

Before the Burnout: Faculty Perspectives on Integrating Self-Care into Educator Preparation Programs

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Abstract

Educator preparation programs (EPPs) play a critical role in equipping preservice teachers (PSTs) not only with pedagogical knowledge and skills and professional dispositions, but also with the emotional resilience and self-care strategies needed for long-term success. Nationwide, in order to retain qualified, passionate educators, we must begin by reconceptualizing educator preparation as a holistic endeavor that has longevity in the field as a foundational goal. Equipping teachers to anticipate, navigate, and recover from the emotional and psychological demands of the job is not a luxury; it is a necessity. This study used the first phase of a fixed explanatory sequential mixed methods model to explore how EPP faculty perceive and approach self-care and burnout prevention in their own lives and with their students. The authors disseminated a 19-question electronic survey to assess faculty understanding of value of burnout prevention, barriers to classroom integration, and personal practices related to self-care and burnout prevention, along with demographic data collection. The majority of respondents (85%) strongly agree that burnout is a serious issue for classroom teachers, and over 91% believe that self-care practice should be a part of the EPP curriculum. 76% either agree or strongly agree that EPP faculty have the responsibility for teaching self-care strategies while 24% believe that individuals should oversee their own self-care, not the educator preparation program. A variety of classroom strategies are utilized to address burnout and self-care in the classroom. Barriers to teaching self-care and burnout identified were lack of time, knowledge and resources, among others. Write-in responses highlighted that EPP faculty feel burnout is a structural/systemic issue, they feel unqualified to teach mental health techniques, and there is a tension between holding space for idealism and being upfront about the realities of teaching. These findings suggest that more work must be done to support those entering and, hopefully, staying, in the profession.

Keywords: *self-care, burnout, educator preparation, mental health*

The mental health of college students is at an all-time low (Alonso, 2023). Rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are at their highest level in over 15 years, and university counseling offices are overwhelmed (Flannery, 2023). *Inside Higher Ed* recently reported that student mental health concerns are growing at an alarming rate, significantly impacting retention (Mowreader, 2024). At the same time, the nation's workplace "burnout crisis" (Moss, 2021) contributes to a broader pattern of societal "overwhelm," further intensifying concerns about student engagement and overall wellbeing (Lipsky, 2018; Muir & Mathieu, 2022). Recent academic research suggests that student burnout can be predictive of professional burnout (Benner & Curl, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2019; Robins et al., 2018). As students struggle to balance demands on their time, manage the impact of social media, and combat loneliness, these stressors affect their preparation for high-impact, stress-filled careers such as teaching (Madigan &

Kim, 2021; Madigan et al., 2023; Moss, 2021; Mowreader, 2024).

The mental health and well-being of teachers are foundational to effective teaching and learning. Educators who experience chronic stress and emotional exhaustion struggle to remain engaged in the classroom, which can negatively affect student achievement and contribute to attrition from the profession. Alarming trends in teacher mental health have emerged alongside a growing national teacher shortage, raising questions about how we prepare educators for longevity in the teaching profession (Beames et al., 2023).

Given this background, educator preparation programs (EPPs) play a critical role in equipping preservice teachers (PSTs) not only with pedagogical knowledge and skills and professional dispositions, but also with the emotional resilience and self-care strategies needed for long-term

success. Nationwide, retaining qualified, passionate educators requires reconceptualizing educator preparation as a holistic endeavor with longevity in the field as a foundational goal. Equipping teachers to anticipate, navigate, and recover from the emotional and psychological demands of the job is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

To that end, this study seeks to understand EPP faculty members' attitudes towards personal self-care and burnout prevention and the extent to which they integrate these concepts into their teaching of preservice teachers. As an initial, exploratory phase of a larger mixed-methods study, this study seeks to provide a preliminary understanding of EPP faculty members' attitudes and practices related to self-care and burnout prevention.

Literature Review

This literature briefly synthesizes current research on several related bodies of research: (a) the conceptualization and prevalence of teacher burnout, (b) self-care and resilience interventions in EPPs, (c) the institutional and policy context surrounding teacher wellness, and (d) gaps in understanding EPP faculty perspectives. It highlights prevailing trends and theoretical developments, especially the shift from viewing burnout as an individual failing to framing it as a systemic and organizational issue.

Conceptualizing Burnout

Burnout is defined as “a psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to stressors on the job” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 103). Maslach & Leiter (2016) identify burnout's three key components: 1) overwhelming exhaustion, 2) feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and 3) a sense of ineffectiveness. Although the term “burnout” appeared in various literary contexts earlier, its current conceptualization originated simultaneously on the East and West coasts of the United States in the early 1970s (Schaufeli, 2017) when Herbert Freudenberger and Christina Maslach observed emotional exhaustion, negative outlook, and decreased motivation among substance abuse volunteers and human service workers. While originally dismissed as a pop psychology fad, empirical studies soon validated burnout as a real phenomenon in the helping professions (Lizano, 2015; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Scholars have also acknowledged Western bias in how burnout is measured and treated differently, highlighting

the need for cross-cultural perspectives (Schaufeli, 2017). This shift from an individual to a systemic perspective reflects a broader theoretical development in the field.

Prevalence and Impact among Teachers and Pre-service Teachers

Research consistently documents high levels of stress and burnout among PK-12 public school teachers, which can negatively affect their well-being and therefore classroom effectiveness. Contributing factors include job demands, limited job autonomy, student behavior, test-based accountability policies, and lack of support (Dicke et al., 2015; Herman, et al., 2018; Herman, et al., 2020; Ingersoll & Tran, 2023; Ryan, et al., 2017). In addition, female educators experience significantly higher perceived stress than their male counterparts (Savage and Woloshyn, 2022) and socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, age, marital status, and teaching context correlate with stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression among teachers (Agyapong, et al., 2022; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). A recent Gallup poll indicated that K-12 educators experience the highest rate of burnout at 44%, surpassing both social services and law-related professions (Marken & Agrawal, 2022). In 2021, nearly 1 in 4 teachers indicated they were likely to leave their jobs, and they reported more general stress and symptoms of depression than the general population (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Pre-service teachers' (PSTs) mental health plays a key role in professional identity development (Ressler et al., 2022). Mentorship, instruction, field experience, and emotional regulation influence PSTs' professional identity and overall self-efficacy, which in turn affects career longevity (Anderson et al., 2022; Bjorklund et al., 2020; Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Garcia-Lazaro et al., 2022; Izadina, 2015; Nichols et al., 2016). Teaching and promoting self-care, wellbeing, and resilience-building in the educator preparation program (EPP) classroom are increasingly viewed as pathways to addressing teacher burnout.

Self-care and Resilience Interventions in EPPs

As studies have become more focused on understanding and preventing worker burnout and promoting worker wellbeing, “self-care” has emerged as a catch-all concept to address these concerns (Adnan et al., 2022; Harnois & Gabriel, 2000; Lizano, 2015). Self-care refers to regular

activities and practices that reduce stress and maintain and enhance short- and long-term health and well-being (University of Buffalo, n.d.). Several studies have integrated self-care, burnout prevention, resilience building, and wellness practices in the EPP classroom with promising results. These interventions include introducing wellness practices, increasing knowledge, changing perceptions, and improving overall wellbeing and affect (Boke et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2022; Maldonado, 2022; Mansfield et al., 2016; McKay, 2019; Schock et al., 2024). For example, a mandatory 6-hour stress management program improved PST health and well-being (Boke et al., 2023) and integrating a 5-week self-care unit increased PST wellbeing and raised awareness of the importance of prioritizing self-care for teaching (Schock et al., 2024). Self-care assignments via discussion posts and in-class conversations promoted self-reported positive changes for PST attitudes towards their classrooms and students (Maldonado, 2022).

However, findings are mixed. Stewart-Ginsburg, et al. (2024) found that practicing and monitoring self-care skills in the classroom did not improve PST resilience and self-efficacy. In addition, trauma-informed care has become an important strand in preparing PSTs to address vicarious or secondary trauma (Foreman & Bates, 2021; Miller et al., 2022), and integrating trauma-informed education in EPP classrooms has been shown to increase PST knowledge, skills, and attitudes about trauma and improved confidence to appropriately address trauma concerns with students (Brown et al., 2022). The interest and need for this focus is growing. Interviews with students and new teachers highlight the need to include more self-care education and preparation into the classroom (Harpster, 2023; Juarez & Becton, 2024; Ressler et al., 2023). So, while classroom interventions to promote PST knowledge of these factors have been studied, there is little research at this time addressing the EPP faculty perspective, especially as it relates to perceptions of importance, resources, and barriers to integrate self-care and burnout prevention in the classroom.

Institutional and Professional Contexts

Currently, self-care training and education are offered through continuing education and teacher training workshops. This is highly dependent on administration,

funding, and time, as well as the values of a given school district. It is a burden the individual teachers bear, rather than being approached holistically in the PST classroom. While teachers are likely to engage in professional development (PD) related to curriculum and content, they are less likely to engage in PD related to general teaching skills such as classroom management (Yoon & Kim, 2022). However, it is not entirely clear why this is, as those other forms of PD do positively impact classroom outcomes. It is possible that other forms of holistic PD are not routinely offered. Veteran teachers are also less likely to engage in PD, although they request more PD to help them understand their students and become more effective educators (Zhang et al., 2019).

At the national level, professional organizations have begun to address educator mental health and its connection to retention. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) launched its multiyear Educator Health and Wellbeing Campaign in 2021, which provides a centralized Health Hub with tools for managing stress and anxiety, promoting resilience to combat burnout, and discounted access to mental health treatment through Talkspace (AFT, 2023). (AFT, 2023). In a similar vein, the National Education Association (NEA) has created micro credentials focused on social-emotional learning for teachers and advocates for policies and legislation to ensure adequate staffing, salary increases, paid leave, and comprehensive health care coverage (NEA, n.d.). AFT's and NEA's combined efforts work to tackle this growing problem from both individual and systemic levels. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), while not explicitly mandating or recommending mental health or wellbeing training, emphasizes preparing teachers to support holistic student development, which indirectly implies teacher well-being as a prerequisite (CAEP, 2022). These developments represent important but still limited systemic responses to educator burnout.

Gaps and Rationale for the Current Study

Taken together, extant literature demonstrates that teachers experience significant mental health challenges that can lead to burnout and/or abandoning the profession. EPPs have begun to grapple with how to best address this issue and have begun to experiment with self-care curricula to prepare PSTs for these demands. However, the gap

between what currently exists and what is likely needed is vast. In particular, there is little to no research currently addressing EPP faculty perspectives on self-care and burnout prevention—how important they consider these concepts, whether and how they integrate them into their courses, and what barriers they face. This study begins to address that gap.

Methods

This study is phase one of a fixed explanatory sequential mixed methods model. Reported in this manuscript are the findings of a quantitative survey that the researchers will use to inform the next phase of the study (phase 2), during which the researchers will facilitate focus groups with interested participants from this survey. Focus group questions will be created from survey responses to bring depth, breadth, and further explanation of the results. Focus group findings will be reported in a later manuscript. For this first phase, a 19-question electronic survey was administered to assess faculty understanding of the value of burnout prevention, barriers to classroom integration, and personal practices related to self-care and burnout prevention, along with demographic data collection. Thirteen questions collected various demographic information including years of experience in primary or secondary education, years of experience in higher education, and information about disciplinary background, certification or specialization. Two 5-point Likert scale questions were created, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. One question addressed personal practices and beliefs around self-care and burnout prevention, and the other addressed the same for professional and classroom beliefs around self-care and burnout prevention. Three questions were multi-select, asking about personal self-care practices, classroom topics or strategies to address self-care in the classroom, and barriers to teaching PSTs about self-care and burnout prevention.

In addition to the closed-ended survey items, participants were invited to provide brief written comments in open-ended response boxes. These comments were reviewed descriptively to identify recurrent ideas and illustrative examples. The study is an exploratory first phase of a larger mixed-methods project, therefore, the open-ended responses are presented within the results section to

supplement and contextualize the quantitative findings rather than as a stand-alone qualitative analysis.

The survey was open for ten weeks and received a total of 137 responses. Purposive sampling (Palys, 2008) was employed, distributing the survey to the following locations and organizations: personal social media accounts, professional contacts, shared in relevant Facebook groups (i.e., Ph.D. Mamas, Academic Mamas*, AERA Division K, AERA Rural Ed SIG), and shared in newsletters of the AERA Research on Women in Education Special Interest Group, the Association of Teacher Educators, and the Texas Association of Teacher Educators.

Sample

The first question of the survey asked whether respondents were currently employed as teacher educators in an institution of higher learning. If the response was “no”, the survey terminated, thereby assuring that all respondents were teacher educators. After removing blank or incomplete responses, there were 105 total usable responses. Respondents were primarily White women with less than 15 years’ experience in higher education but over 15 years’ experience in the broader education field (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). While the study sample is not racially diverse, it is similar to the overall public school teaching force in the US, which is comprised largely of White women (Ingersoll et al., 2021) Additionally, participants had a background in English language arts, social studies, STEM, and many other disciplines.

Table 1

Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
Black	2	1.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1.0
White	97	92.4
Hispanic/Latino	2	1.9
Other	3	2.9

Note. n = 105

Table 2

How many years of experience do you have working full-time in higher education?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	20	19.0
6-10 years	39	37.1
11-15 years	25	23.8
16-20 years	11	10.5
21+ years	10	9.5

Note. n = 105

Table 3

How many years of experience in the broader education field?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	1	1.0
6-10 years	11	10.5
11-15 years	15	14.3
16-20 years	26	24.8
21+ years	52	49.5

Note. n = 105

Findings and Discussion

To present a clear picture of the findings, the results are organized here into two parts. The first summarizes EPP faculty members' own attitudes and practices related to burnout and self-care. The second part describes their classroom practices and perceived barriers when addressing burnout and self-care with their PSTs. Quantitative survey data are presented first in each section, followed by selected open-ended comments that supplement and contextualize those findings. Both quantitative responses and open-ended responses will inform phase two of the study, during which the researchers will facilitate focus groups with interested participants from this survey. This organization, centering EPP faculty as people first and then as instructors second, reflects research that emphasizes the need for people who work in helping professions to prioritize caring for themselves as a precursor to caring for others (Campoli & Cummings, 2024).

EPP Faculty Members' Own Attitudes and Practices

While 78% of respondents reported practicing prevention strategies to avoid burnout and 71% had a self-care routine (Table 4), the majority (87.5%) indicated that they had had to learn these strategies on their own.

Table 4

Likert Responses – Self-care and burnout (personal)

	Frequency	Percent
<u>I practice prevention strategies to avoid burnout</u>		
Strongly disagree	8	7.6
Somewhat disagree	8	7.6
Neither disagree nor agree	7	6.7
Somewhat agree	54	51.4
Strongly agree	28	26.7
<u>I have a self-care routine</u>		
Strongly disagree	4	3.8
Somewhat disagree	16	15.2
Neither disagree nor agree	10	9.5
Somewhat agree	55	52.4
Strongly agree	19	18.1
<u>I had to learn self-care strategies on my own</u>		
Strongly disagree	2	1.9
Somewhat disagree	6	5.7
Neither agree nor disagree	5	4.8
Somewhat agree	39	37.1
Strongly agree	53	50.5
<u>It is my responsibility to avoid burnout</u>		
Strongly disagree	17	16.2
Somewhat disagree	36	34.3
Neither agree nor disagree	20	19.0
Somewhat agree	26	24.8
Strongly agree	6	5.7

Note. n = 105

Numerous self-care strategies identified included, but are not limited to, the following: prayer, exercise, reading, journaling, doing something creative or artistic, listening to music or podcasts, shopping, overworking, and spending time with friends. Thirty-nine percent (39%) admit to drinking, 67% to social avoidance, 47% to overeating, and 43% to shopping as negative coping skills (see Table 5). Several open-ended comments added nuance, with one faculty member explaining, "I've been sober for 20 years, but used alcohol as a coping strategy for a long time." Another noted that social avoidance, drinking, and shopping can feel restorative rather than destructive. These responses complicate the quantitative picture by showing how self-care practices may include both adaptive and maladaptive strategies and how EPP faculty members' own histories and experiences shape their views on this topic.

Table 5

Y/N Responses – Self-Care Strategies

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Listening to music or podcasts	99	94.3	5	4.8
Doing Something creative or artistic	80	76.2	24	22.9
Exercise	92	87.6	13	12.4
Reading	90	85.7	14	13.3
Spending time with friends	98	93.3	6	5.7
Drinking or binge drinking	41	39.0	62	59.0
Social isolation	69	65.7	34	32.4
Overeating or binge eating	49	46.7	54	51.4
Shopping or binge shopping	44	41.9	58	55.2

Note. N = 105

Respondents also answered items about their own experiences, including whether they had ever received a mental health diagnosis and whether they believe in a higher power and attended a place of worship regularly (Table 6). Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents answered “yes” to the question “Have you ever had a mental health diagnosis?” When asked if they believed in God or a higher power, 69% percent answered yes although only 63% attend a place of worship regularly. The questions regarding religiosity were included due to the growing bodies of research exploring the politicization of socio-emotional learning (Roegman et al., 2022; Tyner, 2021) and linking religiosity and attitudes and practices regarding mental health (Lefevor et al., 2020; Lefevor et al., 2021). Potential connections between spirituality and religiosity will be explored further during the focus groups we plan to conduct in phase two of the study.

Table 6

Y/N Responses – General

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Have you ever had a mental health diagnosis?	59	56.2	44	41.9
Do you believe in God or a higher power?	72	68.6	33	31.4
Do you regularly attend worship?	39	37.1	66	62.9

Note. n = 105

These responses suggest that EPP faculty members’ personal attitudes and experiences shape how they approach the curriculum; the following section presents their reported classroom practices and perceived barriers to integrating self-care and burnout into the curriculum.

EPP Faculty Members’ Classroom Practices and Barriers

Most respondents (85%) strongly agreed that burnout is a serious issue for classroom teachers (see Table 7). Over 91% of respondents indicated that self-care practices should be part of the EPP curriculum. Seventy-six percent (76%) either agreed or strongly agreed that EPP faculty have the responsibility for teaching self-care strategies, while 24% indicated that individuals should oversee their own self-care, not the education program (Table 7). Open-ended comments echoed this tension. For example, one respondent noted that they felt it was “potentially dangerous to put the burden on teachers when the burnout is due to systemic issues that need to be addressed.” Some respondents felt they did not have the expertise or resources to adequately address this topic; for example, one respondent commented that, “I am not good at this myself.” Such statements illustrate the conflict between valuing self-care education and feeling unqualified or unsupported to provide it.

Table 7

Likert Responses – Self-care and burnout 2

	Frequency	Percent
<u>Burnout is a serious issue for classroom teachers</u>		
Strongly disagree	2	1.9
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither disagree nor agree	1	1.0
Somewhat agree	13	12.4
Strongly agree	89	84.8
<u>Preparing preservice teachers to practice self-care should be part of the curriculum</u>		
Strongly disagree	1	1.0
Somewhat disagree	1	1.0
Neither disagree nor agree	7	6.7
Somewhat agree	47	44.8
Strongly agree	49	46.7
<u>It is the responsibility of the educator preparation faculty to teach preservice teachers self-care strategies</u>		
Strongly disagree	2	1.9
Somewhat disagree	9	8.6
Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.3
Somewhat agree	53	50.5
Strongly agree	27	25.7
<u>Self-care is the responsibility of the individual, not the program</u>		
Strongly disagree	22	21.0
Somewhat disagree	46	43.8
Neither agree nor disagree	11	10.5
Somewhat agree	21	20.0
Strongly agree	4	3.8

Note. $n = 105$

The most frequently reported approach to addressing burnout and self-care with pre-service teachers was class discussions (87%), followed by modeling self-care behaviors (78%) and classroom management strategies (72%). More than half incorporated SEL curriculum (54%) or daily check-ins (58%), and about 41% utilized guest speakers. By contrast, only a small minority (12.5%) assigned targeted assignments on self-care and burnout prevention (see Table 8).

Table 8

Y/N Responses – Self-Care in Classrooms

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Class discussions	92	87.6	13	12.4
Assignments addressing burnout	13	12.4	91	86.7
SEL curriculum	57	54.3	47	44.8
Modeling	82	78.1	23	21.9
Guest Speakers Classroom management strategies	43	41.0	61	58.1
Daily check-ins	75	71.4	29	27.6
Journaling	61	58.1	43	41.0
	44	41.9	59	56.2

Note. $N = 105$

Taken together, these findings suggest that EPP faculty tend to favor interactive and experiential strategies (e.g., discussions, modeling, and relational practices) over more formalized or graded coursework when integrating self-care content. In addition, the utilization of guest speakers aligns with several open-ended comments in which faculty expressed hesitancy about teaching wellness strategies when they are not qualified or especially trained to do so. One respondent said, “It’s important but I am concerned about teaching this when I am not a licensed therapist,” which is similar to this response: “I am not well versed in strategies . . .” and “it is difficult to teach something I do not do myself.” In addition, one response emphasized the importance of professional expertise and said it is important to “stay . . . in one’s lane . . . when APs [assistant principals] start counseling or SPED teachers start counseling, stressors can happen unnecessarily.” This comment, while only one, suggests that EPP faculty appreciate clarity of professional roles, and that respecting expertise and professional boundaries is a way to manage stress and promote wellness. These responses suggest that EPP faculty need more professional development and institutional support to confidently integrate wellness into EPP coursework.

Despite widespread acceptance of the importance of teaching self-care and burnout prevention, faculty identified numerous barriers that make it difficult to integrate these topics into their courses. Time (88%) and limited space in the curriculum (80%) were the most frequently cited barriers (Table 9). Additional barriers included lack of knowledge (35%), lack of resources

(49%), administration (27.5%), student buy-in (26%), lack of desire to integrate the topic (13%), and lack of expertise (48%) (see Table 9). Open-ended responses reinforced these findings. Five respondents commented that students may be too young and inexperienced to understand the importance or that teaching about burnout could “bring negativity” or “scare them away from the profession altogether.” Several respondents commented that burnout is a structural or systemic issue and that—while individual coping strategies can be helpful, they are insufficient in addressing broader systemic and environmental factors. One respondent noted, “There is so much we cannot control about their [PSTs] future work environment (workload, supervision, violence in schools, etc.)” A smaller number of respondents (n=3) emphasized the absence of institutional resources to prevent faculty burnout as an additional barrier, with one respondent noting that “[t]eacher time is not protected, but I don’t know how to change that.”

Table 9
Y/N Responses – Barriers to teaching self-care in classrooms

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Time	92	87.6	13	12.4
Lack of knowledge	36	34.3	67	63.8
Administration	28	26.7	74	70.5
Lack of resources	50	47.6	52	49.5
Student buy-in	27	25.7	76	72.4
Limited space in curriculum	82	78.1	21	20.0
Lack of desire to integrate that topic	14	13.3	89	84.8
Lack of expertise	50	47.6	54	51.4

Note. n = 105

Implications

Findings from this study suggest a significant opportunity, indeed, an imperative, for EPPs to more intentionally and systematically integrate wellness, self-care, and burnout prevention into their curricula. Given that the majority of survey respondents agreed that self-care should be taught in educator preparation, yet reported lacking time, resources, and expertise to do so, there is a clear mismatch between perceived importance and institutional capacity. This mismatch has implications for program design, curricula

and assessment, and faculty development. Educator preparation programs must create structures and supports that empower faculty not just to model and discuss wellness strategies, but to embed them into EPP coursework through reflective assignments, socio-emotional learning practices, and trauma-informed approaches. This critical revision process should not be considered one more additional topic to add into an already crowded curriculum; rather, EPP curriculum and coursework need to be reconceptualized to position resilience, self-advocacy, and sustainability as foundational professional competencies. If, however, nothing changes, it is possible that the already historically high rates of burnout in teachers (Marken & Agrawal, 2022; Steiner & Woo, 2021) will continue to rise.

Furthermore, findings from this study suggest a need for systemic change within EPPs themselves. Faculty are already experiencing burnout themselves (APA, 2024); in addition, they feel unqualified and/or unsupported in teaching self-care strategies. Asking them to spearhead this important work without institutional investment in their own wellness risks deepening rather than addressing the problem. Therefore, EPPs must revise curricular content while also fostering the creation and nurturance of organizational cultures that prioritize well-being—for themselves and for their students (Chessman, 2023). Strategies to achieve this could include, but are not limited to, the following: compensating EPP faculty for engaging in additional professional development on trauma-informed pedagogy; taking active steps to ameliorate the inequities in terms of service obligations between men and women faculty (Misra et al., 2011); allocating time for wellness integration in course planning and supporting partnerships with mental health professionals. Current research supports that anything from a self-care discussion board to a full self-care unit are enough to increase the awareness of prioritizing self-care in teaching (Boke et al., 2023; Schock et al., 2024; Maldonado, 2022). Changes do not have to be overly burdensome, but they do need to be thoughtful and deliberate. Ultimately, addressing educator burnout at the preparation stage may be one of the most powerful tools available to reduce teacher attrition and promote longevity in the teaching profession.

Conclusion

This study underscores the urgent need to prioritize self-care and burnout prevention within educator preparation programs, not only as a means of supporting PSTs, but also as a response to the broader mental health crisis affecting faculty and the teaching profession at large. While most faculty in our study acknowledged the importance of teaching wellness strategies, they identified lack of time, resources, and institutional support as barriers to overcome. These findings highlight a critical gap between belief and practice, suggesting that without systemic changes, well-intentioned efforts to integrate wellness into educator preparation programs will remain unsustainable and unachievable. Next steps for this research include phase two--focus groups to add depth and meaning to better understanding faculty barriers and concerns, as well as

what factors make faculty more likely to integrate self-care and burnout prevention in the classroom. For EPPs to effectively and authentically prepare resilient, trauma-informed teachers, they must also invest in the well-being of those doing the preparation. Addressing burnout prevention as a shared responsibility, rather than an individual burden, will be essential in shaping a more sustainable future for the teaching profession.

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