

# Teaching Students With Emotional/Behavioral Disorders: Teachers' Burnout Profiles and Classroom Management

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## Abstract

Teachers may have affective responses to teaching students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD) that influence their effectiveness. We used latent profile analysis to examine the burnout profiles of 102 K–Grade 6 general education and special education teachers who had students with or at risk for EBD in their classrooms. We then examined if profile membership varied by teacher type (special education vs. general education) and if profile membership was related to teachers' directly observed classroom management skills. Our results suggest that teachers exhibit three burnout profiles: "flourishing," "buffered," and "struggling"; that profile membership did not vary by teacher type; and that burnout profiles were related to teachers' classroom management skills. These findings suggest teachers may need differential supports when working with students who have EBD and provide directions for future research regarding the association between teacher affect and classroom instruction.

## Keywords

classroom management, teacher burnout, latent profile analysis, teacher attitudes

Many teachers have limited knowledge of academic and nonacademic evidence-based practices for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD; Gable et al., 2012; Westling, 2010). Survey research indicates that teachers tend to be accepting of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms unless they exhibit externalizing behaviors, a characteristic of many students with EBD (Idol, 2006; Olson et al., 1997; Soodak et al., 1998). Observational studies further corroborate survey research that teachers are unprepared to meet the needs of students with EBD as studies show that teachers rarely use effective instructional and classroom management strategies when they teach this population (Maggin et al., 2011; McKenna & Ciullo, 2016; Wehby et al., 2003). The failure of teachers to use effective practices for students with EBD likely contributes to the poor academic outcomes of this group of high-risk students (Blackorby et al., 2005; Gilmour et al., 2019).

Teachers' failures to use effective practices when working with students with EBD may be due in part to their affective responses to working with students who exhibit challenging behavior (Chang, 2009). Studies of teacher burnout suggest that teachers experience increased depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, and lower levels of personal accomplishment, when they report problems with

student behavior (Aloe, Shisler et al., 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and when they report higher stress due to student behavior (McCormick & Barnett, 2011). Moreover, burnout, specifically emotional exhaustion, is highly correlated with teacher career intentions (Bettini, Jones et al., 2017; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Martin et al., 2012). The higher risk for teacher attrition associated with burnout is troublesome given that attrition exacerbates teacher shortages, particularly in special education (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Donley et al., 2019), and disproportionately affects students in high-poverty schools (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Teacher attrition not only creates financial and staffing challenges for schools but also negatively influences students' academic outcomes (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Donley et al., 2019). Understanding more about teacher burnout, a potential intermediary between working with students who exhibit challenging behavior and teacher attrition, is essential for

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developing supports for teachers that forestall their intentions to leave their schools or the field of teaching.

However, a limitation of many existing studies is that teachers' emotional responses to teaching are considered separately, in what is commonly referred to as a *variable-centered analytic approach*. In reality, teachers likely experience varying levels of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment concomitantly. Through a person-centered analytic approach (Lanza & Cooper, 2016), the inherent variability in how teachers experience these constructs in tandem can be examined to (a) understand whether subgroups of teachers show similar patterns of experience, also referred to as profiles and (b) to determine whether teacher profiles relate to their classroom behaviors (Herman et al., 2020) and the outcomes of their students (Herman et al., 2018). Extant person-centered research, though not focused on teachers of students with or at risk for EBD, suggests that teachers' affect is complex with some teachers experiencing both, for example, high stress and high efficacy simultaneously (Herman et al., 2018). Although prior work has suggested teachers of students with EBD experience more burnout (Brunsting et al., 2014), it may be that profiles of burnout are more complex and influence teachers' actions in different ways.

The purpose of this study was to investigate if a sample of general education and special education teachers who had students with or at risk for EBD in their classes (a) presented unique burnout profiles, (b) if profile membership differed between special education and general education teachers, and (c) if burnout profiles were related to teachers' classroom management. Before presenting our research questions and hypotheses, we review prior research on burnout and its link to teacher type (special vs. general education) and classroom management skills.

### Components of Burnout

Burnout is a psychological construct that encompasses multiple components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1986). *Emotional exhaustion* relates to the expenditure of emotional and psychological resources. *Depersonalization* refers to the negative perceptions and attitudes held by an individual toward a client (e.g., teachers' views toward students). Depersonalization may arise from feelings of emotional exhaustion, potentially linking the two constructs (Maslach et al., 1986). The final aspect of burnout, *personal accomplishment*, involves self-perception in the success one experiences at the workplace, with a lack of personal accomplishment potentially leading to feelings of unhappiness and discontent (Maslach et al., 1986). Most studies of burnout consider these components separately, rather than jointly (e.g., Aloe, Shisler et al., 2014; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Eddy et al., 2020; Embich, 2001; McLean et al., 2019).

Burnout is essential to study in an educational context as it is ultimately considered a precursor to teacher attrition or teacher intentions to leave the field (Bettini, Cumming et al., 2017; Billingsley, 2004; Brunsting et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2001; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Martin et al., 2012; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Weisberg & Sagie, 1999). Although certain types of individuals may be more prone to experiencing burnout, prior research indicates that burnout and related feelings of distress are malleable (Jennings et al., 2019; Pas et al., 2012). Examining the relation between burnout and teacher characteristics has the potential to provide insights regarding ways to reduce burnout and to subsequently result in more positive classroom experiences for students, including those with EBD. With regard to teacher characteristics, a growing body of evidence shows that teachers' experience with burnout may be related to the role a teacher fulfills in a school, such as being a special or general education teacher, as well as to the needs of the students they instruct.

### Burnout and Teachers of Students With EBD

Both special and general education teachers may respond to burnout by making different career choices (Bettini, Cumming et al., 2020; Brunsting et al., 2014; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Martin et al., 2012), feeling less able to do their work (Cumming et al., 2020; Hakanen et al., 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), giving students less autonomy and choice (Shen et al., 2015), or changing their classroom management styles (Aloe, Shisler et al., 2014). Research suggests that student behavior may be the precursor to these associations; teachers develop burnout when faced with challenging behaviors from students (Aloe, Shisler et al., 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Evidence from one longitudinal study of early elementary teachers in Finland suggests that teaching students with more externalizing behavior lead teachers to have a less positive affect in the future (Nurmi et al., 2018). The existing literature regarding the association between student behavior and teacher burnout raises specific concerns for teachers who have students with EBD in their classrooms.

Special education teachers serving students with EBD tend to report more stress (Singh & Billingsley, 1996) and higher burnout (Embich, 2001; Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002) than special education teachers working with different populations of students. One recent study found that the probability of teacher attrition, a potential outcome of burnout, increased for both special education teachers and general education teachers as the percentage of students with EBD in their classes increased (Gilmour & Wehby, 2020). Taken together, these findings indicate that retaining a workforce of educators willing and able to work with students with EBD continues to be a problem (Berry et al., 2011; Conroy et al., 2014), however, most studies, with the

exception of Gilmour and Wehby (2020), have focused on special education teachers—not general education teachers—who have students with or at risk for EBD in their classrooms.

Although general education teachers and special education teachers may be at risk of experiencing burnout when they instruct students with EBD, both groups of teachers may still experience burnout differently. Prior research suggests that special education teachers report less manageable workloads (Bettini, Jones et al., 2017), higher stress (Brunsting et al., 2014), competing demands for their time and resources (Adera & Bullock, 2010), lower job satisfaction (Stempien & Loeb, 2002), and higher attrition rates than general education teachers (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Gilmour & Wehby, 2020). Given these differences, the current study investigates whether being a general or special education teacher who instructs students with EBD is differentially related to burnout.

### *Burnout and Classroom Management*

In addition to the role a teacher fulfills (special vs. general education), research using teacher self-report data indicates that instructional practices relate to feelings of burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Cumming et al., 2020). Classroom management is one domain of instructional practice that is essential for teaching students who are at greater risk of exhibiting disruptive or challenging behavior in the classroom than their peers (Blackorby et al., 2005; Institute for Education Sciences, 2006; Newman et al., 2009; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Unfortunately for these students, research indicates that many educators are unprepared to address problem behaviors in their classrooms due to a lack of training in classroom management (Freeman et al., 2014; Greenberg et al., 2014; Oliver & Reschly, 2010), despite evidence that effective classroom management is essential for promoting positive behaviors and academic outcomes for students with EBD (Garwood et al., 2017; Landrum et al., 2003).

Classroom management and burnout may be intricately linked for teachers who have students with EBD in their classrooms. Past research suggests that teachers who are not confident in their ability to properly manage behavioral issues in their classrooms or who report more student problem behaviors are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion (Dicke et al., 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). However, it is possible that burnout may be playing a role in teachers' difficulty managing their classroom. Individuals who feel depleted in their psychological and emotional resources may not have the energy or mental capacity to effectively cope with classroom disruptions. For example, Eddy and colleagues (2020) found that elementary school students with teachers who reported higher levels of

emotional exhaustion were more likely to receive an office discipline referral or in-school suspension than students with teachers who had lower levels of emotional exhaustion, after accounting for students' disruptive behaviors, demographic characteristics, and reading skills. Another study using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta et al., 2008) to assess teachers' more general classroom management found that teachers who reported more job-related stress, a precursor to burnout, received lower scores on classroom organization (Sandilos et al., 2018). The current study builds on existing research by exploring the association between teachers' observed classroom management and burnout profiles.

### *Exploring Profiles of Burnout*

Most empirical work has examined burnout through variable-centered analyses. Variable-centered methods provide information about the influence of distinct components of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment) on outcomes of interest. However, these methods are limited given that components of burnout do not occur in isolation within teachers. A person-centered, analytic approach, such as *latent profile analysis* (LPA), allows for an examination of the simultaneous associations among multiple components of burnout contributing to teacher outcomes. LPA identifies configurations of characteristics (e.g., components of burnout) by grouping individuals with similar levels of those characteristics into one profile (Lanza & Cooper, 2016; Logan & Pentimonti, 2016).

Few studies have included teacher burnout in person-centered analyses, and no studies we could identify have used LPA to examine subcomponents of burnout. One recent study by Herman and colleagues (2018) included an overall composite of teacher burnout in an LPA that also included stress, efficacy, and coping. As compared with stress, burnout displayed more variability across profiles, revealing complexity in the construct beyond simply serving as a correlate to stress. In addition, the authors found that teachers in the profile with the highest ratings of stress and burnout also had the most behavior problems in their classrooms (Herman et al., 2018). Thus, the present study extends this prior work by using the person-centered approach of LPA to conduct a more fine-grained examination of subcomponents of teacher burnout using a sample of teachers who have students with or at-risk for EBD in their classrooms.

### *Research Questions*

The present study addressed three research questions:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** Do unique burnout profiles emerge in a sample of teachers who have students with EBD in their classes?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** Do burnout profiles differ for special education and general education teachers?

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** Are teacher burnout profiles associated with teachers' classroom management?

This study contributes to the existing research in three main ways. First, prior research has found that special education teachers who teach students with EBD report particularly high levels of burnout (Brunsting et al., 2014) and that there is an association between student behavior problems and general education teacher burnout (e.g., Abel & Sewell, 1999; Aloe, Shisler et al., 2014). At the same time, prior research has not examined general education teacher burnout when teachers work with students with or at risk for EBD, despite evidence that general education teachers may struggle to meet the needs of this population (Gilmour & Wehby, 2020). Second, prior work on teacher burnout has primarily examined correlates of the three components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment; Maslach, 2003). In contrast, LPA allows us to examine these constructs in tandem to determine if teachers present different profiles of burnout, if these profiles differ by the role a teacher fulfills (general education teacher vs. special education teacher), and if profiles are related to teachers' classroom management skills. Finally, few studies have linked teacher burnout to teachers' observed behaviors; they instead rely on teacher self-reports (e.g., Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Cumming et al., 2020; Dicke et al., 2014; Evers et al., 2004; Hopman et al., 2018).

## Method

### Sample

Teachers participating in this study were a subsample of a larger randomized control trial that examined the effect of a multicomponent intervention on the academic and behavioral outcomes of students with or at risk for EBD. All data for the present study were collected at baseline before the intervention was implemented. For teachers to be included in the study, their class had to include at least one student who was receiving special education services under the category EBD or a student who was classified as at risk for EBD. We classified students as at risk for EBD if they were rated by teachers at levels exceeding the norms on the Adaptive Behavior Index and Maladaptive Behavior Index from the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (Walker & Severson, 1992) and were rated as having more than five critical events on the Critical Events Index. These inclusion criteria resulted in 102 teachers participating in the study in 30 schools with 1–8 teachers per school.

The study sample characteristics are provided in Table 1. Teachers were asked to complete a survey that included their demographic variables and information about their

positions. Some demographic information was missing. Three teachers were missing data on whether or not they were a special education teacher, four teachers were missing race/ethnicity, three teachers were missing years of experience, and five teachers were missing their education level. Of teachers with reported demographic data, 88.89% were female and 11.11% were male. The majority of participating teachers identified as White (61.61%) and Black (34.34%). There was a nearly balanced distribution of general education teachers ( $n = 49$ ) and special education teachers ( $n = 50$ ).

Approximately one quarter (26.26%) of survey respondents reported having at least a bachelor's degree, 34.34% reported having education beyond a bachelor's degree, 37.37% reported obtaining a master's degree or higher, and 2.02% of individuals did not report their education level. Furthermore, 81.81% of respondents possessed full licensure, with an average teaching experience of 12.01 years. We also collected information on the grades teachers taught. We classified kindergarten through second grade as "early elementary," third through sixth as "late elementary," and teaching more than one grade as "multiple grades." Of this sample, 34.34% taught early elementary ( $n = 34$ ), 20.20% taught late elementary ( $n = 20$ ), and 45.45% taught multiple grades ( $n = 45$ ).

### Measures

**Maslach Burnout Inventory.** The Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey (MBI; Maslach et al., 1986) is a scale used to measure the three components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI consists of 22 items in which respondents rate how often they experience statements related to personal feelings or attitudes. Items are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). The nine items from the emotional exhaustion subscale measure "feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work"; the five items from the depersonalization subscale measure "an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's service, care, treatment, or instruction"; the eight items from the personal accomplishment subscale measure "feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people" (MBI; Maslach et al., 1986, p. 194). The developers of these subscales considered them separately and, as such, they do not combine to form a single composite burnout score. We used total scores for each subscale in our analyses. When interpreting the profiles that emerged we used the MBI's classification of low, moderate, and high (0–30 = *low*, 31–36 = *moderate*, and >37 = *high* for personal accomplishment; 0–16 = *low*, 17–26 = *moderate*, and >27 = *high* for emotional exhaustion; 0–6 = *low*, 7–12 = *moderate*, and >13 = *high* for depersonalization).

**Table 1.** Sample Characteristics.

| Variable                                     | General education teacher<br>( <i>n</i> = 49) | Special education teacher<br>( <i>n</i> = 50) | Full sample<br>( <i>n</i> = 99) |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                                |   |   |                                 |
| Female ( <i>n</i> = 88)                      | 95.92%  | 82%   | 88.89%                          |
| Male ( <i>n</i> = 11)                        | 4.08%   | 18%   | 11.11%                          |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>                        |   |   |                                 |
| White ( <i>n</i> = 61)                       | 73.47%  | 50%   | 61.61%                          |
| Black ( <i>n</i> = 34)                       | 24.49%  | 44%   | 34.34%                          |
| Native American<br>( <i>n</i> = 1)           | 0%  | 2%  | 1.01%                           |
| Hispanic ( <i>n</i> = 1)                     | 0%  | 2%  | 1.01%                           |
| Multiple ( <i>n</i> = 1)                     | 0%  | 2%  | 1.01%                           |
| Not reported<br>( <i>n</i> = 1)              | 2.04%   | 0%  | 1.01%                           |
| <b>Grades</b>                                |   |   |                                 |
| Early (K–2)<br>( <i>n</i> = 34)              | 67.35%  | 2%  | 34.34%                          |
| Late (3–6)<br>( <i>n</i> = 20)               | 32.65%  | 8%  | 20.20%                          |
| Multiple<br>( <i>n</i> = 45)                 | 0%  | 90%   | 45.45%                          |
| <b>Education</b>                             |   |   |                                 |
| Bachelor's<br>( <i>n</i> = 26)               | 34.69%  | 18%   | 26.26%                          |
| Higher than a bachelor's<br>( <i>n</i> = 34) | 28.57%  | 40%   | 34.34%                          |
| Master's or higher<br>( <i>n</i> = 37)       | 34.69%  | 40%   | 37.37%                          |
| Not reported<br>( <i>n</i> = 2)              | 2.04%   | 2%  | 2.02%                           |
| Full certification<br>( <i>n</i> = 81)       | 87.76%  | 76%   | 81.81%                          |
| Avg. experience                              | 12.69 ( <i>SD</i> = 10.39)                    | 11.34 ( <i>SD</i> = 8.71)                     | 12.01 ( <i>SD</i> = 9.55)       |

Note. The analytic sample included 102 teachers. This table reports the characteristics of teachers who reported demographic data.

According to the survey manual, reported reliability coefficients for the three subscales were as follows: .90 for emotional exhaustion, .79 for depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment. Maslach and colleagues (1986) report test–retest reliabilities ranging from .54 to .82, with significance beyond the .001 level. Table 2 includes sample scores on the MBI.

**Classroom Atmosphere Rating Scale.** The Classroom Atmosphere Rating Scale (CARS; Wehby et al., 1993) is a direct observation measure of teachers' classroom management behaviors. Teachers are rated in seven areas: students' level of compliance, students' level of cooperation, students' level of interest/enthusiasm/involvement, as well as if the students consistently follow rules, the students are on-task, the teacher and students accommodate individual differences, and the atmosphere is positive and supportive. For each area of the classroom atmosphere, the rating form

provides an operational definition of levels ranging from *Very High* (1) to *Very Low* (5), or *Unable to Code* (6) because the classroom was unstructured for more than 10 min during the observation. Similar to other measures of classroom management that do not exclusively address discrete teacher behaviors (e.g., CLASS; Pianta et al., 2008), the CARS posits that students' behaviors directly reflect the teacher's classroom management and can, therefore, be used in assessing the teacher's skills. In the present study, trained research assistants observed each teacher's classroom using the CARS for approximately 30 min. Observations took place within 2 weeks of the MBI. We recoded the scores so that higher scores would reflect better ratings. Table 2 includes sample scores on the CARS.

We were interested in assessing teachers' overall classroom management scores so we combined items from the CARS using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). We fit a single factor model with maximum likelihood estimation.

**Table 2.** Sample Scores on the MBI and CARS.

| Variable    | General education teacher |       | Special education teacher |       | Full sample |       |
|-------------|---------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|             | M                         | SD    | M                         | SD    | M           | SD    |
| <b>MBI</b>  |                           |       |                           |       |             |       |
| PA          | 40.61                     | 5.95  | 41.14                     | 5.16  | 40.99       | 5.51  |
| EE          | 2.79                      | 11.49 | 20.78                     | 13.38 | 20.77       | 12.27 |
| DP          | 4.69                      | 4.94  | 3.62                      | 3.14  | 4.22        | 4.19  |
| <b>CARS</b> |                           |       |                           |       |             |       |
| Comply      | 3.84                      | 1.12  | 3.34                      | 1.15  | 3.58        | 1.15  |
| Rules       | 3.65                      | 8.86  | 3.12                      | 1.24  | 3.37        | 1.09  |
| Interest    | 3.63                      | 0.95  | 2.92                      | 1.08  | 3.26        | 1.07  |
| On-task     | 3.59                      | 1.06  | 2.98                      | 1.24  | 3.25        | 1.19  |
| Response    | 3.31                      | 1.00  | 3.34                      | 1.32  | 3.31        | 1.16  |
| Support     | 3.49                      | 1.23  | 3.42                      | 1.25  | 3.43        | 1.24  |

Note. MBI = Maslach Burnout Inventory; PA = personal accomplishment; EE = emotional exhaustion; DP = depersonalization; CARS = Classroom Atmosphere Rating Scale.

A single factor model with all of the CARS indicators accounted for 45.8% of the variation in classroom management. All items but one had moderate to strong loadings onto a single factor ( $b = 0.42\text{--}0.90$ ). One item, students' level of cooperation, had a low factor loading (0.11). We removed this item and reran the EFA; this increased the proportion of total variation accounted for by the indicators to 53.3%. The internal consistency of the measure with the cooperation item was 0.77; without the cooperation item it increased to 0.86. Many teachers ( $n = 68$ ) did not provide opportunities for cooperation while they were observed, providing substantive support for removing this item. We constructed standardized factor scores for each teacher using the loadings from the EFA that excluded cooperation.

**Inter-observer agreement.** Prior to data collection, observers reviewed the CARS coding manual and looked at examples and non-examples related to each item in the scale. Next, observers viewed videotape clips of classroom instruction and practiced scoring each clip using the CARS protocol. The project coordinator who had used the measure in previous studies provided feedback. Observers had to achieve a minimum of .80 agreement with a master coding file for each video clip (three clips total) before moving to the final stage of training. We defined agreements as scoring within plus or minus one of the master coding file. Observers then practiced using the measure in non-participating classrooms. To qualify for data collection on the project, observers had to achieve a minimum of .80 agreement, within plus or minus one, on the CARS with three different observers. During actual data collection, two observers went to score the same classroom for 10% of all observations. Average agreement was 91.46%, with a range of 71.42%–100%.

## Data Analysis

**Latent profile analysis.** To address RQ1, we conducted LPA that included the three constructs on the MBI: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Prior to conducting the LPA, we examined intraclass correlations to determine the variance in teacher burnout subscale scores associated with teachers being nested within their schools. The ICC for personal accomplishment was 0.00, for emotional exhaustion it was 0.12, and for depersonalization, it was 0.00. Given that emotional exhaustion was slightly elevated, we estimated the LPA using “type = mixture complex” to account for teachers being nested within schools. We first estimated a model with all teachers in one profile. We then increased the number of profiles and examined the change in model fit using the Akaike information criterion (AIC), Bayesian information criterion (BIC), sample size adjusted BIC (SSABIC; Hancock & Samuelsen, 2007). For these indices, lower values are preferred. Prior research indicates that the SSABIC is the most accurate fit index when LPA is conducted with modest sample sizes ( $N = 100\text{--}200$ ; Dziak et al., 2014; Peugh & Fan, 2013; Yang, 2006), so we closely considered this index. We also consulted the Lo–Mendell–Rubin likelihood ratio test (LMR). LMR tests whether an increase in the number of profiles results in a statistically significant improvement in fit over the previous number of profiles ( $k-1$ ); however, LMR tends to be a more accurate fit index when there is a very large degree of separation between profiles (Geiser, 2013; Nylund et al., 2007; Tein et al., 2013). We also examined entropy, which is an indicator of classification quality and provides information about whether or not the profiles are sufficiently distinct from one another. Entropy values closer to 1.00 represent better classification quality. Aligned with recommendations by Nylund and colleagues (2007),

**Table 3.** Tests of Fit and Entropy for Latent Profiles.

| Profile solution | AIC             | BIC             | SSABIC          | LMR           | Entropy       | Sample sizes  |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---|
| 1                | 2,028.97        | 2,044.72        | 2,025.77        | Not available | Not available | Profile 1= 102  |
| 2                | 1,973.34        | 1,999.59        | 1,968.01        | 60.36*        | 0.918         | Profile 1= 90<br>Profile 2= 12                                  |
| <b>3</b>         | <b>1,948.22</b> | <b>1,984.97</b> | <b>1,940.75</b> | <b>31.42</b>  | <b>0.84</b>   | <b>Profile 1= 48</b><br>Profile 2= 44<br>Profile 3= 10          |
| 4                | 1,941.40        | 1,988.65        | 1,931.79        | 14.07         | 0.869         | Profile 1= 49<br>Profile 2= 11<br>Profile 3= 41<br>Profile 4= 1 |

Note. AIC = Akaike information criteria; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; SSABIC = sample size adjusted AIC, LMR = Lo-Mendell-Rubin Adjusted LRT Test. Bold indicates the retained profile.

\* $p < .05$ .

we retained the model that best fit the data, included a substantive number of teachers in each class, and was interpretable.

*Differences between special and general education teachers.* After identifying the appropriate number of burnout profiles, we examined if profile membership was associated with being a special education teacher. We used multinomial logistic regression with maximum likelihood estimation with an indicator for being a special education teacher predicting profile membership. A statistically significant association would suggest that profile membership was associated with being a special education teacher.

*Association between profile membership and classroom management.* To address RQ3, we examined if burnout profile membership was associated with teachers' classroom management. We merged profile membership with the classroom management scores calculated using the EFA. We ran a regression with profile membership predicting classroom management, and planned to include the special education teacher indicator if it was related to profile membership. We also did not use multilevel models in the regression analyses because the intraclass correlation for classroom management at the school level was very low ( $ICC = 0.055$ ). All of the analyses were conducted in *Mplus* (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) and we used  $\alpha = .05$  as our cut-off for statistical significance.

## Results

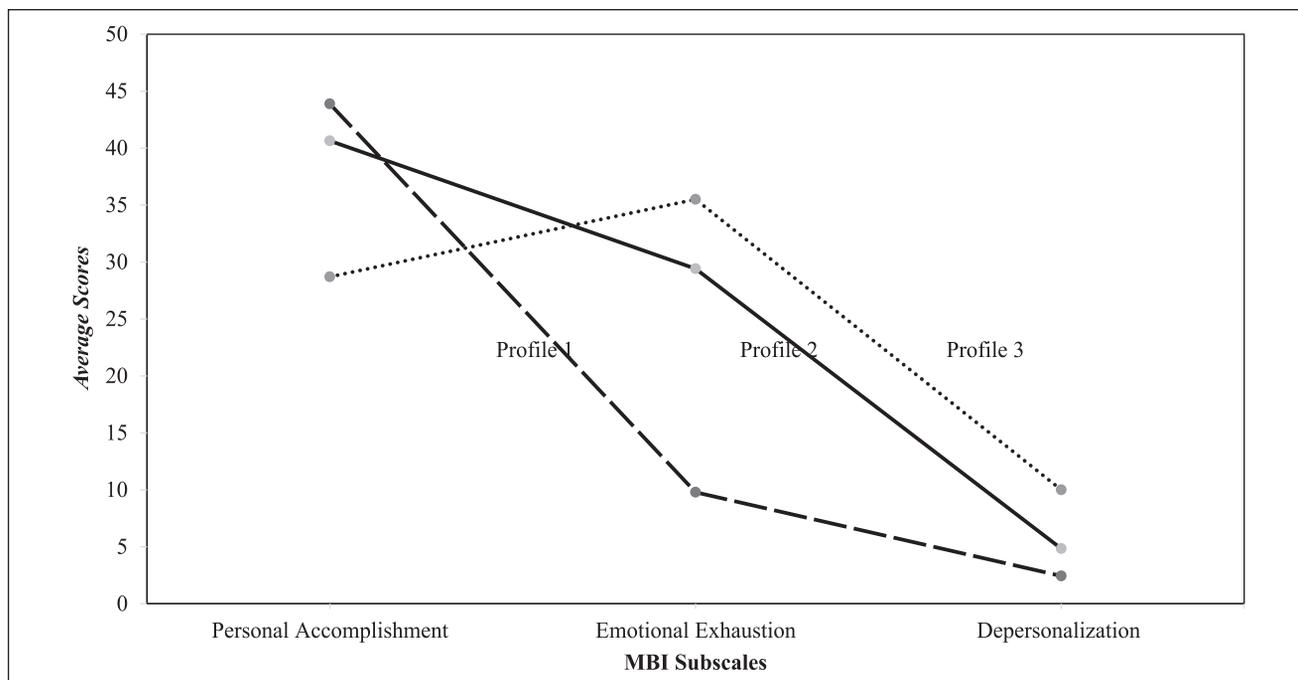
### Burnout Profiles

In Table 3, we report the fit statistics from the models with a single profile, two profiles, three profiles, and four profiles. We retained the three-profile model because this model had a lower SSABIC than the one- or two-profile models, an entropy of more than .80, and a substantive number of

teachers per profile as compared with the four-profile model. The first profile of teachers ( $n = 48$ ) had average scores of 43.88 on personal accomplishment ( $SD = 3.34$ ), 9.79 on emotional exhaustion ( $SD = 5.68$ ), and 2.44 on depersonalization ( $SD = 2.69$ ). As illustrated in Figure 1, these teachers had, on average, high personal accomplishment and low emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The second profile of teachers ( $n = 44$ ) had average scores of 40.64 on personal accomplishment ( $SD = 3.65$ ), 29.41 on emotional exhaustion ( $SD = 6.66$ ), and 4.84 on depersonalization ( $SD = 3.62$ ). On average, teachers in this profile had high personal accomplishment, though lower levels than teachers in the first profile, high emotional exhaustion, and low depersonalization. The third profile of teachers ( $n = 10$ ) had average scores of 28.70 on personal accomplishment ( $SD = 2.31$ ), 35.50 on emotional exhaustion ( $SD = 7.79$ ), and 10.00 on depersonalization ( $SD = 6.38$ ). This profile of teachers had, on average, low personal accomplishment scores, the high emotional exhaustion, and moderate depersonalization. Classification probabilities for the three profiles were consistently high (i.e., .92 for each profile; Nylund-Gibson et al., 2014). We referred to the first profile as *flourishing*, the second class as *buffered*, and the third class as *struggling*. Flourishing teachers were those with the highest levels of personal accomplishment and lowest levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Conversely, struggling teachers had the lowest levels of personal accomplishment and highest levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. We named the second class *buffered* because of the potential for high personal accomplishment to protect against the concurrently high levels of emotional exhaustion reported by these teachers.

### Burnout Profiles and Teacher Type

We used multinomial logistic regression to examine if burnout profile was predicted by being a special education teacher. The association between being a special education



**Figure 1.** Best-fitting three-profile solution.

Note. Profile 1 = Flourishing, Profile 2 = Buffered, Profile 3 = Struggling.

teacher and profile membership was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Special education and general education teachers did not have different probabilities of being part of the flourishing, buffered, or struggling profiles.

### *Burnout Profiles and Classroom Management*

Because profile membership did not vary by special education teacher status, we did not include this variable in our analyses that examined if burnout profiles were related to teachers' classroom management. Findings indicated that burnout profile subtype was associated with classroom management scores. As compared with teachers in the flourishing profile (i.e., reference group), teachers in the buffered ( $\beta = -.23, p = .02$ ) and the struggling profiles ( $\beta = -.22, p = .02$ ) had significantly lower classroom management scores. When rotating the comparison group, teachers in the buffered and struggling profiles did not differ from each other with regard to classroom management ( $\beta = .14, p = .39$ ).

## **Discussion**

Teaching students with EBD presents unique challenges that may influence the affective responses of both general education and special education teachers and, in turn, affect their classroom practice. In this study, we examined if teachers exhibited different profiles of burnout, if profile membership was related to teacher type, and if profile

membership predicted teachers' classroom management. We identified three distinct profiles of burnout: a group of flourishing teachers with high personal accomplishment and low emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; a group of buffered teachers with high personal accomplishment, high emotional exhaustion, and low depersonalization; and a group of struggling teachers with low personal accomplishment and relatively high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as compared with the other profiles. Profiles were not related to being a special education or general education teacher. Profile type did predict teachers' classroom management skills. These findings contribute to the existing literature base by including general education and special education teachers who have students with EBD in their classrooms, by considering multiple aspects of burnout in consort, and by linking burnout profiles to directly observed classroom management.

Past studies of burnout have largely focused on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as separate predictors of career intentions (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). The results of this LPA support that these are important constructs that may function differently across subgroups of teachers. Specifically, our profile analyses showed that there may be more variability across teachers with regard to their feelings of emotional exhaustion as compared with the relatively low levels of depersonalization across all profiles. One potential reason for the similarly low levels of depersonalization across profiles could relate to a social desirability effect given negative connotations of items on

this subscale, which tap into overtly cynical feelings toward students and the larger teaching profession (Brunsting et al., 2014). Yet another possibility is that a core desire to help and support children may remain steadfast in most teachers despite intense feelings of emotional exhaustion.

Our findings from the buffered group show that teachers can experience emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment at relatively similar levels, a finding missed when each aspect of burnout is considered separately. These teachers had lower classroom management ratings than teachers in the flourishing group, but higher classroom management ratings than teachers in the struggling group, though this difference was not statistically significant. This finding indicates that despite feeling accomplished, a teacher's feelings of emotional exhaustion may still have a detrimental influence on their classroom practices. Future research should examine if this group of buffered teachers may be most receptive to coaching or other ongoing professional development as they still may experience a sense of teaching efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Despite research from the teacher attrition literature that suggests potential differences between general education and special education teachers' burnout (Billingsley, 2004; Gilmour & Wehby, 2020), we did not identify differences in profile membership between these groups. This lack of difference could be due to our focus on teachers with students with or at risk for EBD in their classrooms. Special education teachers who work with students with EBD have higher burnout levels than those who work with students identified with other disabilities (Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002); perhaps the characteristics of students that teachers instruct have a greater influence on burnout than the roles they fulfill within a school. The failure to find differences across these groups of teachers could also reflect the characteristics of students with EBD assigned to different types of teachers and the differences in the internal resources had by special education and general education teachers. For example, students with EBD who are assigned to a special education teacher may have more significant learning and/or behavioral needs, but a special education teacher may be more prepared to address these challenges. Conversely, general education teachers may not have the training to work with students who have significant learning and/or behavioral needs, but the students with or at-risk for EBD who are assigned to a general education teacher may have less significant needs. Thus, the challenges of working with students who have EBD and the internal resources that teachers have to face these challenges may be different across general education and special education teachers but balanced in terms of the association with burnout.

A related explanation for the lack of differences across special education and general education teachers could be the external resources schools provide to teachers who have students that receive special education services for EBD.

Students with an EBD diagnosis who qualify for special education services may receive additional academic and behavioral support in and outside of their classrooms, such as assistance from paraprofessionals, behavior analysts, and school psychologists. In addition, students with EBD are, on average, in smaller classes than students without disabilities or students with learning disabilities (Gilmour & Henry, 2020). Smaller class sizes and external resources provided to teachers of students with EBD could potentially serve to reduce teachers' feelings of burnout. In particular, special education teachers could have access to more support as these teachers are more often responsible for students *with* EBD rather than students *at risk* for EBD, who do not necessarily qualify for special education services. However, prior research finds that teachers of students with EBD tend to report little access to instructional resources, extra responsibilities that interrupt their teaching, and insufficient time for planning (Bettini, Jones et al., 2017). Future research should examine the support provided to general and special education teachers who instruct students with EBD and how these supports are linked to both burnout and classroom management.

The results of this study should be considered in light of five main limitations that also provide directions for future research. First, the sample size resulted in some profiles that included a small number of teachers, particularly the struggling group. This may have influenced our ability to detect statistically significant differences in the regression models. Although recruiting teachers of students with EBD is challenging due to the relatively small percentage of students with or at risk for EBD in teachers' classes (McFarland et al., 2018), future research should extend this work with a larger number of teachers. Replication is also important because the LPA we conducted was exploratory rather than confirmatory. As such, researchers should examine if these profiles emerge in other samples, including samples of teachers without students with or at risk for EBD in their classrooms, to assess if the profiles identified in the present study were reflective of the general teaching population or specific to teachers of students with or at risk for EBD. Second, it is likely that the association between burnout profiles and classroom management is cyclical or bidirectional (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers may exhibit particular burnout profiles when they lack classroom management skills and their burnout profiles may subsequently influence their classroom management skills. Given that these data were cross-sectional, we were unable to assess the directional nature of these associations; future research should collect longitudinal data on both burnout and observed classroom management. Additional longitudinal work could examine if profiles change over time. For example, the teachers in the buffered group might transition to the struggling group without appropriate support. Third, we did not examine if student outcomes varied by teacher burnout profiles or if classroom

management mediated the association between profile and students' outcomes. An important next step in this work is to include student outcomes as part of the analyses. Fourth, the CARS uses a mix of teacher and student behaviors to assess teachers' classroom management skills, similar to another widely used teacher observation measure, the CLASS (Pianta et al., 2008). Future work on this topic should consider a more discrete measure of teacher behaviors, such as reprimands or praise statements, to further understand the relation of teachers' practices to their corresponding burnout profiles. Finally, we did not have information about the number of students with or at risk for EBD in each teacher's class. It could be that burnout profile membership is associated with teaching higher percentages or numbers of students who may exhibit more challenging behavior. Future research should examine the specific characteristics of students in teachers' classes and also examine if prior experience with students with or at risk for EBD influences teachers' burnout and classroom management.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study provide information to practitioners and researchers about supporting teachers who have students with EBD in their classrooms. Primarily, identifying teachers with specific burnout profiles allows for schools to direct resources to support specific groups of teachers. A positive finding was that nearly half of the sample belonged to the flourishing group, a group of teachers that, in turn, had much better classroom management skills than teachers in the other two profiles. These teachers might not need more support with students who have or are at risk for EBD. In addition, teacher type (i.e., special education or general education) might not best identify the teachers in need of support. Instead of intervening with all teachers, targeting those in the buffered or struggling groups is potentially a better use of resources. School and district administrators would benefit from understanding the burnout profiles of teachers who have students with EBD in their classroom to better predict staff burnout and attrition, and, even more importantly, to support teachers before they reach this stage. In particular, it is valuable for administrators to know that even teachers who have high personal accomplishment may still struggle with classroom management if emotional exhaustion is also high. By identifying teachers' differential affective responses to teaching students with EBD, schools can better direct resources to supporting teachers' classroom management skills and the subsequent outcomes of this group of students.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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