motivated to do it 1. online, but you still have to be in there physically. Whereas if I was just getting up to the work.
1. Participant 1
1. On the sole person that I'd start and move at 10 minutes and then think to myself I can't be 1. bothered for this anymore as sitting at home like so let me do find something else to do.
1. Participant 1
1. Yep.
1. Participant 1
1. Yep.
1. Researcher
1. Well, it's it's to be honest. It sounds like. Also you're describing from from the first moment it's 1. it has changed then. So let's say with your at first you don't have it. You don't feel like a lot of 1. stress. You don't feel really stressed about anything because you didn't have a lot to do. But 1. overtime. That kind of changed with your with your added workload and everything that you 1. had to consider.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, definitely. So like that. The second lockdown was a lot more stressful for me then the 1. first. It wasn't even the second lock down, it was just after the second lockdown end. It's 1. coming back to school.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Coming back to school yeah yeah. And when when you're referring to, are you referring to the.
1. Researcher
1. Uh, is it January time was it? Is it in this?
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, it was that this year I can't remember now. 2021 year January 2021 when we went into 1. the second lock there.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, yeah.
1. Researcher
1. I will see.
1. Researcher
1. Made.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, so when so that's this year, so I'm doing that around I'm talking about may this year, May 1. 20 and 21. That was the stressful period.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah OK OK alright then.
1. Participant 1
1. Like swimming.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, yeah.

1. Researcher
1. Well, it's crazy, isn't it? Because lock down started at 2019. Well know 2019 end of 2019 and 1. then we went into lock down into March 2020. So then we have that whole. Yeah it's almost a 1. blur, isn't it?
1. Participant 1
1. Hello hello.
1. Researcher
1. Hum.
1. Researcher
1. What about the sort of the bubbles? Or trying the being you know, COVID safe within scored 1. you feel like that has an impact on on your stress or.
1. Participant 1
1. For me personally now because I'm with the kids were kept in bubbles in terms of.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Participant 1
1. They weren't. They were in the same year groups, but they can't mix between different year 1. groups, which meant for lot of teachers. It was more stressful 'cause there was a lot more 1. moving around the school and not being able to stay in the same classroom. But for our 1. department in business studies we have to move around anyway, so it was the same for me as 1. usual really. In that regard, in terms of them, you know, like being in the classroom.
1. Participant 1
1. It's not something that I've personally ever worried about, like catching COVID or anything like 1. that, and and maybe I should have more but.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. I think once I in theory I say yeah, I I've do, but then when I'm in the classroom and I'm trying 1. to work with a kid for me the more important thing at that time was probably make that 1. helping the kids and their work probably occasions where I've got to close or the kids got too 1. close to me. Or we're mixing Amanda classroom and we shouldn't have been but ended up on 1. the other side of things like this. School is a very old that parts under classrooms or tiny 1. anyway can't do anything about that, so I'll I'll forward it.
1. Participant 1
1. You know me going a little bit closer isn't gonna make much of a difference.
1. Researcher
1. Difference OK, I get that.
1. Researcher
1. What about them?

1. Researcher
1. The media, if you like the media, hasn't impact on your stress or anything me.
1. Participant 1
1. Oh yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. You know what I thought?
1. Participant 1
1. Impact on my stress. I'm not sure I would ever. I'm sorry I watched the news every day so I like 1. to be informed.
1. Researcher
1. Uh-huh
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm?
1. Participant 1
1. I thought I felt say I did so much stress but it was.
1. Participant 1
1. It was I don't know it.
1. Researcher
1. yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, I don't know what word to use and it was interesting to keep up with the developments 1. and stuff and like seeing stuff like what was his name Dominic Cummings breaking the 1. breaking the law that they had so much, Jess more 'cause I pull out my phone.
1. Participant 1
1. And he's not.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, yeah no. I completely understand that. I completely understand that.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. They're not stressing me out.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Researcher
1. How would you describe your school's response to the pandemic in general?
1. Participant 1
1. I think in general it's it was good.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Participant 1

1. Uhm like especially, you know, I've heard some schools and horror stories about their forcing 1. them to do online lessons and stuff like that, whereas we've asked, we were given a bit more 1. leeway, so when I said talk about online lessons, are there mention before as well? Like we 1. didn't have to do an online lesson, every single lesson we had done our timetable where some 1. schools had to do that.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. So we were given the option to, you know, instead of having the online lesson, you could post 1. work up for them and get them to complete something instead, or something like that, which I 1. think helped. 'cause when you got five hours a day of lessons to being fun of the compute on 1. the screen is worth of being a bit too much. And like I know, Tanya had to do that. They had to 1. do online lessons for every lesson they had on their timetable.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, and they've always been like I had. Teacher is always generally quite supportive with most 1. upset, like people who were worried about the pandemic and stuff like that. He's always 1. allowed them to join meetings online if they wanted to. Even still to this day.
1. Researcher
1. Still to this day.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, and then uh.
1. Participant 1
1. And.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. And like I don't know at home I was having, you know, off my chair when I was working on at 1. home wasn't very comfortable and it's hurting my back. And then he said go deliver you a 1. chair. And so I thought I bought their response in general was good. The the only side that I 1. thought wasn't was maybe the lack of understanding around that example. There's testament 1. period in May.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, where's which is where I understand from their perspective, they've got the deadlines to 1. meet as well, but then you've got to, you know, balance the workload up so soon, I guess.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Do you like it was?
1. Researcher
1. Do you like the sort of response that you got from the school? Their response from the school 1. was clear, UM, for you to understand. Was it clear? Was it a smooth transition to work online?

1. Researcher
1. You know where your options clear, basically.
1. Participant 1
1. Yes, uh, generally that's one thing we score isn't great. Acuin clean instructions, but I've done 1. online stuff. I think it actually was. So like I said, it was made very clear from the beginning. It's 1. up to us whether.
1. Participant 1
1. You know you, we want you to do some online lessons, but not every lesson has to be online. 1. You can set work instead, et cetera, et cetera. And to be honest, I was, you know, I was never 1. really chased up that much on that or what. What am I doing?
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, so I feel like I was trusted to just get on with it and that had to get on with my lessons and 1. know that what I'm teaching or they live in to the kids.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. So on that note, how would you describe the the Department of Education's response to the 1. pandemic so you know the the the the, the guidance, the information that was given to your 1. school? Or you know that you may have read.
1. Participant 1
1. Well Paul is a nice way of describing it.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, we have with the first lockdown I I.
1. Participant 1
1. Understand their perspective a bit more, so there obviously governments never been in this 1. situation for first pandemics ever gone through.
1. Researcher
1. Uh-huh
1. Researcher
1. uh-huh
1. Participant 1
1. They tried to do such. I'd set up that algorithm which afford that kids grades, which didn't 1. work out, but I think they're a bit too slow in changing that, but I felt like they never learned 1. the lessons from that, so I think it's OK to get it wrong once you know it's the first ever time 1. and I'm I won't be too harsh, but what annoyed me was that they didn't seem to put in place 1. any contingencies for that happening again in the future. And all it was was, yeah exams or.
1. Participant 1
1. Overhead.
1. Participant 1
1. Yes.
1. Researcher
1. what you see in in? Do you mean like we've locked down happening again? Which closures?
1. Researcher
1. I see.
1. Researcher

1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, so we've school closures happening again, with no exams taking place at the end of the 1. year. Again, there was no contingency put in place to you know how that might happen. We 1. went into the second lock down in January so took it to the children in year 11 and 13 are 1. supposed to have exams in 5-6 months time and it took them a long time to come out and tell 1. those students and the teachers what was going to happen for those grades.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. I felt like there was no need for that to happen. You know, we've just had this last year. You 1. could have put in plan, place a plan for to give out groups, students grades a lot earlier so 1. students stress levels, went through the roof during that time and they had no idea what they 1. were doing during that January lock down. That first happened. So I think the lockdown started 1. on like the third or channel the 4th of Jan. We had students who take exams in January, so one 1. had one.
1. Participant 1
1. On like the 6th or 7th and at first the guidance was, you know, in lockdown not leave the 1. House. But if you've got an exam you should go to the exam and then don't go to the exam and 1. it was all very confusing and no one knew what was happening.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, and you know we are your kids contacting us.
1. Researcher
1. Uh-huh
1. Researcher
1. yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Who are very stressed? They've got example in a day or two and we didn't know what to tell 1. them. We could only go with what the government was saying, so we're telling them no, you 1. still need to go to the exam 'cause you might not get a grade and it wasn't very clear. Cut out 1. hole and the what annoys me about that even more is everything. It was tailored around sort 1. of GCSE's and a levels never ever give any thought to the students who are doing vocational 1. courses like Btech 'cause they're the ones who have the exams in January.
1. Participant 1
1. That goes towards their final grades.
1. Researcher
1. Uh-huh
1. Researcher
1. here.
1. Participant 1
1. And they always seem to be an after fault with the government.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher

1. Yeah no, I get that. I mean, I guess I'm dealing with that as well, and having them, you know, 1. students contact you and they're feeling really stressed. Can you know have an impact on you 1. as well? And when you don't know what's going on, makes it even harder.
1. Participant 1
1. Exactly.
1. Researcher
1. Walk it back.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Researcher
1. Uhm?
1. Researcher
1. Let's say I'm looking forward.
1. Researcher
1. OK, looking forward from this whole situation in UM.
1. Researcher
1. What will you be taking away from this past year in term you know with regards to your role?
1. Participant 1
1. God tomorrow.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm?
1. Participant 1
1. So I've.
1. Participant 1
1. I think one of the things I've taken away from the whole thing and moving forward is.
1. Participant 1
1. This is the I'm a lot less sort of stressed actually in the classroom or dealing with students.
1. Participant 1
1. Then I was before.
1. Participant 1
1. Wait?
1. Researcher
1. My keep my ears.
1. Participant 1
1. I thought no other hand, but I don't lose my temper as well.
1. Participant 1
1. As I used to.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. So now I think I'm trying to be more empathetic with students with border situations they're 1. going through. I think the lockdown has let us see a lot of the time, a lot of their home 1. situations, or what they're going through stuff you wouldn't necessarily see before.
1. Researcher

1. For yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. At the same time, there's been a lot since the pandemic that has come out, like unconscious 1. bias is a huge thing now, and stuff like that. So I think taking in all these different information 1. has changed my practice and the pandemic has has to deal with that as well.
1. Participant 1
1. So.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uhm?
1. Participant 1
1. So I I hope I keep that aren't moving forwards.
1. Participant 1
1. But
1. Researcher
1. You know, it's interesting. You said that. I mean, we've the do you feel like so was it? Can I just 1. clarify? Was the unconscious bias online training? Was it face to face?
1. Participant 1
1. those online today.
1. Researcher
1. It was on and do you feel like that's?
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. That sort of having an online training. Do you think that that's because of the pandemic that 1. you've kind of you guys have been able to see that it's possible to engage in online training 1. from school?
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, definitely.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, we would have never ever done on my training before, however, on a personal level, I 1. don't actually really enjoy it and training.
1. Researcher
1. Now I get.
1. Participant 1
1. I'm someone who asked to sort of like getting involved and stuff and sitting down and 1. watching a screen for a couple of hours when I'm not talking. I'm just listening. I can very 1. quickly sort of start looking for other things to do.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, I guess it's that that's how it is with students as well. There isn't it.
1. Participant 1

1. Yeah, exactly.
1. Researcher
1. Kind of understand their perspective. No, that's really good to hear. I mean, it's almost like it 1. sounds like you know you've missed your students. You've missed that even you. Maybe that's 1. why there's a level of compassion there.
1. Participant 1
1. I'll say that now.
1. Researcher
1. And how do you in in your opinion? How do you think teachers can be best supported in in the 1. aftermath of this pandemic or during 'cause we're still kind of in it?
1. Researcher
1. He
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. sorry, we're still kind of in it now.
1. Researcher
1. And but
1. Researcher
1. yeah, how do you feel like, in your opinion? How do you think staff can be supported? 1. Teachers?
1. Participant 1
1. Well, what I'm going to say in terms of supported, I think the the number one thing which is 1. probably impossible, but it's more time, you know 'cause I feel like there's always more and 1. more things being put on us, like something like I don't know. Google Classroom putting your 1. lessons up at the end of the day for order classroom. Sounds like a face. Simple thing to do, but 1. after you've been teaching for five days and then you've got a kid come to you to look at your 1. personal state. It's personal statement and you're absolutely knackered.
1. Participant 1
1. Is sometimes you know it's just. It's another thing to go and then another thing to do and you 1. got a pile of mark in waiting for you. So for me, if it would be, time is the most important thing. 1. Teachers, I think already have a lack of it. You know they and the type that given to us we 1. couldn't do the job role before. And you know every it for any teacher to do their job 1. effectively and properly you have to work past your hours or on your weekends, you know.
1. Participant 1
1. Evenings, weekends or whatever it might be, and so the more things that get put into that 1. time, though, more of that it's going to impact.
1. Researcher
1. Well and when you say let's see how you could be supported, it's you know it's time.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah.
1. Researcher
1. Could you give me an example of?
1. Researcher
1. How, let's say that can be achieved.

1. Participant 1
1. More money, more teachers.
1. Participant 1
1. Here.
1. Researcher
1. More money, more teaches OK OK.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh, I, which like said, I know it's probably not realistic because, UM, lots of schools are have 1. less money than before now, so you know, there's it's they're struggling in that regard.
1. Participant 1
1. Uh.
1. Participant 1
1. Pop.
1. Participant 1
1. Maybe if there was any other way it be more more emphasis on like.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. As summative assessment over the informative as well. 'cause that is something that takes up 1. a lot of time thinking about it. You know, marking work or marking a set of books can take you 1. forever.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. And whereas you can sometimes do that in the classroom with a student, but I feel like.
1. Participant 1
1. Schools in Jammu down.
1. Participant 1
1. Valued at as much because obviously they're salty. Can't see it where sometimes you need to 1. trust the professional, that that's what they're doing and that's what's taking place.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah OK, I'll get that. That's quite a different way of looking at it from.
1. Researcher
1. What about on the management level?
1. Participant 1
1. What do you mean? The management level side?
1. Researcher
1. So let's say from what that from, let's say, the SLT's, or let's say your head teacher or the you 1. know the leadership teams. How can the leadership team support you guys?
1. Researcher
1. Do you have any thoughts on that?
1. Researcher
1. Hey.
1. Participant 1

1. Uhm again, I. I mean everything SLT arts for is kind of you under understand the reasons why. 1. So again, I'm going to give it. I'm gonna give you the same artsy and say time sometimes I think 1. they sometimes I think they forget what it's like for classroom teacher to have a full day and 1. they want instead of responses or things to be done in. You know like give you a day or two to 1. complete an activity when for those two days you're teaching every lesson.
1. Participant 1
1. So it's like when I'm not supposed to do this, so maybe just like a better understanding of.
1. Participant 1
1. How?
1. Participant 1
1. Home teachers time is used up or else you know.
1. Researcher
1. Is that it sounds like.
1. Researcher
1. Here you're giving a different response because yes, you're talking about time. But you're also saying you want them to be read more understanding.
1. Researcher
1. In August.
1. Participant 1
1. Yeah, which in theory they should, because they're all had been teachers or someone. They all 1. do still teach just on a reduced timetable. But sometimes it's not. I don't think their 1. expectations are realistic.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah, I get that.
1. Participant 1
1. So I'll give you an example of what's coming up with us at the moment, like we got mock 1. exams by 11's just before the Christmas holidays.
1. Researcher
1. OK.
1. Participant 1
1. So.
1. Participant 1
1. The two weeks before Christmas so you could have an exam on the first day and we break up 1. on the fly, they say.
1. Researcher
1. Ah.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. And then but then you have to input their data for the mocks on, like the second day after we 1. come back. So the expectation there is is that your marking junior holidays.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1

1. Which is that wears off? It should be up to that. I do that personally just because I want to stay 1. on top of my work, but it shouldn't be an expectation.
1. Researcher
1. I get that yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. And then for unknown, let that impact on my patients or those people decide about don't 1. want to do it. I won't do it.
1. Researcher
1. Yeah.
1. Participant 1
1. But
1. Researcher
· I get that.
· Researcher
· OK.
· Researcher
· Uhm?
· Researcher
· So you're on the second last question. You've been amazing self. Thank you so much.
· Researcher
· Good.
· Researcher
· Let's say could you describe?
· Researcher
· And defining moment in your experience of the pandemic as a professional.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· I declined them live and good or bad or evil.
· Researcher
· Anything something that's you know stuck with you.
· Participant 1
· Ah.
· Researcher
· Something that's meant something to you could be good, bad, ugly, whatever it is.
· Participant 1
· I think so and situation.
· Researcher
· Can I take the time?
· Researcher
· OK.
· Participant 1

· So by my defining moments is the I feel like the lone big myself too much, but I feel like I'm a · teacher. Does have good relationships with their students and as ahead of you, I like to get to · know all of the kids in my year group. So one thing that stuck with me was being able to. One · thing I did through during that first and then make a didn't sit there playing war zone all day. · But I don't think I did though was I would call kids and we're just chat.
· Participant 1
· Conversations about what they're up to, how they're doing. You know I'll have sometimes have · parents emailing me saying I'm really worried about my son. He's, you know, doing this and · that and what one thing that stuck with me is that?
· Researcher
· Yes.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· The opportunity just to just to cool kids up and talk to them rather than always going on about · work. And you know your grades in university or the time loud bang on about just to talk. Say · what you've been up to, how you been. Have a laugh with them and have a chat. And I really · enjoyed that part of it.
· Researcher
· Yeah, that's really nice. I mean, it's it's that and that's different from.
· Researcher
· You know pre pandemic isn't it.
· Participant 1
· Yeah, that would have never happened pre pandemic.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· Uh, and I have students who have left now so they're not at the school anymore. Who I am. · I'm more than happy to still call up, and if I need to for any reason. So like I don't know, · sometimes I have football and I know one of them used to referee, so I'll call him up anytime · we like. Yeah, you can. You come referee for me and you'll be like yes or no 'cause he's at uni · and I'll just. But I I'm glad I've got that relationship with them. Or like they'll be like on a they'll · be like when we come back.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· For Unix, I will meet up at the pub and have a drink or something like that, and I'm like as long · as you're buying, that's fine.
· Researcher
· And what about we've parents or colleagues?
· Researcher

· Let's say with the same sort of thing in mind and experience.
· Participant 1
· Also colleagues.
· Researcher
· K.
· Participant 1
· Colleagues, so I've got. I've got some friends here, so like I don't know in terms of experience, · it's the same thing. Just developing those relationships. So there's a couple of us where every · common because they'll be mondo. Every Friday during the pandemic. This first one we would · meet up for a chat like this and have a coffee morning at like just chat and say how things go in · and.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· So that was good to you know the school as well. In general, they'd like some of the staff · arranged quiz nights online and stuff like that. It's just quite good. Them fun to get involved in · when you're stuck at home all day.
· Participant 1
· Like, uh?
· Participant 1
· Yeah.
· Researcher
· It's that's different as well, reasoning that again, that's not something that you know.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· That's I mean so. It's nice from that perspective and with parents again, I'm going to quit or · with the same. But we have some parents. Again, it was about developing better relationships · with them 'cause they were moving contact than they would usually be, which was so. It was · nice to even just sometimes called them and talk to them and.
· Participant 1
· Come up with strategies together over and how.
· Participant 1
· How best to support their son?
· Participant 1
· Uhm?
· Participant 1
· Whereas you don't. Sometimes you don't get to see a pair when until like parents evening · once a year.
· Researcher
· Yeah, yeah.
· Participant 1

· And then come so that was from that perspective was quite good as well.
· Participant 1
· Uh.
· Participant 1
· I'm just trying to think what else as well. Another good thing. Actually we have Google · Classroom. We always used it before. Sort of like hard part it Lee.
· Researcher
· OK.
· Participant 1
· Whereas with the pandemic slide everyone you start using it properly and we came up with a · new. We found a new function whereas you could invite their parents to the classroom as well.
· Researcher
· Oh
· Participant 1
· For example, that works quite nicely as well, it so now the kids are like couldn't say the excuse · that they didn't get their work or anything like that because the parents were also getting it.
· Participant 1
· Yeah.
· Researcher
· also as so I guess in a way the parents can also check, UM, if work has been saying or what sort · of stuff they're doing in class.
· Participant 1
· Yeah, exactly.
· Participant 1
· Yeah.
· Researcher
· That's really good. It's more transparent, isn't it?
· Participant 1
· Yeah, definitely.
· Researcher
· That's really good.
· Researcher
· Uhm, alright sidewalk. Final question, Mark.
· Participant 1
· Yep.
· Researcher
· Uh, and this is really a question of, you know, is there anything that you feel that you would · like? Is there anything else that you would like to add up about the past year regarding your · job role or the pandemic? Or how you felt?
· Participant 1
· Uh, I think I don't know like overall I'm has been a stressful milotic per year and a half now a · couple of years since we first went into lockdown.

· Participant 1
·
· Uh, but I think it's like being like that for everyone. You know the students, teachers, the · school in general. First time it's anything ever happened and I think overall it was. I think · overall we have made this deal with it, so there's things that have been left behind as well.
· Researcher
· Or what?
· Participant 1
· Uh, like students are picked up and mentioned this before. Actually one of my roles is I'm also · the safeguarding lead for the six form.
· Researcher
· OK.
· Participant 1
· So Julian that I had a lot of stuff coming through during that first phase, but I feel like since · we've come back into school when, especially since you know we've started now in September. · Again, things do feel a lot more like normal.
· Researcher
· OK.
· Participant 1
· Uh, which I'm happy about and I feel like I don't know the students. The teachers are all · settling again.
· Researcher
· Yeah.
· Participant 1
· Whereas that wasn't, I don't think that was the case like last year.
· Participant 1
· Uh, so it does feel like things are starting to go back to normal now, which is nice.
· Researcher
· Very good game, so let me clarify. You are a business studies teacher.
· Researcher
· Head of a yes is it 13?
· Researcher
· OK, sorry.
· Participant 1
· Well other 12 vampire teams at the moment until but next year I'll be 13 and then back that · well.
· Researcher
· At the moment is here to have head of Year 12.
· Researcher

· Safeguarding lead for six form.
· Participant 1
· Yeah.
· Researcher
· And if I'm not mistaken, or you put on a on the on the governors as well.
· Participant 1
· Yeah, I'm staff governor as well.
· Researcher
· OK, that's amazing, OK?
· Participant 1
· Help get years 7 football coach.
· Researcher
· I can prove OK, it's OK, OK?
· Participant 1
· Although we lost yesterday.