



Compassion Satisfaction as a Protective Factor Among Teachers Working with Children Impacted by Trauma

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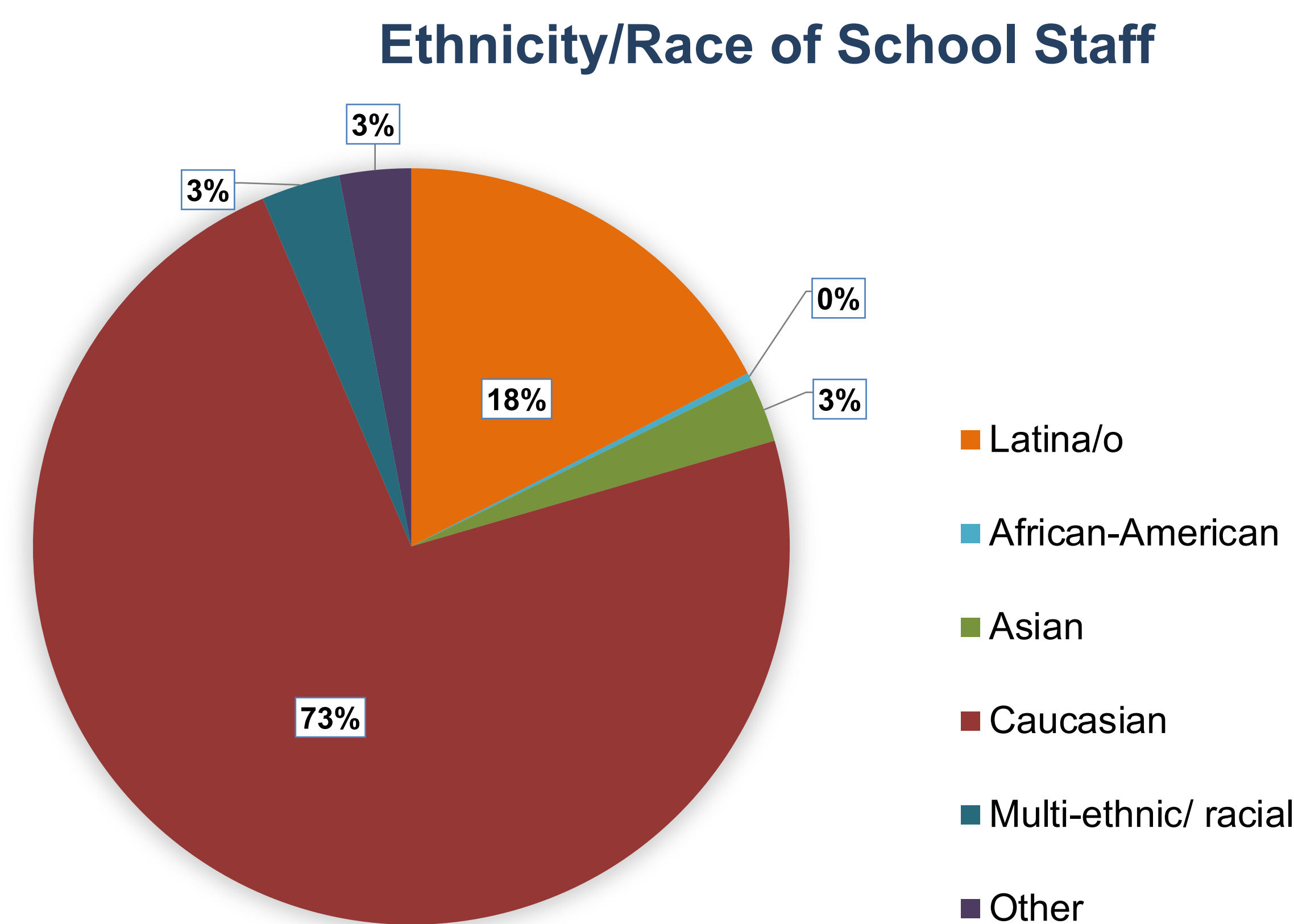
Introduction

- Childhood trauma is pervasive and has been described as a “public health epidemic” (Baker et al., 2015) that is associated with poor physical and mental health as well as negative behavioral and academic outcomes (Baker et al., 2015; Blodgett & Harrington, 2010).
- The implementation of trauma-informed care (TIC) in schools is a promising approach to mitigating the negative consequences associated with childhood trauma.
- TIC may also help address high rates of burnout and secondary traumatic stress among school staff serving children impacted by trauma (Abraham-Cooker, 2012; Caringi et al., 2015).
- Research is lacking on TIC in schools, particularly regarding the potential protective role of staff compassion satisfaction, or positive feelings related to one’s helping profession (Martin-Cuellar et al., 2018).
- In the present study, we explored the relationship between compassion satisfaction and self-efficacy in working with children who have a history of trauma, perceived effectiveness of TIC, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and intent to leave the field of education among school staff at high-needs elementary schools.

Methods

Participants:

327 elementary school staff (teachers, aids, administrative assistants; $M = 41.7$, $SD = 11$, Range 20-75 years; 86% female) in an underserved, economically disadvantaged school district in the Pacific Northwest with a high percentage of Latinx students (40%).



Procedure:

School staff at high-needs elementary schools in a district serving a high percentage of Latinx students of low socioeconomic status (SES) were invited to complete an anonymous online survey, which included the Trauma-Informed Care Survey and ProQOL 5.

Measures:

Trauma-Informed Care Survey. The TIC Survey was developed for the present study and includes 12 Likert-scale items. Seven items related to perceived effectiveness of TIC were summed to create a TIC “buy-in” variable, 5 items related to self-efficacy in working with children who have a history of trauma were summed to create a self-efficacy variable, and 2 items regarding intent to leave the field of education were summed.

Professional Quality of Life Scale-Version 5 (ProQOL 5; Stamm, 2010). The ProQOL 5 is 30-item, Likert-scale self-report measure that assesses negative and positive effects of helping others who experience suffering and trauma. The ProQOL 5 has three subscales: Compassion Satisfaction ($\alpha = .88$), Burnout ($\alpha = .75$), and Secondary Traumatic Stress ($\alpha = .81$).

Results

- Compassion satisfaction was positively and significantly related to self-efficacy in working with children who have a history of trauma and perceived effectiveness of TIC among school staff.
- There was also a significant and negative association between compassion satisfaction and burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and intent to leave the field of education

Table 1. Summary of intercorrelations between study variables.

	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress	Self-Efficacy	Turnover Intent	TIC “Buy-In”
Compassion Satisfaction	-.529**	-.415**	.393**	-.464**	.321**

** $p < 0.01$. * $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

- Staff who reported high levels of compassion satisfaction were more likely to view TIC positively, which suggests bolstering staff’s sense of satisfaction in their work could improve their “buy-in” and adoption of TIC practices.
- Staff with higher compassion satisfaction were also less likely to report burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and intent to leave the field of education.
- Overall, results suggest that compassion satisfaction may be a potent protective factor against poor quality of life among school staff serving children of low SES from underrepresented groups and turnover from education.
- Limitations of the current study include the potential for response and selection bias on measures. Additionally, the Trauma-Informed Care Survey was created for this specific study, and, thus, is not a validated measure. Finally, the present study examined one school district and results may not be reflective of the general population.
- Future research should explore how to best bolster compassion satisfaction among staff as a means of improving retention, quality of life, and commitment to TIC among staff in underserved, high-needs school districts.

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