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Retaining Instructional Staff in Public Schools During and After the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Perspective

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Retaining Instructional Staff in Public Schools During and After the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Perspective

by
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Approval Page

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Abstract

Retaining Instructional Staff in Public Schools During and After the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Perspective. Debbie Brockett, 2023: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: Teacher retention, pandemic, motivation, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, mastery teachers, longevity

This dissertation investigated the critical issue of staff retention during and after the pandemic in public schools. Focusing on instructional staff, the study explored the impact of self-efficacy, relationships within the school setting, and administrators' support on their decision to remain in or leave their positions during these unprecedented times.

To comprehensively explore these factors, the research adopted a mixed methods approach. The quantitative component involved analyzing retention rates of instructional staff in public schools, taking into account variations in self-efficacy perceptions and the influence of supportive measures provided by administrators during and after the pandemic.

The qualitative component was gathered through open-ended questions on a survey, which allowed instructional staff to provide in-depth responses, insights, and personal experiences related to self-efficacy, the quality of relationships with colleagues administrators, and students, and the effectiveness of support received during this transformative period.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, this mixed methods study aimed to offer a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics surrounding staff retention during and after the pandemic. The findings provided valuable insights into how self-efficacy, relationships, and administrator support interact to shape instructional staff’s decisions, leading to the formulation of targeted strategies to enhance self-efficacy perceptions, improve relationships within the school environment, and optimize administrator support. Ultimately these strategies contributed to the betterment of staff retention and the overall resilience and well-being of public schools in the face of ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic originated in Asia and various other global regions. China confirmed its first fatality from COVID-19 on January 11, 2020, and the virus subsequently reached the United States, with its initial case reported on January 22, 2020. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated the situation a "public health emergency of international concern" (Eurosurveillance Editorial Team, 2020). As time progressed, the United States witnessed a significant rise in fatalities due to the disease, prompting the implementation of government-mandated shutdowns. In March 2020, educational institutions nationwide, including ours, closed their physical premises to students. While initially anticipating a brief closure of two to three weeks, the escalating death toll necessitated an extension of the shutdown. Consequently, educators embarked on the transition to remote learning.

The pandemic-induced closures necessitated teachers to modify their instructional approaches. The nature of their role underwent significant changes as they transitioned to online teaching and embraced novel teaching methods (Daniel, 2020). These shifts, coupled with the emotional toll of the nationwide pandemic and limited resources, contributed to elevated levels of stress and burnout (Allen et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Chan et al., 2021; Viner, Russell, Croker, et al., 2020). Consequently, this heightened stress has driven some teachers to exit the profession (Diliberti et al., 2021). Multiple studies conducted during the pandemic also identified an upsurge in teacher depression and anxiety (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Sokal et al., 2021; Walter & Fox, 2021). The adoption of remote learning brought about numerous adjustments for educators, with many needing to acquire technology skills for the first time in their

careers (Love & Marshall, 2022; Pressley & Ha, 2022). Moreover, due to the emotional impact of the pandemic, teachers had to integrate social-emotional strategies into their daily interactions with students. These changes occurred concurrently with many struggling to balance teaching their children at home or caring for younger children, given the closure of all daycares (Cipriano & Brackett, 2020).

As a Regional Superintendent in March, 2020, working in the 5th largest school district, it became apparent that the escalating effects of the pandemic also amplified the emotional strain on all staff members. The personal impact of losing friends, colleagues, and family members to COVID-19, combined with anxiety about personal and family health, exacerbated the stress stemming from instructional changes. This led to numerous individual discussions with staff about their potential departure from the profession.

Prior to the pandemic, public education encountered challenges in staffing schools due to factors such as curriculum demands, accountability measures, student behaviors, and public scrutiny. These challenges intensified during the pandemic, making it even harder to retain and recruit instructional staff (Evans et al., 2021). Teachers, assuming the role of front-line workers during the pandemic, swiftly adapted to address students' academic needs while prioritizing their safety (Sokal, Trudel, Babb, 2020). The pandemic prompted teachers to work longer hours due to COVID-19-related adjustments (Kelly, 2021), and concerns arose about the impact of their educational roles on their well-being, leading to thoughts of leaving the profession (EdWeek, 2020).

In public schools, instructional staff continued to be accountable for teaching state standards. As students transitioned back to in-person learning, teachers also took on the responsibility of addressing students' social-emotional needs and bridging the

achievement gaps that emerged from 19 months of remote and hybrid learning. This additional load, combined with worries about safety, family health, and student well-being, added to the stress faced by teachers. As a school superintendent, I observed these extra stressors and the overwhelming demands of the job contributing to challenges in retaining instructional staff. The ongoing presence of the pandemic and the emergence of new variants further complicate the situation. This, coupled with pre-existing challenging working conditions in education—marked by heightened accountability measures, increasing demands for student achievement, constant mandates, and inadequate school funding—creates an even more challenging environment for retaining staff. Consequently, the study of the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning, along with strategies to mitigate teacher burnout and increase retention, holds significant relevance.

Statement of the Problem

This study focused on the challenge faced by public school districts in retaining instructional staff during the pandemic. According to a survey conducted by Recruiting and Hiring (4/10/2021), out of 1200 surveyed school and district leaders, approximately two-thirds indicated teacher shortages, reaching a historically high level not seen since 2015. Official records obtained from the human resources department (September, 2021) reveal that in a suburban district in Oregon, which enrolls 6,300 students, 23 teachers have resigned since June, 2021. Additionally, 28 instructional assistants who directly support students across the district's ten schools have resigned since April 2021. The significance of addressing instructional staff attrition arises from its adverse impact on student achievement, as highlighted in studies by Diliberti, Schwartz, and Grant (2021) and Trust, Carpenter, Krutka, and Kimmons (2020).

Following the nationwide school closures in the spring of 2020, instructional staff members grappled with the overwhelming demands of teaching, questioning the adequacy of their compensation in relation to the health risks they undertake (Diliberti et al., 2021). In January, 2021, a survey conducted by RAND revealed significant shifts. When compared to their perceptions prior to the pandemic, teachers showed a notable 9% rise in those contemplating leaving their positions. Furthermore, teachers expressed a 6.2% greater inclination than before the pandemic to not continue working until retirement age. An additional 6% indicated their contemplation of exiting the profession within the next five years. These figures raised concern as the departure of teachers coincides with a decline in enrollment in teacher preparatory programs across colleges nationwide (Evans et al., 2021; Sawchuk, 2015).

The Research Problem

In the current educational setting, educational professionals, including instructional staff, teachers, and paraprofessionals, are increasingly opting to leave the education profession for jobs that have reduced workloads and higher financial incentives (Räsänen et al., 2020; Sutcher et al., 2019). Concurrently, teacher preparation programs were witnessing a decline in enrollment, leaving school districts without qualified candidates to fill open positions (Sutcher et al., 2019). This trend was compounded by elevated attrition rates, stemming from both voluntary resignations and retirements, as highlighted in the same study by Sutcher et al. (2019). The implications were clear: retaining the existing educational workforce had become a matter of importance, necessitating a focused effort to address the multifaceted challenges driving staff departures

Background and Justification

A recent EdWeek article (April, 2021) shed light on significant findings derived from a survey encompassing 2,000 district leaders and principals. Notably, a considerable segment, approximately a quarter, grappled with moderate to severe staffing shortages. Among these, 15% reported highly severe shortages, and 25% indicated shortages of a severe nature. Additionally, a comparable proportion of respondents disclosed a severe scarcity of substitute staff. This apprehension transcends national boundaries; the UK also witnessed a surge in teachers contemplating exiting the profession. Their April, 2021 survey unveiled that 43% of interviewed teachers were contemplating departure by the summer of 2025, marking a 16% increase from prior data (Fullard, 2021).

The pattern of teacher turnover was not a new phenomenon, and it has demonstrated consistent growth since the 1980s. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) reported a single-year departure rate of 5.6% among teachers in 1988-1989. In 2017, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond identified a 2% uptick in teachers leaving the profession, culminating at nearly 8% over the preceding decade. Teacher attrition was an ongoing concern prior to the introduction of novel stressors from the pandemic. Therefore, the focal point of this research was to uncover strategies for mitigating attrition in public schools.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

This study critically examined the existing literature pertaining to instructional staff retention, identifying key gaps and limitations that warrant further investigation. The current body of knowledge revealed a partial understanding of the factors that influenced retention dynamics, with particular attention to self-efficacy, relationships, and

administrator support. However, the literature fell short of offering in-depth analyses of these components and their collective impact on staff retention. In the wake of the pandemic, a shortage of research existed on the evolving landscape of staff retention, rendering the existing literature somewhat outdated.

Methodologically, a predominance of single-method approaches impeded a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of retention. This study employed a mixed-method approach and centers on the interaction between self-efficacy, relationships, and administrator support in a mid-sized suburban school district. By addressing these gaps, this research contributed a subtle understanding of the field of instructional staff retention.

Audience

The intended recipients of this study encompassed individuals within the public school sector, spanning both district and state tiers. Within the local echelon, the audience encompassed diverse roles, comprising school board members, school districts, school superintendents, school administrators, and teachers. On a broader scale, the study's purview extended to encompass government personnel operating at both state and federal levels. Given the widespread challenges posed by staffing concerns during the pandemic, the study's implications also resonated on a national scale, impacting schools across the country.

Setting of the Study

This study took place in a suburban school district located in the Pacific Northwest, specifically within the surroundings of wine country just north of Portland. Situated in a town with an approximate population of 35,000, the district was uniquely

characterized by its economic foundation predominately rooted in agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Notably, the role of hospitality, though smaller in scale, assumed a vital position within the local economic fabric.

The chosen study site comprised a school district with an enrollment of approximately 6,300 students and a staff contingent of around 900 individuals. Among these staff members, roughly 780 were engaged in instructional roles. The staff composition was predominantly white/Caucasian, with a representation of less than 6% from different ethnic backgrounds. Conversely, the student body showcased greater diversity, with Hispanic/Latino students accounted for about 36%, white/Caucasian students at 60%, African American/Black students constituted 3%, and students from other ethnicities comprised less than 1%.

Researchers Role

As a researcher and superintendent of the district, a survey was created to collect data on the factors that caused instructional staff to leave or stay in the profession. Participants had the opportunity to contribute data through anonymous electronic responses to facilitate the collection of information for subsequent analysis and reporting of findings. Moreover, a thorough examination of relevant articles was conducted to ascertain whether certain studies offered constructive recruitment and retention strategies tailored for instructional staff.

This concern was being addressed from the perspective of a school superintendent deeply engaged in the recruitment and retention of staff. It was evident that if measures were not taken to alleviate and address teacher burnout, the academic performance of students would have inevitably suffered negative consequences. The researcher had been

serving in a role requiring the hiring of instructional staff for the past 24 years and the hiring of instructional staff was becoming difficult before the pandemic but given the shortage of new teachers entering the profession, and the inadequate number of newly qualified instructional staff available, it was even more critical to prioritize the retention of existing instructional staff in the education setting. For schools and districts to attract and retain their instructional staff, school administrators needed to identify the factors that contributed to the desire to enter and remain in the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the influence of the pandemic on instructional staff within Oregon's public schools. Specifically, the study aimed to assess the workload experienced by instructional staff upon resuming work after the 19-month school closure prompted by the pandemic. Additionally, the study intended to identify the prominent factors contributing to job dissatisfaction. Given that public education heavily relied on instructional staff, a comprehensive grasp of the strategies available to district and school administrators to enhance job satisfaction among these staff members could have potentially led to improved retention rates (Räsänen et al., 2020).

Definition of Terms

Burnout is the exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration (Webster, n.d.).

Extrinsic rewards are usually financial or tangible rewards given to employees, such as pay raises, bonuses, and benefits (Frontiers Media SA, n.d.).

The instructional staff is considered any individual who has responsibility for

teaching children (Law Insider, n.d.).

Intrinsic rewards are internal rewards that employees achieve from completing their tasks or projects successfully. These rewards are mostly psychological and are based on the effort and abilities of a person (Frontiers Media SA, n.d.).

A pandemic is a disease prevalent over a whole country or the world (Google, 2009).

Teacher attrition is the rate at which teachers exit the profession (Steinke & Bryan, 2013).

Teacher retention is the rate at which teachers remain in the profession (Steinke & Bryan, 2013).

Teacher shortages are the inability to adequately staff teacher vacancies by those qualified to teach (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Teacher well-being is a multidimensional construct related to satisfaction and fulfillment at work (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Bricheno et al., 2009; McCallum et al., 2017).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Research conducted both nationally and globally underscores the increasing imperative of retaining teachers. “Across the US, schools are hemorrhaging teachers while fewer college graduates enter the profession” (Yan et al., 2019, para. 4; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Pre-pandemic surveys revealed that teaching ranked among the most stress-inducing professions in the United States (Gallup, 2014). A report by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) suggested a nationwide teacher shortage (Sutcher et al., 2016). This issue became particularly worrisome, given the decline in teacher morale attributed to heightened teacher workload and increased work expectations during and following the pandemic. Education researchers and surveys had identified that early retirements and diminished enrollment in teacher preparation programs, coupled with escalated teacher workload, exacerbated the issue of teacher shortages (Kurtz & Bushweller, 2020; Lardieri, 2020; Perry, 2020; Yan et al., 2019). An April, 2020 survey completed by AACTE found “23% of [EPPs leader] respondents expected a decline in continuing education student enrollment of more than 10%, and 40% expect such a decline among new students”.

According to the second annual Merrimack College Teacher Survey completed in 2022-2023, teachers who were interviewed reported a ten percent increase in job satisfaction during the current school year, however, 35 percent indicated their intention to depart from the teaching profession within a span of two years. These numbers reflected a decrease of 11 percentage points from the previous year but still caused concerns as the country did not have the personnel to replace 35 percent of teachers.

Although promising that 14 percent indicated they were highly likely to leave, which was a decrease from 29 percent compared to the previous year, it was important to note that job satisfaction was still considerably lower than they were a decade ago (Will, M 2023).

The numbers, though decreasing from the highest numbers reported during the pandemic, remained to be an international teacher shortage which was being amplified by the high teacher attrition rates (Sutcher et al., 2019). Before the pandemic, a study conducted in 2016 by the Learning Policy Institute scrutinized the nationwide evidence of teacher shortages, projecting a need for more than 300,000 teachers by 2020. During that period, enrollment in teacher preparation programs had witnessed a decline of up to 35% (Huong, 2020). This identical study also illuminated that teachers entering the profession with lower levels of preparation exhibited departure rates two to three times greater than their well-prepared counterparts. This was especially alarming since research indicated that many first-year teachers entered the classroom after the pandemic, entered without the full training needed, coming at a time when instruction was more challenging due to the learning gaps caused by the closing of schools (Schmidt, 2019; Villar & Strong, 2007).

The Economic Policy Institute (2019) delved into the nationwide concerns surrounding teacher shortages in K-12 education. The discrepancy between the demand for teachers and the available teacher pipeline escalated from 20,000 in 2012-2013 to surpass 110,000 in 2017-2018 (Sutcher et al., 2016). This insufficiency of teacher candidates was evident even before the pandemic unfolded (Sutcher et al., 2019), and as noted by Lieberman (2021), it would have substantially worsened unless district and school administrators formulated strategies to enhance job satisfaction and retain current

teachers. This was especially crucial as the number of individuals entering teacher preparation programs was experiencing a significant decline (Sutcher et al., 2016). Garcia et al. (2022) projected that the pandemic amplified school staffing challenges. While The Center for Public Education (2016) reported a nationwide increase in teacher licenses being issued, it was noteworthy that more than 20 states have observed declines in teacher hiring over the last four years. Additionally, the same study highlighted a consistent decrease in both teacher preparation enrollment and completion from 2010 to 2014.

With teacher preparation program enrollment decreasing, the need to retain teachers currently in the profession became of even higher importance, as student achievement depended on the retention of staff. Studies from the past completed by both Ronfeldt et al. (2013) and, more recently, Sorenson and Ladd (2019) discovered elevated rates of teacher turnover negatively affected student achievement, even for those teachers who did not turnover. Worries had been expressed regarding the rise in teacher attrition and potential shortages of teachers in the future due to the significant stress and burnout experienced by educators during these uncommon periods of the pandemic (Zamaro, 2021)

The other impacts of teacher turnover were the additional expenditures for districts due to the process of hiring staff (Sorenson & Ladd, 2019) and the additional training requirements when new staff was hired. The impact of quality teaching on student outcomes was profound, and schools that struggled to retain their top-notch educators were likely to experience a decline in academic achievement among their students (Gallant & Riley, 2017). Rayo et al. (2022) study implied that the dedication of

teachers was closely connected to the quality of their work, which had a profound impact on student achievement.

In a recent study conducted by Kaufman and Diliberti (2021), an analysis of teacher surveys revealed a substantial surge in teacher workloads since the onset of the pandemic in spring of 2020. The study also demonstrated a decline in teacher morale due to heightened teaching complexities, particularly in schools with elevated poverty rates, where the recruitment of qualified staff had historically proven challenging (Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010). Additionally, Cheptea et al. (2021) explored the relationship between teachers' anxiety and exhaustion, revealed that these factors contributed to occupational burnout, with emotional exhaustion emerged as a significant issue in educational settings. Saks et al. (2021), through their study, substantiated the direct impact of workloads on emotional exhaustion. Persistent research had consistently underscored that the pandemic had exacerbated instructional challenges, resulting in heightened stress among teachers (Love & Marshall, 2022; Pressley, 2021; Pressley, 2022).

Teacher morale could have been influenced by various stressors and elements (Marshall et al., 2022). Marshall et al. (2022) emphasized the necessity of enhancing our comprehension of teacher morale due to studies conducted during the pandemic revealed a connection between morale and the intention to remain within the profession. The Evidence Project (2021) pointed out that some of this discontent might stem from teachers feeling ill-equipped to effectively teach in an evolving instructional landscape. Data cited by The Evidence Project (2021) from Brown University and the City University of New York researchers indicated that more than half of teachers reported a

lack of success in the classroom and expressed frustration over inadequate support and guidance from their districts and administrations. Notably, these stressors were evident even before the pandemic but might have intensified amid the ongoing crisis.

The pandemic stressors made it very difficult to maintain the well-being of the staff in many school districts and settings during and after the pandemic, which may have led to diminished levels of job contentment, supporting the need to identify the factors that led to increased levels of job satisfaction. A study completed by Kraft et al. (2020) indicated that teachers who maintain their job satisfaction linked it to being highly supported, having clear roles and responsibilities, and having time for professional development. Another more recent study completed by Walter and Fox (2021) showed that teachers had less mental strain when they had good working teams, compassionate leaders, and acceptable resources. It was imperative to understand the factors that caused high levels of stress for instructional staff, which led to higher levels of burnout so district leaders could have reduced turnover, increased retention, and built systems and structures that attracted others into the profession.

Theoretical Framework

Many theories have been developed around job satisfaction. Theories of Content and Needs (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Herzberg, 1959, 1968; Maslow, 1943, 1954; Skaalvik & Skaalivik, 2011) all focused on the intrinsic needs of employees. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs looked at the intrinsic needs related to the job, such as success, recognition, taking responsibility, and creating opportunities. Dihham and Scott (2000) and Skaalvik and Skaalivik (2001) focused on intrinsic needs concerning working with students and developing relationships. Herberg's Dual Factory Theory of Satisfaction (1959 and 1968)

indicated that personal needs such as eating and drinking must have matched one's professional satisfaction and an employee's need to feel respected, recognized, and successful.

Process theories elucidated the interplay between values, needs, and expectations that composed motivation and job contentment (Adam, 1965; Bandura, 1997; Kerschen, Armstrong, & Hillman, 2005; Ololube, 2006). Locke (1976) and Hackman and Oldham (1976) both developed theories based on situational models. These theories, both the Range of Affect Theory and the Job Characteristics Model, looked at job attributes pertaining to the inherent aspects and caliber of the job. Glisson and Durick (1998) measured the influence of job contentment based on the working and wage conditions, and employee respect and rewards. Glassman and McAfee (1992) measured the impact of disrespect among colleagues and complex work processes and the effects it had on employee satisfaction and motivation.

All of the different theories, dating back decades, speak about meeting both the professional and the personal needs of staff to increase job motivation and satisfaction. In 2021, amidst the pandemic, Larkin formulated a theory of job embeddedness rooted in the challenge faced by public school districts in retaining instructional staff. This theory primarily focused on investigating the factors contributing to teacher attrition, with a specific analysis of the obstacles to teacher retention amid the pandemic. The concept of job embeddedness encapsulated the "collective embedding forces that anchor an individual in their job, as opposed to the adverse attitudes that motivate them to depart" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 1109). This notion had demonstrated its efficacy as a potent predictor of retention across a wide spectrum of employee categories, that spanned law

enforcement officers, military personnel, IT professionals, hospital staff, retail employees, banking personnel, and even collegiate-level coaches (Mallol, Holtom, & Lee, 2007). The theory of job embeddedness, Table 1, concerning teacher retention posited that teacher embeddedness comprised three essential constituents: links, fit, and assets.

Table 1

Teacher Embeddedness

Fit Organization/Community	Link Organization/Community	Asset Organization/Community
Positive Feedback Values Work Ethic Day-to-Day Norms Safety Culture Standardized Testing Teacher Evaluation Systems	Human Relationships (students, staff, administration, parent, community) Family Religion Social Affiliation Mentors	Wages Healthcare Benefits Workplace space and materials Professional Growth Housing Established Patterns of Living

Both the school organization and the community serve as lenses through which these three components are examined (Larkin, 2021), addressing diverse theories on staff motivation. As outlined by Larkin (2021), fit encapsulates the degree of ease and compatibility an individual experiences within the organization, encompassing the alignment of their objectives with their workplace and community. This encompassed alignment with the organization's daily norms and expectations as well as the broader cultural milieu of the work environment. Links refered to the interpersonal connections an employee forges with colleagues, students, and other stakeholders at the workplace and within the community's social domains. Assets pertained to the tangible and

intangible rewards an employee reaps, encompassed remuneration, resources, and avenues for professional advancement within the workplace. In the community context, this involved housing and overall lifestyle. Larkin's theory underscored the significance of each of these constituents in shaping job satisfaction within public schools.

FIT

Right Fit for the Position

As underscored in multiple theories, staff must have experienced a sense of ease and compatibility within their surroundings to establish a feeling of alignment with the culture of both the school and the community (Larkin, 2021; Maslow, 1943 & 1954; Meyers & Allen, 1997). Scherer et al. (2001) found that within cognitive psychology, the occurrence of positive emotions corresponded to the congruence between our surrounding conditions and our objectives. As Santoro (2019) noted, educators must have perceived a harmonious match between their ideal teaching self and the expectations imposed on them; otherwise, the potential for burnout becomes a concern. Watson and Olson-Buchanan (2016) found that turnover is lowest when employees are fully integrated into their positions. Staff must have believed they were vital to the organization. This was supported by earlier research completed by Kern et al. (2014), where it was found staff feeling a high sense of meaning and accomplishment had higher levels of work satisfaction. When the employees' objectives, values, and strategies were in harmony with those of the organization, the probability of the employee's sustained commitment to the organization greatly increases. Larkin (2021) states the importance of helping the staff create new or temporary aspirations and goals to adjust to the effects of the pandemic on student learning and behaviors, which was supported by research

completed by Madigan and Kim (2021) as they found teachers that believed they were meeting the expectations of their job were more likely to remain in their position.

Walter and Fox (2021) as well as Dunn (2020) both pointed out the clear connection between elevated staff morale and the act of entrusting educators to execute their responsibilities. This encompassed permitting them to make choices that aligned with students' requirements amid the numerous adjustments introduced by the pandemic within the school environment. Trusting instructional staff built their self-efficacy and increased their feelings of fitting into the organization. This included staff feeling safe to ask for help as shown by multiple studies from the past (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flores, 2006; Jenkins et al, 2009). Cheung et al. (2011) reported that teachers must feel free to express their feelings because suppressed emotions led to teachers feeling increased burnout. Kim et al. (2022) showed how the lack of work autonomy and social support drastically declined teachers' mental health and well-being.

Feelings of Self-Efficacy

The connection between teacher efficacy and educators' inclination to persist in the profession had been consistently observed in prior research (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Research findings indicated that the sense of self-efficacy had diminished both during and after the pandemic, attributed to the persistent alterations in requisites and anticipations that had led teachers to have perceived a shortfall in their pedagogical performance (Pressley & Ha, 2022; Walter & Fox, 2021). According to social cognitive theory, a person who did not expect to be successful put forth less effort toward the task and gave up more easily (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Bandura (2006) reported that high self-efficacy was related to high-

performance attainments. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) defined teacher self-efficacy as the individual convictions held by teachers regarding their capacity to make a positive influence on students' educational journeys.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) reported that better self-efficacy increased satisfaction on the job, whereas poor self-efficacy led to higher levels of burnout. This was supported by a more recent study completed by Peng et al. (2022) where they found job autonomy was significant for teachers as it granted them a feeling of control and enabled them to uphold their values. Past studies by both Allinder (1994) and Guskey and Pasaro (1994) showed how teachers with a high perception of self-efficacy worked harder and stayed in the profession longer (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

Instructional staff, following the return to in-person learning, faced more stress and anxiety (Pressley, 2021) as they found that many students returned with higher academic and social needs made it more difficult to reach their previous level of instructional competence. Bandura (1997) discovered that elevated levels of stress and anxiety possessed the capability to impact personal self-efficacy adversely, resulting in a decline in teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1977, 2000, 2002) found in his research, four major influences on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological arousal), and stated that mastery experiences had the most impact, which came from actual teaching accomplishments. Mastery experiences for new and master teachers were being impacted, as teachers struggled to help their students reach success. A past study by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) reported that when teachers had a low sense of self-efficacy they were less likely to strive when tasks become challenging.

Day-to-Day Workload Requirements

Teachers, before the pandemic, faced many daily demands and stressors (McCarthy et al., 2016) but the additional demands caused exasperating the stress and burnout. Bakker and Demeriouti's (2017). Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, stated that work stress was an imbalance between job demands and job resources. When the job demands were high and the resources were low, stress increased leading to symptoms of burnout (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Taris et al., 2017). Volume and equity of the workload, as well as professional autonomy, were controllable by the school (Lam & Yan, 2011) and directly impacted teacher well-being. Several studies had noted the relationship between teacher burnout and increased workloads during COVID-19 (Pressley, 2021a; Răducu & Stănculescu, 2022; Sokal et al., 2020). The support of colleagues and teacher support groups improved the mental health of teachers by helping them understand what they were and were not in control of within their classroom (Stark, Daulat, & King, 2022).

Since the pandemic in 2020, teachers felt their workload had increased. Education Support (2020) surveyed teachers during the pandemic and found that 31% of teachers reported working more than 51 hours/week on average due to increased workloads, and stated it was one of the primary reasons they were burnt out and considering leaving the profession. Burnout was related to high absenteeism, resignations, and retirement (Ingersoll & May 2012) which negatively impacted student achievement (Herman et al., 2018; Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). A more recent study by Saks et al. (2021), found that monitoring teacher workload and job assignments were the most critical factors of emotional exhaustion, which was a symptom of burnout.

Jacobs and Teise (2019) revealed that numerous administrators were engaging in exploitative practices toward teachers, including unfair treatment and burdening them with excessive workloads that surpassed their capacity, in addition to their regular responsibilities. Several research studies had found that teachers who received proper administrative support aren't negatively impacted by workload "from seminal sources" (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003) and were less likely to resign as seen in studies from the past (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Ingersoll, 2011; Podalsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016; Richardson et al., 2008; Urick, 2016).

As teachers returned to in-person teaching following the pandemic, new initiatives were implemented in schools to help with the learning loss and mental wellness of students. These novel initiatives have raised workloads, potentially inducing heightened exhaustion among teachers and contributing to diminished self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bottiani et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Madigan and Kim (2021b) reported that decreased mental wellness lead to teachers leaving the educational field. The loss of teachers can be a financial burden to districts in the past as seen in both past and more recent studies (Barnes et al., 2007; Birkeland & Curtis, 2006; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Milanowski & Odden, 2007) and negatively impacted student achievement (Madigan & Kim, 2021a; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Kim's recent research (2022) demonstrated that the provision of administrative support to instructional staff directly influenced their mental well-being.

Professional Support for Teachers

Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) emphasized the value of teacher efficacy and stated that teacher efficacy depended on clear communication with administrators and colleagues

and principals were the main person to ensure resources and work were coordinated. Lack of administrator support, lack of autonomy, and demanding work conditions increased job-related stress and teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016; Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2017; Pearson and Moomaw, 2005). Before the pandemic, administrative support and workday expectations contributed to teachers' perspectives on staying in the profession (Pressley, 2021b; Pressley and Ha, 2021; Sokal, Trudel, & Babb, 2021). Sokal et al. (2020; 2021) reported that teachers planning to leave the profession contributed their school administrators to their burnout, citing feelings of not feeling valued.

Ford et al. (2019) discovered that teachers were directly influenced by school administrators through their everyday interactions. According to Saeki et al. (2018), supportive principals indirectly contributed to reducing the stress experienced by teachers. Administrative support, as defined by Boyd et al. (2011), referred to the extent to which principals and other school leaders facilitated teachers' work and assisted them in enhancing their teaching practices. Past studies showed that dissatisfaction with poor administrative support was reported by 51% of teachers who changed schools, while 32% of those who left the profession cited it as a contributing factor to their dissatisfaction (Ingersol, 2000). Burk et al. (2013, p. 265) argued that the support provided by school leaders, referred to as "executive support," strongly affected a teacher's decision to stay in the profession. Additionally, Kersaint et al. (2007) discovered that a lack of administrative support influenced teachers' decision to leave the profession.

Kraft et al. (2020) found that clear communication by both the school and the district leaders, as well as providing fair expectations, led to teachers feeling a higher

level of success. As teachers' job demands and expectations had changed since the pandemic, Kraft et al. (2020) found that when administrators provided strong professional development and time for collaboration with colleagues, teachers felt more successful. Teachers' feelings of self-efficacy increased when their administrators observed them and provided them with positive feedback (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

In the current context of heightened stress during the pandemic, it was imperative to ensure instructional staff's support and equipped them with the necessary resources for their effectiveness. The assertion made by Santoro (2011) suggested that when teachers were granted autonomy alongside administrative support, their confidence in their capacity to aid students grows. Marshall et al. (2022) conveyed that educators who benefited from supportive administrators and a conducive, adaptable environment for their professional responsibilities displayed a reduced likelihood of contemplating leaving their roles. Research from the past conducted by Hoy and Wolfolk (1993) demonstrated the necessity for principals to furnish teachers with strategies and constructive feedback to cultivate an atmosphere that nurtures teacher self-efficacy.

Stress Leading to Increased Attrition

Stress from the pandemic itself led to higher levels of burnout for teachers (Allen et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021) but research as far back as Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's (1978) study recognized teaching as an emotional, and stressful profession (Day et al., 2007; Gu & Day 2007). Extended work hours, demanding task loads, and restricted opportunities for adult interaction had been highlighted as factors contributing to educators' departure from the profession, as noted by Ryan (1970). Teacher wellness was linked to teacher

turnover, which was concerning because there was a teacher shortage before the pandemic, and turnover was linked to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Sutcher, & Carver-Thomas, 2017; Kaufman & Diliberti, 2021a; Ryan et al., 2017; Singer, 2021; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Teachers' bandwidth to deal with stress had decreased with the pandemic (Pressley, 2021). Even though the pandemic had impacted teachers' abilities to deal with stress, past studies by Day and Gu (2010) found that organizational and contextual factors played a significant role in helping teachers decreased stress. Kim et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between social support and teachers' mental health and well-being. A study completed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), revealed that 70% of the variability in teacher burnout could be attributed to factors related to the school setting. Additionally, teacher burnout emerged as a significant indicator of the desire to leave the teaching profession. As a result, school administrators must prioritize teacher well-being and job satisfaction by recognizing potential stressors within the school environment.

Numerous investigations conducted throughout the pandemic had consistently demonstrated a rise in teacher anxiety and depression (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Sokal et al., 2021; Walter & Fox, 2021). However, alternate research had indicated that in educational settings where teachers experienced trust and support, the adverse effects of attrition are mitigated (Marshall et al., 2022). The significance of fostering a sense of self-efficacy for bolstering staff morale was well-established, as indicated by the correlation between morale and retention within the profession. This assertion was substantiated by Walter and Fox's research (2021), which underscored the positive impact of empathetic leadership and the creation of conducive working teams on teachers' well-

being. Saks et al. (2021) underscored the leadership's pivotal role in safeguarding employees' well-being, while Pressley's (2022) study in occupational health emphasized that diminished teacher morale and mental health adversely affect teachers' perceived ability to support students and contributed to increased attrition rates.

Teacher attrition negatively impacted student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013) and decreased academic achievement (Klusmann et al., 2021; Madigan & Curran, 2021). Teacher burnout and attrition also had a negative effect on the climate and effectiveness of a school (Ford et al., 2019; Madigan & Kim, 2021a; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). When teachers were facing high levels of burnout, their resources were depleted not allowing them to support the students' learning needs (Klusmann et al., 2021; Madigan & Curran, 2021). The negative impact on students was emphasized because teachers' well-being was essential to a healthy learning environment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Madigan and Kim (2021a) found that when teachers faced burnout it affected their ability to plan for lessons and their students tended to perform worse on exams and tests and show lower cumulative grades. Manla (2022) affirmed that poor school climate negatively affected school performance.

Relationship between Mental Health and Job Satisfaction

The global populace had encountered detrimental impacted on mental health and overall well-being due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Holmes et al., 2020) which had led to the decreased mental wellness of educational staff (Terlizzi & Norris, 2021; deSouza et al., 2012). In January, 2021, teachers experienced more frequent job-related stress than employed adults nationally. Forty percent of employed adults reported experiencing frequent job-related stress, compared with 78 percent of teachers (Steiner, 2022). Green

(2016) reported that the pandemic, along with other traumatic events had led to increased mental health issues for educators.

Approximately thirty percent of the surveyed educators sought counseling services to address their mental health concerns amid the pandemic, as highlighted by Terlizzi and Norris's findings (2021). This was higher than the reports from the Centers for Disease and Prevention, where only 20.3% of all adults sought counseling. A recent investigation (Kim, Oxley, & Asbury, 2022) attributed the deterioration of teachers' mental well-being to augmented job requirements, encompassing heightened workload, multifaceted roles, uncertainty, and a dearth of essential job resources like work autonomy, social support, and coping mechanisms. It was common for professionals in helping professions to encounter compassion fatigue, which arose from intense emotional involvement in challenging situations and was particularly prevalent among professionals advocating for children (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019). The severity of students' academic and social needs put educators at risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress.

Findings by Peng et al. (2022) demonstrated that teacher autonomy impacted mental well-being through its influence on teaching efficacy. The research not only affirmed the intermediary function of teaching efficacy in connecting teacher autonomy and mental well-being but also substantiated the mediating influence of job satisfaction, as supported by the findings (Peng et al., 2022). This study was supported by prior research which indicated that teacher autonomy was a positive predictor of job satisfaction (Ortan et al., 2021; Sokmen & Kilic, 2019). In essence, the cascading mediating effect of teaching efficacy and job satisfaction implied that teachers with

higher levels of autonomy were more like to perceive themselves as effective educators, which contributed to greater job satisfaction and better mental health.

Link

Building Strong Professional Relationships

Establishing robust professional relationships held significance not only in retaining existing educators but also in attracting and recruiting new teachers. Mitchell et al. (2001) discovered that improved alignment results in an employee who cultivated a stronger connection with those within their school and community. Multiple studies from the past had shown that these connections were made with students (Hirschkorn, 2009), colleagues, and administration (Jarzabkowski, 2002; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Dinham and Scott (2002) uncovered that when educators operated within a collaborative setting, their job satisfaction rose, consequently enhancing their dedication to the profession (Moolenaar et al., 2012).

In a study completed by Eğinli (2020), he found that the desire for a teacher to remain in the profession increased when collegial relationships existed among teachers and when their principals were supportive. According to Smith (2009) teachers who received support from their leaders were more likely to demonstrate commitment towards the school's vision, mission, and values. An earlier study by Hongyun et al. (2005) supported this in their study where they found a sense of collective efficacy can link to teachers' work devotion and the satisfaction of collegial relationships. Eğinli (2020) further stated that when teachers were supported for their accomplishments individually and collectively it led to enhanced interest in continuing in the profession. Manla (2022) found that the presence of a collaborative school environment that encouraged teacher

participation in decision-making was closely associated with increased morale, stronger dedication to teaching, and a desire to continue in the profession.

Over nearly a decade, researchers had consistently documented that approximately half of new teachers left the profession within their initial five years of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2017). This trend corresponded to a period during which novice educators had access to student teaching experiences and the chance to collaborate with experienced instructors, essential for honing pedagogical skills and cultivate student relationships, as evidenced by earlier and recent research alike (Boyd et al., 2009; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2020). However, the pandemic disrupted this valuable learning opportunity for many aspiring teachers, thereby placing them in a more tumultuous situation during their initial teaching years. Although the repercussions of this attrition might not have manifested immediately, if unaddressed, they could potentially have led to elevated attrition rates among these educators.

Teaching was a personable profession, where personal relationships contributed to job satisfaction. As reported in a study from the past by Kearn et al. (2014), educators demonstrated a higher likelihood of remaining within the profession when they developed positive relationships and engagement with colleagues. Multiple studies from the past showed that positive interpersonal relationships at work had a positive effect on the well-being of staff and their mental health (Jacobsson et al., 2016; Hobson & Maxwell, 2017).

Relationships with Students and Parents

Relationships with students were a vital element of teachers' well-being. An earlier study by Hargreaves (2000) identified relationships with students as being the

primary reason for a person to enter and stay in the teaching profession. Research from the past indicated that teachers' connection with students was directly related to teachers' well-being (Milatz et al., 2015) and online and hybrid teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic had a direct impact on the ability of teachers to make connections with students. As Magdam and Kim (2021) reported, teachers are becoming more depersonalized due to high levels of exhaustion which affects the relationships between their students, their colleagues, and their parents. As teachers find less enjoyment they withdraw from working (Madigan & Kim, 2021) directly affecting their relationships.

Saks et al. (2021) completed an empirical study and found that the relationships teachers build with students have a positive impact on their perceived teaching ability and their intrinsic motivation. This same study showed that teachers maintaining discipline within their classroom also contributed to the relationship building with students because it builds a positive relationship with students. This was supported by an empirical study completed by Nguyen et al. (2019) where it was found that fewer discipline problems led to lower teacher attrition. An early study by Howard and Johnson (2004) indicated that the most frequent challenge in the school or classroom context was student behavior. A more recent study completed by Dicke et al. (2020) showed that a positive disciplinary climate was positively related to teachers' and principals' satisfaction, and it had a positive impact on student achievement.

Studies from the past by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) and Smith (2003) reported teachers found a sense of belonging and motivation when making significant changes in the lives of students and are reported main sources of intrinsic job satisfaction in teachers. Teachers are motivated by a desire to help others and work with young people, leading to

a positive impact on society. Bandura's early research (1993, 1997) stressed that teachers' own efficacy beliefs could influence how students perceived their ability to achieve, influencing the overall academic achievement school-wide. This was supported by multiple studies from the past (McLean & Connor, 2015; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Zhang & Sapp, 2008), as they showed that teacher wellness and mental health are associated with positive learning environments and both academic and non-academic student outcomes.

In an earlier study, Dan Lorti (1975) found that teachers were more motivated by student success than other assets (e.g. summer vacation; financial compensation). Madigan and Kim's (2021) research shows a correlation between teacher well-being and students' motivation. When teachers are not well emotionally, it negatively impacts students' motivation. The daily challenges of their job (e.g., classroom discipline; class schedule; staff relationships; conflicts with school leadership; criticism from students' parents) can affect a teacher's capacity to effectively educate and support their students, which in turn can led to increased symptoms of burnout and well-being (Iancu et al., 2018; Iriarte-Redín & Erro-Garc´es, 2020; Taris et al., 2017).

Parents of students also impact teachers' feelings of self-efficacy. In an early study, Stipek (2012) found that when parents supported teachers and the learning environment there was a positive impact on their well-being. However, relationships with parents and students can harm teacher well-being when they perceive a conflictual relational climate and a lack of reciprocity in their relationships (Bakker et al., 2000). Tye and O'Brien found in their earlier studies (2002) that the teaching profession is unpleasant when teachers have to deal with hostile parents who don't support them.

These conflicts can arise when students have poor discipline, demonstrate a lack of motivation, and fail to show progress on learning outcomes (Ingersoll, 2000; Macdonald, 1999; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). These factors are not always related to students, as teachers who are burned out are perceived as less emotionally supportive (Shen et al., 2015) and have a decreased social-emotional relationship between the teacher and student (Jensen & Solheim, 2020). Teachers' emotional well-being influences the climate of their classrooms and their students (Keller & Becker, 2020).

Historically, studies have shown that dealing with challenging situations involving parents contributes to mental strain for teachers (Bauer et al., 2007), even undermining the effectiveness of instruction (Fisher & Kettl, 2003). However, teachers recognize the importance of establishing positive relationships between the school and home for optimal academic support for students, thus placing pressure on themselves to foster such relationships with parents (Prakke et al., 2007). Negative relationships with parents emerged as the strongest predictor of teachers feeling disconnected from their work (Ekornes, 2017). A negative relationship between a teacher and parent directly impacted the quality of education provided to students.

Collegial Relationships

Dunn (2020) underscored the significance of establishing robust administrative frameworks alongside fostering interpersonal collaborations to augment both school efficacy and staff morale. Amidst the pandemic, there was a growing urgency to prioritize establishing personal connections for staff members, particularly for instructional staff whose reliance on student and colleague relationships became disrupted during the transition to remote learning. Rebuilding these connections amidst

pandemic safety constraints had presented challenges. Notably, research by Rodriguez et al. (2022) illuminated that the absence of connections with students detrimentally impacted teachers' mental well-being and served as a substantial impediment to their personal and professional growth. Mental health and well-being were enhanced when staff felt connected to colleagues because it fostered a sense of belonging as shown in past studies (Hobson & Maxwell, 2017; Jacobson et al., 2016; Owens, 2016).

In the past, according to Allensworth et al. (2009), positive relationships in the educational context were characterized by trust, collaboration, and open communication among teachers. These relationships provided a comfortable environment for teachers to discuss their challenges and seek advice from their peers. The Merrimack College survey indicated an overwhelming majority of teachers (over 90%) indicated that their primary source of support came from fellow teachers and colleagues. Similarly, research by Burke et al. (2013) highlights the crucial role of collegial support and relationships in teacher attrition. Collegial support referred to the level of support provided by fellow teachers within a school, which was particularly significant for new and beginning teachers. Moreover, positive relationships among colleagues and individuals involved in student learning foster professional collaboration and contribute to a more stable faculty. Consequently, the absence of positive relationships and collegial support increased the likelihood of teachers relocating or leaving their profession.

Organizational Impact

Sokal and Trudel (2020) pointed out that research conducted in Canada highlighted that educators exhibit enhanced coping abilities when they receive concurrent backing from their school environment and their families. Research findings by Skaalvik

and Skaalvik (2017) indicated that the presence of a strong social support system was linked to increasing levels of self-belief and overall job contentment. Teachers who perceived parents as supportive also report greater levels of job satisfaction and professional accomplishment (Marshal et al, 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Additionally, fostering a nurturing climate through the provision of grade/subject level and school level assistance held significance in promoting the welfare of instructional staff, as emphasized by Walter and Fox's findings (2021).

Beginning teachers receiving support from mentors exhibited a reduced propensity to exit the field (Nguyen et al., 2019) and that can be attributed to the development of their skills but also the support they received from their mentor. Marshall et al. (2022) reported that the teachers they surveyed reported respect and trust in teachers around making decisions about their teaching and were more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to leave the profession. Additionally, his report showed that teachers they surveyed reported that respect and trust of teachers around making decisions about their teaching were more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to leave the profession.

Larkin (2021) addressed the need for staff to feel connected to their organization on a professional and personal level. Previous research had indicated that staff members were inclined to exit the profession or transfer from a school setting when they perceived a discordance between their convictions and the prevailing practices within the school environment (Flores, 2006; McCormack & Gore, 2008). Job satisfaction, in the field of education, promoted higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm and protected against burnout and intentions to quit the teaching profession (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Several researchers from the past had shown that mentoring or coaching had a positive impact on

self-efficacy (O'Connor & Korr, 1996; Ross & Bruce, 2007). Teachers who build positive relationships with colleagues within the school were less likely to leave the school or the profession (Siciliano, 2016).

Asset

Compensatory (wages, healthcare, benefits)

In past research, Mackenzie (2007) initially underscored the significance of intrinsic factors such as job security and social service, alongside extrinsic factors encompassing compensation, authority, policies, advancement opportunities, recognition, and power distribution. This was corroborated by recent research from Larkin (2021), who maintained that fostering teacher embeddedness involved supplying personnel with both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of support. In early studies, Ingersoll and Smith (2003) reported that low teaching salaries, limited administrator feedback, and lack of teacher involvement in decision-making all led to overall job dissatisfaction. To provide an accurate perspective on this problem it was necessary to report the past financial background to provide a complete picture of the past and current trends and how this had influenced retention. Before the pandemic, close to 20 percent of teachers indicated that their decision to leave the profession was being driven by financial reasons (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), and 20 percent of teachers who left the profession during the pandemic cited "insufficient pay to merit the risks or stress" (Diliberti, Schwartz, & Grant, 2021).

The pandemic's impact had amplified the necessity for supplying supplementary instructional and emotional aid to students, resulting in instructional staff dedicating more time to their roles (Kaden, 2020; Pressley, 2021). The heightened workload resulting

from the various responsibilities assigned to staff members, stemming from the impact on staffing, was responsible for the additional demands placed on them (Kim et al., 2022). Worth et al. (2018), showed that workload was the primary factor that significantly impacted teachers' decisions to exit the profession and posed the most significant challenge to retaining them. A study completed by Diliberti et al. (2021) indicated that insufficient pay did not merit the risk or stress brought on by the pandemic. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that low teaching salaries were leading to job dissatisfaction.

Extensive research asserted that retaining instructional staff within the classroom necessitated the provision of compensation and resources (Mackenzie, 2007; Pressley et al., 2021; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). A study completed by Maforah (2015) showed that there was a moderate to high positive correlation between job satisfaction and salary, indicated that higher wages led to greater job satisfaction. This was supported by Olsen and Huang (2019) who proclaimed that salaries directly related to job satisfaction. Shaukat et al. (2019) indicated that a teacher was more likely to stay committed if they experienced a high level of job satisfaction, which Nguyen et al. (2019) found to have played an important role in teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching.

Garcia et al. (2022) indicated that teacher salary impacted teacher retention, most notable for mid-career teachers. Another study signified teachers who had lower wages and were thinking about leaving the profession could be persuaded to stay with higher wages (Olsen & Huang, 2019; Landrum, 2018). This, however; was a constant issue in public education as wages were determined by state funding and when increasing salaries, there was more than likely a need to increase class sizes which Loeb et al. (2005) show was a determinant of teacher turnover.

Administrative Support and Trust

Over recent academic years, the prevailing issue highlighted frequently by employee associations had revolved around concerns related to staff burnout. Burnout, an outcome of prolonged work-related stress (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Pressley, 2021), had been shown to correlate with educators leaving their positions (Change, 2009; Madigan & Kim, 2019). The escalated workload, coupled with insufficient support and resources pertaining to curriculum initiatives, along with the pressures stemming from the pandemic, had resulted in chronic stress. This, in turn, can contribute to intensified perceptions of inefficacy (Alves et al., 2021; Maslach et al., 2001). As Chang (2009) indicated, teachers, struggle with lesson preparation and teaching when their emotions were drained. New teachers needed additional support to fully integrate, including comprehensive mentoring and a strong induction program to help build their capacity (Schmidt, 2019).

Teachers, in a 2003 study, indicated that their work environment was essential for job satisfaction (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Johnson and Birkeland (2003) reported that teachers who asked to move to another placement cited their desire to feel like a professional, be respected, and get more guidance from their principal. Furthermore, Cohen (2006) emphasized the impact of school climate on its overall success. Previous research had consistently highlighted the significant influence of school climate on academic performance. Garner's (2008) study summarized the key aspects of school climate, such as high expectations, an orderly environment, positive treatment of students, and high morale, which was strongly correlated with positive school climates. Similarly, Griffith (2002) discovered a positive association between individual and

school-level perceptions of climate, academic achievement, and attendance. The existing body of research on this subject consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between school climate and academic success (Singleton, 2006).

Tye and O'Brien (2002) found that when teachers encountered issues on their job strong administrative support was absent. Other studies (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Tye & O'Brien, 2002) supported that teachers' perception of administrative support significantly affected teacher job satisfaction. Brown and Wynn (2009) reported that principals who created continuous supportive environments worked with teachers who were satisfied with their jobs.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) and Nyugen et al. (2019), found compensation and administrative support to have a significant positive relation to teacher retention. They indicated that administrative support played a significant role in staff retention and Pressley (2021) found a need for district and school administrators to have provided supportive environments to ease instructional staff anxiety. Maslach (1986) indicated that one symptom of chronic work stress that led to teacher burnout was reduced professional efficacy. Both newly appointed and experienced educators were confronting novel teaching hurdles attributed to the pandemic-induced modifications, necessitating enhanced adaptability from school and district administrators, as well as the establishment of pragmatic anticipations concerning student learning (Chan et al., 2021; Walter & Fox, 2021).

Before the pandemic, administrative support and workday expectations contributed to teachers' perspectives on staying in the profession (Pressley, 2021b; Pressley & Ha, 2021; Sokal, Trudel, & Babb, 2021). Sokal et al. (2020, 2021) reported

that teachers planning to leave the profession contributed their school administrators to their burnout, citing feelings of not feeling valued. Literature indicated that administrative support for teachers led to higher levels of performance (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). When staff felt encouraged and the school had a clear vision, staff were much more likely to remain in the school and profession. A study completed by Garcia et al. (2022) found that teachers were more likely to remain in teaching when they influenced their school policies and had more autonomy within their classrooms. This same study supported the need for a work environment where principals and other administrative staff were supportive.

Educators who were furnished with ample resources and effective administrative support to facilitate their provision for students manifest heightened job satisfaction and encounter diminished burnout (Kim et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2019). Findings by Nguyen et al. (2019) indicated teachers who received strong professional development were less likely to leave due to the increased in their efficacy. Ross and Gray (2006) and Ebmeier (2003) both found that teacher efficacy was positively impacted by principal support. This was supported by Brown and Wynn (2009), as their study showed that supportive teacher environments led to a higher level of job satisfaction.

Closing

The challenge of retaining staff in public education had long been a matter of concern, but it’s urgency had heightened in the wake of the pandemic. Retirement rates and departures from the teaching profession had seen a noticeable increase, while the enrollment numbers in teacher preparation programs had witnessed a decline. Extensive

research had been conducted to identify the various factors influencing the attrition of instructional staff in public schools. The evidence from numerous research articles showcases a decline in the number of individuals pursuing teaching as a profession, coupled with a surge in those contemplating leaving the field. In light of these circumstances, it was crucial to identify the factors that significantly impacted the decision of staff members to remain in the education setting.

Notably, a research gap existed concerning the factors contributing to the substantial increase in staff departures and considerations of leaving the profession since the onset of the pandemic. Therefore, there was a pressing need for this research study to determine the key elements that influenced staff retention. By understanding these factors, schools ensured they maintained a well-staffed environment with highly qualified teachers and supportive instructional staff. Failing to address this issue undoubtedly affected student achievement both in the present and in the future. It was imperative to identify and implement strategies that instructional staff found most impactful in their decision to remain dedicated to the profession.

Research Questions

The purpose of the qualitative dissertation was to understand what organizational factors had the largest impact on the retention of instructional staff, with a focus on fit, link, and assets. Three questions were established to guide this study and were as follows:

1. Quantitative - To what extent did instructional staff members perceive their feelings of self-efficacy, as measured by a quantitative survey?
2. Qualitative - How might these perceptions have related to their decisions to stay or leave their positions in public schools?

3. Qualitative - In what ways did relationships within the school setting influence the instructional staff in public schools?
4. Qualitative - How did instructional staff members perceive these relationships and their impact?
5. Qualitative - What were the most significant supports provided by the administrators that impacted the retention of instruction staff in public schools?
6. Mixed Method - How did these perceptions align with quantitative measures of staff satisfaction and retention?
7. Mixed Method - How did instruction staff members perceive the effectiveness of these supports, and to what extent did these perceptions align with the quantitative measures of staff retention and job satisfaction?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study was anchored in a mid-sized suburban school district situated in Oregon, comprising six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Employing a purposive sampling strategy, participants who were employed as teachers or instructional assistants since the 2019-2020 school year and voluntarily chose to participate, were selected. The study used a mixed-method approach, intertwining qualitative and quantitative data to gain a holistic understanding of the complexities of staff retention, and offer profound insights into the dynamics shaping the educational workforce and informing strategies for enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

Participants

Quantitative

Participants for this study were selected from a mid-sized suburban school district in the state of Oregon made up of six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants who met the following criteria: (1) employed as a teacher or educational assistant, (2) having been in one of the two positions since the 2019-2020 school year, and (3) choose to participate in the study. Selected participants who met the criteria listed above formed a sample of 427 instructional staff, 310 licensed staff (teachers; counselors; school psychologists; speech and language pathologists), and 117 classified (education assistants) who were representative of all nine schools throughout the school district.

Qualitative

The qualitative data complements the quantitative findings by providing in-depth insights into staff members' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the identified supports and their impact on staff retention. The two sets of data were integrated during the analysis phase. By using the same participants for both the quantitative and qualitative components, this mixed methods approach enabled a deeper understanding of the research questions.

Instruments

The instrument used for the study consisted of a survey (Appendix A) that was developed by the researcher in Survey Monkey. The survey included quantitative and qualitative questions that gathered the instructional staff's perceptions around fit, link, and asset factors. It had Likert scale questions that ranged from one to four, as well as open-ended questions to gain in-depth insights into their experiences, perceptions, and reasons for either remaining or considering departing the school, district, or profession.

The survey was administered to staff members who fell within the sample and included demographic information around years of teaching, grade level of job assignment (secondary or elementary), and job assignment (classified or licensed). Due to the role of the researcher, as the superintendent in the district, a message was included with the survey that clearly stated that the survey was optional and there was no responsibility of those receiving the survey to respond. Furthermore, it was clearly stated that if they did choose to respond their responses would be anonymous, only analyzed in whole group analysis with no personally identifying information being

retrieved. To maintain the anonymity of the survey, it was distributed to all 427 staff that fell into the sample, and 110 responses were received.

Procedures

Research Design

The mixed method research design for this study was concurrent triangulation because both sets of data were collected and analyzed simultaneously and the results were compared and integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of each research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). By using qualitative and quantitative questions, the researcher had a more comprehensive exploration of the factors that influence the retention of instructional staff capturing both subjective experiences and numerical data. The quantitative responses were analyzed on a Likert scale rating from one to four and the quantitative responses measured their feelings about post-pandemic job satisfaction.

The Likert scale survey questions provided quantitative data, as the respondents rated their agreement or disagreement with a statement using a 4-point scale indicating the importance of each factor being measured from least important, somewhat important, important, and most important. The open-ended questions provided qualitative data that allowed the respondents the option to express their thoughts and experiences and provide more detailed explanations as to what impacts their job satisfaction the most.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection

The survey was administered to all participants and included a combination of closed-ended questions, designed to measure factors such as link, fit, and asset using quantitative scales, as well as open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights into

participants' perceptions and experiences related to these factors. The survey was developed in Survey Monkey and administered online.

After refining the survey, the researcher distributed the survey electronically to the target participants. Participants were informed that the completion of the survey, including the open-ended questions, was voluntary and they would remain anonymous. Clear instructions on how to complete the entire survey, including the open-ended questions were provided, and a two-week deadline for response was set.

After gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, a follow-up email was sent to thank the participants and inform them that the survey had been closed. The data, including the qualitative responses, were securely stored and retained for a period of three years, adhering to ethical guidelines for data management and confidentiality. At the end of the retention period, all data and related materials will be destroyed, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' information

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data analysis involved various statistical methods to address the research questions. The first step was to measure the levels of self-efficacy, staff satisfaction, and staff retention using descriptive statistics. This included calculating the means, standard deviations, and frequencies. To explore the relationships between key variables, the research employed the Pearson correlation coefficient. This correlations analysis examined the associations between self-efficacy scores and staff retention intentions, and between staff satisfaction and retention scores. Additionally, the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of administrator support and staff retention and job satisfaction was assessed using the same correlation coefficient.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis focused on the open-ended responses gathered from the participants. The primary aim was to identify common themes that emerged from the data. These themes shed light on specific aspects of the research questions. To begin, the analysis delved into the open-ended responses to gain a deeper understanding of self-efficacy perceptions among instructional staff members. By identifying recurring themes, the study sought to uncover how these perceptions may affect staff decisions to either remain in their positions or consider leaving. The analysis then explored the responses related to relationships within the school setting. The goal was to identify themes that highlighted the influence of these relationships on instructional staff members. This examination provided valuable insights into how these relationships are perceived and their potential impact on staff satisfaction and retention. The last analysis concentrated on responses about the significant support provided by administrators. By identifying themes in this area, the study aimed to ascertain the impact of these supports on staff retention. This analysis will help understand the perceived effectiveness of the provided supports and their alignment with quantitative measures of staff retention and job satisfaction.

Overall, through a thorough qualitative data analysis, the researcher aimed to reveal in-depth perspectives and experiences of instructional staff members, offering a comprehensive view of their perceptions, experiences, and the factors influencing their decisions to stay or leave their positions in public schools. The analysis of open-ended responses provided rich and nuanced insights into the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the instructional staff members. By capturing their voices, there was a more holistic

understanding of the complex dynamics in the public school system, potentially informing strategies to improve staff retention and job satisfaction.

Data Integration

The research employed was a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data gathered through a survey on staff retention and qualitative data gathered through open-ended surveys with instructional staff. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, median mode, standard deviation, and percentages, were calculated to provide an overview of the staff retention rates within the mid-sized suburban school district during and after the pandemic. A comparative analysis was conducted to compare the staff retention rates before and during the pandemic period. The analysis was aimed at identifying any significant changes in retention patterns during the challenging times of the pandemic. Multiple regression analysis data was used to assess the predictive relationship between various factors, including self-efficacy, relationships, and administrator support, and their impact on staff retention rates during and after the pandemic.

The qualitative data collected through open-ended survey responses were subjected to rigorous thematic analysis to extract meaningful insights. An inductive approach to coding was adopted, where initial codes were generated directly from the data, and the codes were grouped into categories based on shared themes and patterns that were developed by identifying overarching patterns and connections that emerge across the data.

The integration of the qualitative and quantitative data involved a concurrent triangulation design. The findings from quantitative and qualitative findings were analyzed independently, and the results were compared and synthesized to draw

comprehensive conclusions. Where possible, the qualitative themes were used to contextualize and enrich the quantitative results, providing deeper insights into the relationships between self-efficacy, relationships, administrators' support, and instructional staff retention during and after the pandemic.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The overarching goal of this mixed-methods study was to delve into the organizational factors that predominantly influence the retention of instructional staff. In doing so, it draws attention to concepts of fit, link, and assets. To methodically address the study's purpose, a series of questions, both qualitative and quantitative, were posed.

This chapter provides a systematic presentation and interpretation of the findings derived from six guiding questions. The study examines how teachers' perceptions potentially contribute to their decisions to either remain in or depart from their positions within public schools; the role of relationships within the school environment and their influence on instructional staff; how instructional staff members discern these relationships and their subsequent ramifications; the alignment of these perceptions with quantitative metrics of staff contentment and retention; identifying the cardinal supports provided by administrators that hold significance in retaining instructional staff in public schools; and it investigated the perceived efficacy of these administrative supports, juxtaposing these perceptions against quantitative indices of staff retention and job satisfaction. The findings of these investigations will be presented in the subsequent sections, offering insights that may be pivotal for understanding and enhancing instructional staff retention.

Demographic Characteristics

The researcher used an online survey when collecting data for the study. The first section of the survey collected demographic information from 110 participants. This

information can be found in the tables below and is important for a deeper understanding of the participants.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the years of teaching experience among a group of educators and shows the number (N) and percentage (%) of teachers falling into different experience categories.

Table 2

Years of Teaching

Years	N	%
0-5	8	7.3%
6-10	22	20.0%
11-20	37	33.6%
20 and above	43	39.1%

The data in Table 2 shows the majority of teachers, 39.1%, have 20 or more years of teaching experience, while 33.6% have between 11 to 20 years of experience. Additionally, 20.0% have 6 to 10 years of experience, and 7.3% have been teaching for 5 years or less.

The data in Table 3 illustrates the distribution of job assignments by grade level among a group of educators and indicates the number (N) and percentage (%) of individuals in each category.

Table 3

Grade Level of Job Assignment

Grade Level	N	%
Elementary	54	49.1%
Middle	31	28.2%
High	25	22.7%

Notably, 49.1% of educators are assigned to elementary schools, 28.2% work in middle schools, and 22.7% are in high schools, reflecting the diverse grade-level distribution within this group of professionals.

Table 4 provides an overview of the job roles within a certain educational organization, categorizing employees into two main groups: "Classified" and "Licensed." The data indicates the number (N) and percentage (%) of individuals in each category.

Table 4

Job Assignment

Job Roles	N	%
Classified	29	26.4%
Licensed	81	73.6%

Specifically, 73.6% of the employees hold licensed positions, while 26.4% are classified employees. This table illustrates the staffing composition, with the majority being licensed professionals and a smaller portion categorized as classified staff within the organization.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The second section of the survey collected quantitative data from participants. The questions were written on a Likert scale. There were 110 participants who answered the questions consistently throughout this section.

Research Question 1

To what extent do instructional staff members perceive their feelings of self-efficacy, as measured by a quantitative survey?

Table 5 presents the distribution of self-efficacy ratings among educators across five key work-related categories. Each category reflects a different aspect of professional

self-perception, including meeting job expectations, influencing student success, being part of a team, receiving training for new initiatives, and being trusted to make decisions.

Table 5

Self-Efficacy Frequencies

	Meet the expectations of the job and be successful	Having an impact on student success	An integral part of the team	Receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements	Respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work
N	110	110	110	110	110
Mean	3.4636	3.6818	3.3364	3.2636	3.8636
Median	3.0000	4.0000	3.0000	3.0000	4.0000
Mode	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
Std. Deviation	.53634	.50560	.68103	.71263	.34474

The table reports the number of responses (N), mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for each category. All categories have the same number of responses (N = 110). The mean scores range from 3.26 to 3.86 on a scale (presumably 1 to 5, although the scale is not specified), indicating a generally positive self-efficacy perception with the highest average rating in the domain of being respected and trusted to make decisions. Median and mode values complement the mean, highlighting the most typical responses, with medians of 3.00 and modes of 3.00 or 4.00, suggesting that the most common ratings are around the central tendency. The standard deviation values indicate moderate variability in perceptions within these domains, the highest being in the category related to receiving training for new initiatives.

Table 6 delineates educators' self-efficacy perceptions across various domains of support. The table summarizes responses from 110 instructional staff members. The table details the frequency and percentage of responses across four levels of perceived

importance (Least Important, Somewhat Important, Important, Most Important) for five support categories.

Table 6

Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

Support Category	Response Level	N	%
Feeling like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful	2 – Somewhat Important	2	1.8%
	3 – Important	55	50.0%
	4 – Most Important	53	48.2%
Feeling like you are having an impact on student success	2 – Somewhat Important	2	1.8%
	3 – Important	31	28.2%
	4 – Most Important	77	70%
Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization	2 – Somewhat Important	13	11.8%
	3 – Important	47	42.7%
	4 – Most Important	50	45.5%
Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements	1 – Least Important	2	1.8%
	2 – Somewhat Important	11	10.0%
	3 – Important	53	48.2%
	4 – Most Important	44	40.0%
Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work	3 – Important	15	13.6%
	4 – Most Important	95	86.4%

The data reveal that a substantial majority of educators place a high value on "Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work," with 86.4% indicating it as the most important. "Feeling like you are having an impact on student success" also emerges as a pivotal element, with 70% of respondents deeming it most important. In the category of meeting job expectations, half of the respondents (50%) rate it as important, while a comparable number (48.2%) consider it most important. For

impacting student success, the largest group (70%) identifies this as the most important. When it comes to feeling integrated within the organization, 42.7% find it important, and 45.5% rate it as most important. Regarding receiving training for new initiatives, a plurality (48.2%) deems it important, and 40% as most important. Lastly, in the domain of being respected and trusted to make decisions, a commanding majority (86.4%) views this as most important, underscoring the value placed on autonomy and respect within the educational context. These figures highlight the critical role that self-efficacy and trust play in educators' job satisfaction and effectiveness.

Table 7 presents the analysis of educators' perceptions regarding their relationships in the educational setting, based on a sample of 110 instructional staff. The table enumerates the responses related to five distinct aspects of educational relationships: collegial relationships with colleagues, connections with students, behavioral expectations and disciplinary climate for students, support from parents, and receipt of mentoring or support from colleagues.

Table 7

Relationship Frequencies

	Building collegial relationships with colleagues	Feeling connected to students	Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate	Feeling supported by parents	Receive mentoring or direct support from a colleague
N	110	110	110	110	110
Mean	3.1818	3.6000	3.6727	3.0091	2.7364
Median	3.0000	4.0000	4.0000	3.0000	3.0000
Mode	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
SD	.66611	.57788	.49044	.74803	.83146

The data illustrates the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for each of the relationship aspects. The highest mean score, which represents the average rating, is

for "Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate" at 3.6727, closely followed by "Feeling connected to students" at 3.6000. This suggests that, on average, educators feel most favorably about these aspects.

The median values, all at 3.0000 or 4.0000, indicate the middle response when all ratings are sorted in order. The mode values, with the most frequency at either 3.00 or 4.00, suggest the most common perception among the respondents is one of positive agreement. The standard deviation (SD) provides insight into the spread of responses around the mean. The lowest variability is seen in "Strong behavioral expectations" (SD = .49044), indicating consensus among responses in this category. In contrast, "Feeling supported by parents" exhibits the greatest variability (SD = .74803), indicating a wider range of feelings about this aspect among educators. These metrics collectively contribute to an in-depth understanding of the current state of relational dynamics perceived by instructional staff, identifying areas where educators feel well-supported and areas where there may be room for development to strengthen the educational environment.

Table 8 provides an examination of the perceptions of instructional staff on the importance of various relationships within an educational environment. The dataset, derived from a cohort of 110 instructional staff members, categorizes responses into four levels of importance, ranging from "Least Important" to "Most Important."

The findings reveal that a majority of the educators rate "Feeling connected to the students" (70%) and "Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate" (68.2%) as "Most Important." These high percentages underscore the critical value that educators place on student connections and the establishment of a structured and positive learning environment. While "Building collegial relationships

with colleagues" is considered "Most Important" by 31.8% of respondents, it is notable that over half (55.5%) view it as "Important," highlighting the significance of collegial support in their professional milieu.

Table 8

Relationship Impact on Instructional Staff

Support Category	Response Level	N	%
Building collegial relationships with colleagues	1 – Least Important	1	0.9%
	2 – Somewhat Important	13	11.8%
	3 – Important	61	55.5%
	4 – Most Important	35	31.8%
Feeling connected to the students	2 – Somewhat Important	2	1.8%
	3 – Important	31	28.2%
	4 – Most Important	77	70%
Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate	2 – Somewhat Important	1	0.9%
	3 – Important	34	30.9%
	4 – Most Important	75	68.2%
Feeling supported by parents.	1 – Least Important	2	1.8%
	2 – Somewhat Important	24	21.8%
	3 – Important	55	50.0%
	4 – Most Important	29	26.4%
Receive mentoring/direct support from a colleague	1 – Least Important	9	8.2%
	2 – Somewhat Important	24	21.8%
	3 – Important	54	49.1%
	4 – Most Important	18	16.4%

Similarly, "Feeling supported by parents" is valued, with 26.4% considering it "Most Important" and exactly half (50.0%) labeling it as "Important," which illustrates a recognition of parental support in the educational process. The category "Receiving

mentoring/direct support from a colleague" exhibits a more varied response, with 16.4% deeming it "Most Important" and a notable 8.2% viewing it as "Least Important." This suggests a divergence in the perceived value of peer mentoring among the instructional staff, with a substantial proportion appreciating it, yet a smaller segment assigns it less importance.

Table 9 presents an analysis of the perceptions of instructional staff regarding administrative support across seven categories. The data is based on a sample size of 110 instructional staff members.

Table 9

Administrator Support Frequencies

	Pay and/or compensation	Provided with the necessary resources	Provided enough time to complete the job	Receive necessary support from the principal or supervisor	Feeling safe to ask for help or provide input	Receive clear communication from the school and/or district	Receive effective feedback from the administration
N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Mean	3.5909	3.5636	3.6909	3.5364	3.4909	3.4545	3.0455
Median	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	3.0000	3.0000
Mode	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
SD	.53634	.55068	.52015	.61595	.58648	.55250	.75888

The results show that "Provided enough time to complete the job" has the highest average perception of support with a mean score of 3.6909, followed closely by "Pay and/or compensation" and "Provided with the necessary resources." The median scores in these categories are consistently high (4.00), indicating that the majority of staff perceive a strong level of support in these areas. Similarly, the mode for each category, except for "Receive clear communication by the school and/or district" and "Receive effective feedback from the administration," is 4.00, signifying that the most common response is one of high support.

However, variability in perceptions is evident as indicated by the standard deviation (SD) values. Lower SD values in "Receive clear communication" (SD = .55250) and "Receive effective feedback" (SD = .75888) suggest that opinions on these aspects of support are more consistent among staff. In contrast, categories like "Provided with the necessary resources" and "Feeling safe to ask for help or provide input" have slightly higher SD values, indicating a greater range of opinions on these aspects of administrative support.

Table 10

Supports that Impact Instructional Staff Retention

Support Category	Response Level	N	%
Pay and/or Compensation	2 – Somewhat Important	4	36%
	3 – Important	37	33.6%
	4 – Most Important	69	62.7%
Provided with Necessary Resources	2 – Somewhat Important	3	2.7%
	3 – Important	42	38.2%
	4 – Most Important	65	59.1%
Provided Enough Time to Complete the Job	1 – Least Important	1	0.9%
	3 – Important	31	28.2%
	4 – Most Important	78	70.9%
Receive Support from the Principal/Supervisor	2 – Somewhat Important	7	6.4%
	3 – Important	37	33.6%
	4 – Most Important	66	60.0%
Receive Effective Feedback from the Administration	1 – Least Important	4	3.6%
	2 – Somewhat Important	17	15.5%
	3 – Important	59	53.6%
	4 – Most Important	30	27.3%

Table 10 elucidates the perceived importance of various support factors in influencing instructional staff retention. Analysis of the responses from 110 instructional staff members reveals the priority placed on different supports.

Notably, "Pay and/or Compensation" is a highly significant factor for instructional staff retention, with 62.7% rating it as the most important. "Provided with Necessary Resources" and "Provided Enough Time to Complete the Job" also play vital roles, with 59.1% and 70.9%, respectively, regarding them as most important. Additionally, "Receiving Support from the Principal/Supervisor" and "Receiving Effective Feedback from the Administration" are perceived as important, with a majority of respondents in each category recognizing their significance.

The third section explores the relationships between key variables and the researcher employed the Pearson correlation coefficient. This correlations analysis examined the associations between self-efficacy scores and staff retention intentions, and between staff satisfaction and retention scores. Additionally, the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of administrator support and staff retention and job satisfaction was assessed using the same correlation coefficient.

The results of the Pearson Correlation analysis related to factors of job satisfaction and performance can be seen in a detailed correlation matrix in Table 11 (Appendix B). The findings indicate that there are two pairs of factors that have a correlation above 0.5, “Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization” displayed a high positive correlation with “Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements” (see Table 11, Appendix B); and “Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate” showed a strong positive

relationship with “Feeling supported by parents.” There was a high negative correlation between “Building collegial relationships with colleagues” and “Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives for job requirements.” Correlation values marked with an asterisk (*) in Table 11 (Appendix B) are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Those marked with two asterisk (**) signify statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Several factors presented in Table 11 (Appendix B) have correlations near zero, indicating no substantial relationships between them.

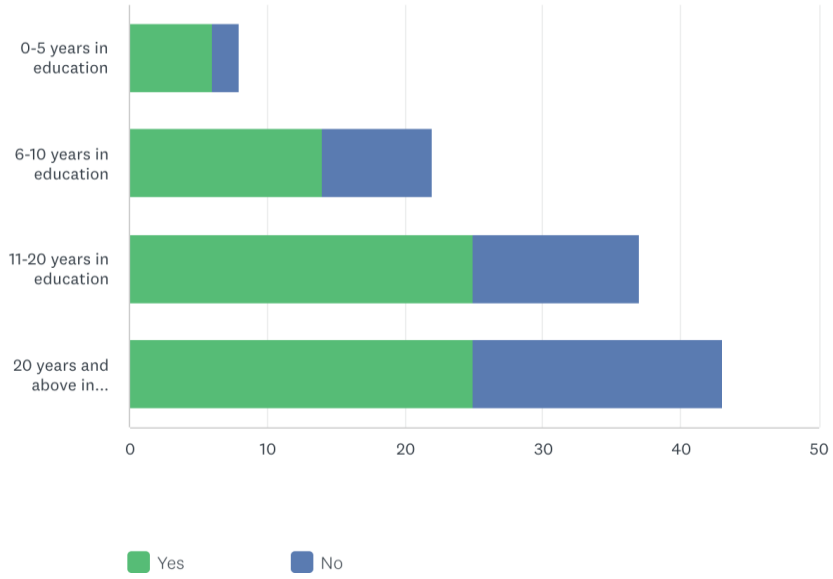
The results from the Pearson Correlation analysis related to various factors influencing job satisfaction and performance are discussed in this section. Detailed coefficients can be referenced in Table 12 located in Appendix C. The findings show that there were high positive correlations, above 0.5 in three pairs of factors. They included: "Provided enough time to complete the requirements of your job" displayed a robust correlation with "Provided with the necessary resources to do your job" (see Table 12, Appendix C); "Receive necessary support from your principal and/or direct supervisor" showed a marked correlation with "Feeling safe to ask for help or to provide input", and "Receive clear communication by the school and/or district" was significantly associated with "Receive feedback from your administration."

There was one pair of factors with a notable negative correlation: "Pay and/or compensation commensurate with job responsibilities" was inversely correlated with "Provided with the necessary resources to do your job." Correlation values that are marked with an asterisk (*) in Table 12 (Appendix C) signify statistical significance at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Those with two asterisks (**) indicate statistical significance at the 0.05 level. A notable number of factors listed in Table 12 (Appendix C) exhibit

correlations near zero, which suggests a lack of significant relationships or neutrality in correlations.

Figure

Professionals Considering Leaving the Profession



SurveyMonkey. (2022). https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6PF2TJY

The fourth section analyzes the qualitative data to identify common themes that emerged from the data. These themes shed light on specific aspects of the research questions. The analysis delved into the open-ended responses to gain a deeper understanding of self-efficacy perceptions among instructional staff members.

Figure 1 illustrates the responses to a question regarding whether educational professionals have considered leaving the profession since returning from pandemic closures. The graph displays the number of respondents who answered "yes" or "no" to this question. It provides a visual representation of the extent to which pandemic-related challenges may have influenced educators' thoughts about staying or leaving the educational field, offering insights into the potential impact of the pandemic on

workforce retention in the education sector.

Research Question 2

How might these perceptions relate to their decisions to stay or leave their positions in public schools?

Table 13 presents an analysis of the factors prompting instructional staff to consider exiting the education profession. Participants, totaling 110, were asked to select the top three reasons that might have led them to leave. The table lists the reasons in order of those chosen most often to least often.

Table 13

Top Three Reasons Instructional Staff Considered Leaving the Education Profession

Reason for Considering Leaving the Profession	N	%
Excessive job expectations, make it difficult to be successful	44	63.77%
Lack of monetary compensation (pay and/or benefits)	37	53.62%
Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations	34	49.28%
Lack of time to complete the requirements of your job	24	24.78%
Don’t feel respected/trusted to make decisions about teaching/work	19	27.54%
Lack of support by parents	9	13.04%
Lack of clear communication by the school and/or district	8	11.59%
Lack of support from your principal and/or direct supervisor	7	10.14%
Don’t feel like an integral part of the organization	6	8.70%
Not feeling you are having an impact on student success	5	7.25%
Haven’t been provided with the necessary resources to do the job	5	7.25%
Haven’t received proper training for new initiatives/job requirements	2	2.90%
Lack of mentoring/direct support by a colleague or administration	2	2.90%
Lack of effective feedback from the administration	2	2.90%
Lack of collegial relationships	1	1.45%
Don’t feel connected to students	1	1.45%
Don’t feel safe to ask for help or provide input	1	1.45%

The data reveals that the most pressing reason, noted by 63.77% of respondents, is "Excessive job expectations, making it difficult to be successful." Close behind, "Lack of monetary compensation (pay and/or benefits)" was indicated by 53.62% as a significant

concern. "Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations" also emerged as a critical issue for 49.28% of the participants. Lesser yet notable concerns include "Lack of time to complete job requirements" and "Not feeling respected/trusted to make decisions," highlighting the importance of sufficient planning time and professional autonomy.

Table 14 delineates the factors that contribute to educators' considerations of leaving the profession. It is segmented by their years of experience. The table shows the top three reasons chosen by each segment.

Table 14

Factors Influencing the Thought of Leaving by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Factors	%
0-5 years	Lack of monetary compensation	100%
	Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations	66.0%
	Excessive job expectations, make it difficult to be successful	50.0%
6-10 years	Lack of monetary compensation	71.4%
	Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations	64.3%
	Excessive job expectations, make it difficult to be successful	42.9%
11-20	Excessive job expectations, make it difficult to be successful	72.0%
	Lack of monetary compensation	44.0%
	Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations	40.0%
20 years and above	Excessive job expectations, make it difficult to be successful	70.8%
	Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations and lack of time to complete the requirements of the job	45.8%
	Lack of monetary compensation	41.7%

Educators within the 0-5 years' experience bracket unanimously cite "Lack of monetary compensation" as a factor, suggesting that financial remuneration is a critical issue for those in the early stages of their careers. Additionally, 66% of these educators identify "Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations," and 50% cite "Excessive job

expectations" as contributing factors. For educators with 6-10 years of experience, "Lack of monetary compensation" remains a significant factor at 71.4%, with "Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations" close behind at 64.3%, and "Excessive job expectations" affecting 42.9%. In the 11-20 years' experience range, "Excessive job expectations" becomes the most prominent factor at 72.0%, followed by "Lack of monetary compensation" at 44.0%, and "Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations" at 40.0%. Educators with over 20 years of experience also rank "Excessive job expectations" as the highest at 70.8%, but both "Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations" and "Lack of time to complete the requirements of the job" are equally significant at 45.8%, with "Lack of monetary compensation" affecting 41.7%.

Table 15

Top Three Reasons for Instructional Staff Remaining in the Profession

Reason for Not Considering Leaving the Profession	N	%
Feel like you are having an impact on student success	32	80%
Feeling connected to students	22	55%
Feel respected and trusted to make decisions about teaching/work	16	40%
Monetary compensation (pay and/or benefits)	14	35%%
Feel like you are an integral part of the organization	13	32.5%
Feel like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful	9	22.5%
Built collegial relationships with colleagues	4	10%
Receive necessary support from your principal and/or supervisor	3	7.5%
Pay and/or compensation commensurate with job responsibilities	2	5%
Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or positive culture	1	2.5%
Feeling safe to ask for help or to provide input	1	2.5%
Receive effective feedback from your administration	1	2.5%

Table 15 conveys the primary reasons why instructional staff members have elected to continue their careers in the education sector post-pandemic. The data is derived from 110 surveyed instructional staff. It reveals that 40 individuals had not considered leaving the profession during this period.

The most prominent reason to remain, cited by 80% of these respondents, is the sense of having a positive impact on student success. More than half of the staff (55%) report "Feeling connected to students" as a key incentive, and 40% value "Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about teaching/work." These responses suggest that intrinsic motivators such as a sense of purpose, relationship with students, and professional autonomy are more influential in their decision to stay than extrinsic factors like pay. Monetary compensation, though important, ranks lower, with 35% acknowledging it as a reason for their commitment to the profession. A sense of belonging within the educational community and the ability to meet job expectations are also noted.

Table 16 details the motivational factors for instructional staff to remain in the education profession. It is broken down by years of experience. The data elucidates a shift in priorities as educators accumulate more years in the field. For those in the initial 0-5 years, "Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization" stands out as the unanimous factor for all respondents, reflecting the importance of early career educators feeling valued within their institutions. Half of the respondents within this cohort also cite the impact on student success and respect for their professional autonomy as critical reasons for staying. In the 6-10 years’ experience bracket, "Feeling like you are having an impact on student success" takes precedence, resonating with 75% of the educators.

Other significant factors—such as monetary compensation, meeting job expectations, feeling integral to the organization, and feeling respected and connected

Table 16

Factors Affecting Instructional Staff Choosing to Remain in Profession by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Factors	N	%
0-5 years	Feel like you are an integral part of the organization	2	100%
	Feel like you are having an impact on student success	1	50%
	Feel respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work	1	50%
	Built collegial relationships with colleagues	1	50%
	Feeling connected to students	1	50%
6-10 years	Feeling like you are having an impact on student success	6	75%
	Monetary compensation (pay/or benefits)	3	37.5%
	Feel like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful	3	37.5%
	Feel like you are an integral part of the organization	3	37.5%
	Feel respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work	3	37.5%
	Feeling connected to students	3	37.5%
11-20	Feel like you are having an impact on student success	9	75%
	Monetary compensation (pay/or benefits)	4	33.3%
	Feel like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful	3	25%
	Feel like you are an integral part of the organization	3	25%
	Feel respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work	3	25%
20 years and above	Feel like you are having an impact on student success	16	88.9%
	Feel respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work	9	50%
	Feeling connected to students	9	50%

to students—each account for 37.5% of responses, highlighting a diverse range of considerations for mid-career educators.

Educators with 11-20 years of experience echo the priority given to the impact on student success (75%). However, financial compensation becomes less of a focus for this group, with just 33.3% citing it, which may suggest a shift towards intrinsic rewards with increased experience. For veterans in the profession with over 20 years of experience, an overwhelming 88.9% indicate that having an impact on student success is their main reason for staying in the profession. Additionally, half of the respondents in this category value feeling respected and trusted in their professional judgment and feeling a connection to students.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The third section involves the thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through open-ended survey responses to extract meaningful insights. In this section, 87 respondents consistently answered the questions. We analyze the responses to several research questions pertaining to the necessary support and resources, professional development, mentorship, and perceived value within the current school environment, among other factors affecting teacher and instructional assistant satisfaction and retention. The summaries of the questions below condense the responses to the open-ended questions into a more concise and organized format. It captures the key themes and findings from the respondents' detailed comments, allowing for a more straightforward and efficient understanding of the data. This section will address the following research questions:

Research Question 3

In what ways do relationships within the school setting influence the instructional staff in public schools?

Research Question 4

How do instructional staff members perceive these relationships and their impact?

Table 17 is an analysis of responses related to relationships within the school setting to determine their impact on the satisfaction and retention of instructional staff. The data highlights the frequency and perceived value of these relationships. The data indicates that relationships are important to educators.

Table 17

Impact of Relationships on Satisfaction and Retention

Aspect	Frequency	Percentage
Collegial Relationships	22	25.3%
Relationships with students and families	24	27.6%
Relationships with colleagues and students/families	33	37.9%

Of the respondents, 25.3% value relationships with their colleagues, while 27.6% of the instructional staff find their relationships with students and their families to be a significant aspect of their job satisfaction at the highest percentile, 37.9% place high value on having strong relationships with both colleagues and students/families combined.

There were several open-ended questions in the survey to measure the insights of the respondents. There were 87 participants that consistently answered the questions. To analyze the data, tags were put on common words within their responses and then filtered to see common themes.

The first open-ended question asked what factors contributed to their job satisfaction. The responses varied but the top response was administrative support (28).

The other high responses were student impact (24); relationships with students (24); and relationships with colleagues (22). Notably, only three respondents indicated that pay and compensation were the biggest factor.

Respondents were asked if they had considered leaving the profession and if they had what were their main reasons. Of the 87 respondents, 22 (25.29%) indicated they had never considered leaving. Of those that had considered leaving the profession, the largest response was student behavior with 23 responding with that being their main reason for wanting to leave the profession. The other three themes that were commonly identified were lack of administrative support, lack of pay, and lack of time and resources (20 respondents each).

The respondents were asked if they felt valued and appreciated as an instructional staff member in the district and 67 stated they did and 36 of them indicated administration is the reason for this feeling. These responders also cited colleagues (22) and students/families (10) being the reason they feel valued or appreciated. Of the 13 that said no they did not feel valued, there was no common theme for this reason but administration and lack of pay were cited as their reasons most often.

The respondents were asked what improvement or changes they would suggest to enhance retention of instruction staff and the most common them was better pay/benefits (36). The next was more time to complete their job (24) which included more undirected professional development time and fewer meetings. Administrative support (16) and support for student behaviors (14) were the other two themes that had more than 15% of the respondents indicated as important.

Mixed Methods Analysis

The final analysis focused on responses regarding significant support provided by administrators. The study aimed to identify themes in this area to understand the impact of these supports on staff retention. This analysis contributes to comprehending the quantitative data of the perceived effectiveness of the provided supports and their alignment with quantitative measures of staff retention and job satisfaction.

Research Question 5

What are the most significant supports provided by the administrators that impact the retention of instruction staff in public schools?

The analysis examined the perceived role of school administration in supporting the retention of instructional staff, including teachers and instructional assistants. The respondents were asked what role the administration could play in supporting the retention of staff. The top tag was providing support (26) but each respondent identified support differently. Several indicated increased staffing and pay as supportive, while others indicated resources and instructional leadership. The other themes that had high numbers of tags, were being visible (13), making authentic connections (11), and communication (15).

The respondents were asked what support or resources they felt were necessary to thrive in their current schools and three common themes arose. The most common theme was increased time to complete their job including undirected planning time (28). Administrative support was the second highest theme (21), followed by increased resources (16) and student behavior support (12). The other responses varied and were five or fewer respondents.

In alignment with support, they were asked if they received mentorship and how it impacted their job satisfaction. Of the 87 respondents, 72 indicated they had received support and 35 of them cited the support being a factor in their job satisfaction. Several of the respondents indicated that this mentorship was the only reason they stayed in the profession. It is important to note, that of those that responded yes, only two of them stated they received their mentorship outside of the district.

Research Question 6

How do these perceptions align with quantitative measures of staff satisfaction and retention?

The alignment between qualitative and quantitative data suggests that administrative support is crucial for staff satisfaction and retention; however, the definition of such support differs across data types. Quantitatively, the choices provided led to a focus on monetary compensation, job expectations, and student behaviors as key factors for satisfaction and retention. Qualitatively, administrative support emerged as the primary influence, with less emphasis on monetary compensation, as noted by less than 10% of respondents.

It is noteworthy that administrative support encompassed various factors in the qualitative responses, including aspects of monetary compensation and student behavior management, alongside providing sufficient time for staff to meet job expectations. This diversity in definitions suggests a more nuanced understanding of administrative support and its role in satisfaction and retention, reflecting a more comprehensive alignment within the data.

Research Question 7

How do instruction staff members perceive the effectiveness of these supports, and to what extent do these perceptions align with the quantitative measures of staff retention and job satisfaction?

The qualitative data reveals a perception of the effectiveness of administrative support, with 32.8% of respondents associating it with higher job satisfaction, 24.13% deeming it necessary to thrive, and 26.43% feeling appreciated by their administration. In contrast, the quantitative measures show an overwhelming majority felt it was important or very important to feel respected and trusted to do their job (100%) and receive support from their principal or supervisor (99%). This suggests a strong alignment between staff perception and quantitative measures, indicating that administrative support is indeed having a positive impact on staff satisfaction and retention.

Summary

Chapter 4 presents a summary of a survey conducted via SurveyMonkey, encompassing 21 questions with both quantitative and qualitative elements. The study aimed to identify the factors contributing to staff retention in the education sector following the pandemic. Participants were individuals employed by a suburban school district in Oregon who remained in their roles through the pandemic, having been employed before its onset.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the complexities and challenges public school districts face in retaining instructional staff amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The study used a mixed-method approach, intertwining qualitative and quantitative data to gain a holistic understanding of the complexities of staff retention, and offer profound insights into the dynamics shaping the educational workforce and informing strategies for enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

The research problem addressed in this dissertation delves into why educational professionals, including instructional staff, teachers, and paraprofessionals, are choosing to leave the profession. In this chapter, the study's findings are discussed in relation to the broader literature and existing research. Additionally, recommendations are provided to address the challenges of staff retention and to support educational institutions in fostering a stable and effective instructional workforce. The overarching aim is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and to provide actionable insights for policymakers, administrators, and leaders in the educational sector.

Summary of Findings

The research in this study was designed to examine what factors impact an instructional staff’s decision to remain in the education profession. This section presents a discussion based on the findings from Chapter 4, addressing the research questions and drawing conclusions to expand current practice and improve future research.

The first research question was to measure the extent instructional staff members perceive feelings of self-efficacy. Findings indicate a positive perception of their self-

efficacy. Instructional staff want to be supported and provided with resources to meet the job expectations, while also being respected and trusted to make decisions.

In the second research question, the researcher looked at how these perceptions relate to their decisions to stay or leave their profession. Both qualitative and quantitative data showed a relationship between feeling like they are an integral part of the organization and having a direct impact on students on their choice to remain in the profession. These insights underscore the value of self-efficacy, its impact on student success, and respect in the educators' work environment. In alignment with resources, staff perceive administrative support as being highly important. There is a strong sense of support in terms of time, pay, and resources but there is a diverse range of opinions regarding communication and feedback which could be areas to explore for enhancement.

In the third research question, the researcher wanted to determine in what ways relationships within the school setting influence the instructional staff. The qualitative and quantitative data indicated that staff members highly value the relationships within the school setting, including both colleagues and administration. They also place significant emphasis on relationships with students and on relationships and professional support networks. The findings suggest that while there is a strong agreement on student connections and positive discipline, opinions on parental support and peer mentoring are more varied, which could point to opportunities for further development in these areas. This also addresses the fourth research question of how instructional staff members perceive their relationships and their impact.

In the fifth research question, the researcher wanted to identify the most significant supports provided by the administrators that impact the retention of

instructional staff in public schools. The quantitative and qualitative data showed that administrators ensuring there is ample time to complete the job, as well as necessary resources, are important supports. Compensation varied, as it rose to the top in the quantitative data sets but was not as prevalent in the qualitative data sets. This is an area that could be studied more deeply to gain a better understanding of compensation and its impact on the retention of instructional staff.

In the sixth research question, the study aimed to examine how staff perceived factors related to job satisfaction and retention, using quantitative measures. The findings reveal that instructional staff place significant importance on receiving support and fostering positive relationships with both students and colleagues, in addition to making a meaningful contribution to student success. However, there was a discrepancy regarding compensation; the qualitative results did not show it as a primary factor in retaining staff, whereas the quantitative data suggested that it was highly regarded.

The final research question was to measure how the instructional staff members perceive the effectiveness of these supports, and to what extent these perceptions align with the quantitative measures of staff retention and job satisfaction. This was more difficult to measure, as it there was no specific measure for effectiveness. However, it was found that the more support they received and the stronger their relationships with their colleagues and students, there was less of an indication that they were considering a departure from the education field.

Interpretation of Findings

The research reveals the complex factors influencing educators' decisions to either leave or remain in the teaching profession. Compensation emerges as a critical factor,

with less experienced educators, notably those with under ten years in the field, citing it as a primary reason for considering leaving. This aligns with findings from Dilberti et al. (2020) highlighting a trend where pay influenced the departure of educators during the pandemic. Conversely, those with over five years of experience also acknowledge compensation as a key factor in their choice to stay, a sentiment backed by research from Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) and Nyugen et al. (2019), correlates teacher retention with competitive pay.

For seasoned instructional staff, with over ten years of experience, the primary concern driving potential departure is excessive job expectations. Recent studies corroborate this, indicating a significant impact of workload on teachers' decisions to leave the field. Education Support (2020) found that a substantial portion of teachers considered leaving due to increased workload, a finding echoed by Worth et al. (2018) and Kim et al. (2022), who noted the retention challenges posed by heightened job demands.

In terms of retention, administrative support, and positive interpersonal relationships appear to play a pivotal role. The Pearson Correlation analysis further substantiates this by identifying a positive correlation between a sense of organizational belonging and appropriate training, as well as between student behavioral expectations and parental support. These factors, along with having adequate time and resources to complete job responsibilities, receiving support from leadership, and clear communication, are all linked with job satisfaction and the inclination to remain in the profession. However, a notable negative correlation exists between compensation and the

provision of resources, highlighting a potential area of concern for educators' job satisfaction.

Context of Findings

The findings from this research align closely with the findings from many recent articles. In both the quantitative and qualitative data sets, administrative support is indicated as an important factor for retention. In the quantitative data support did not get implicated as a major factor in influencing retention but in the qualitative data sets it was the top factor. That aligns with research by Sabrina et al. (2023) where it was found that teachers' perceptions of long-term career success are largely related to the levels of support they receive early on in their careers.

Sulit and Davidson (2020) state that teachers often leave the field within their first three to five years due to increasing demands and unrealistic expectations from their principals. This aligns with the quantitative data that indicated that 50% of instructional staff with less than five years of experience showed excessive job expectations are a factor influencing their thoughts of leaving. Of importance, are the perceptions of staff with more than five years of experience indicating that excessive job demands are within their top three reasons for considering the departure from the profession. Several studies found that even before the pandemic teachers attributed excessive workloads to their reasons for wanting to leave the profession. (Kim et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2019).

Administrative support, including resource allocation, plays a pivotal role in instructional staff remaining in the profession. Multiple research articles indicate that the lack of administrator support and demanding work conditions increase job-related stress

and teacher turnover related stress and teacher (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016; Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2017; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Holmes, et al. (2019) showed that organizational management at advanced levels plays a pivotal role in the achievement of educators. Sokal et al. (2020, 2021) contributed to educators' desire to leave the profession on their school administrators not making them feel valued, which was also supported by a study completed by Marshall et al. (2022). The data in this study indicated the same, with excessive job requirements being one of the top three reasons for considering leaving the profession.

Another area of support that was seen in both the quantitative and qualitative data was behavior support for students. The lack of a supportive disciplinary climate was one of the top three reasons for considering the departure from education. This directly aligns with the building of student relationships, which is indicated as a top indicator for job satisfaction in the qualitative data. Saks et al. (2021) showed that teachers maintaining a strong disciplinary climate within their classroom contributed to their ability to build relationships and Nguyen et al. (2019) found that fewer discipline problems lead to lower teacher attrition. This is especially relevant post-pandemic, as there is an increase in negative behaviors in schools and lack of support for student behaviors is a top factor for teachers considering leaving the education profession. This is supported by a study completed by Pressley (2021), where it was found that many students returned with higher social needs.

Relationships with colleagues arose as a factor that influenced the decision to remain in the profession, which is supported by recent research completed by Magdam

and Kim (2021). Shuls and Flores (2020) note that beginner teachers who engage with and learn from veteran teachers tend to experience greater job satisfaction, and Nguyen et al. (2019) showed that beginning teachers who received support from mentors are less likely to leave the field. This is also supported by research completed by Stark et al. (2022) where they found that the support of colleagues improves the mental health of teachers, increasing their ability to complete their assigned tasks. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were noted in the study as important for learning from colleagues and seen as a form of professional development. This aligns with the findings of Kraft et al. (2020) who found that collaboration time with colleagues helped teachers feel more successful.

The data within this study that did not align with current and past research (Holmes et al, 2019; Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) was the importance of administrators prioritizing goal setting for teachers and offering constructive feedback. In both the quantitative and qualitative data sets, these items were not identified as major factors in the retention of staff. However, in the qualitative data there was a reference to the importance of administrator support in alignment with instructional leadership, which according to Sulit and Davidson (2020), retention weighs heavily on the perceptions that teachers have of their supervisors' leadership practices and can have an impact on whether or not a teacher decides to remain in the field.

Another area that had inconsistent findings and did not consistently align with the current research is the impact of compensation as a determining factor of remaining in the profession. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) and Nyugen et al. (2019), found compensation had a significant positive relation to teacher retention but data in this

study did not consistently align. Quantitative data indicated it was a top reason for considering the departure from education but qualitative data found it to be less relevant.

Implications of Findings

The study delineates several crucial takeaways regarding the professional environment in educational settings. Firstly, it highlights the importance of adequate training for employees to feel valued and integral within an organization, suggesting that the need for building collegial relationships may diminish with better training. It also notes that establishing a disciplined environment with clear behavioral expectations is likely to boost parental support. The research points out that job satisfaction is heavily dependent on the provision of sufficient resources and transparent, effective communication, particularly about the perception of receiving constructive feedback.

The findings draw attention to an imbalance where employees feel that while compensation is generally satisfactory, the resources at their disposal may be lacking, signifying an area that requires further attention. These insights are pivotal for informing the direction of professional development programs and initiatives that seek to bolster staff morale and effectiveness. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of understanding patterns of perceived self-efficacy among educators to tailor support and enhance job satisfaction and retention. It becomes evident that relational factors have a considerable impact on professional satisfaction, emphasizing the necessity of a supportive and collaborative work environment.

Furthermore, the data presents a complex picture of administrative support, showing strengths as well as potential gaps that could be bridged, particularly in the areas of resource allocation and communication. The multifaceted nature of staff retention is

examined, revealing that it is influenced by an array of factors such as compensation, resources, leadership support, and the quality of feedback received. The study suggests that addressing job satisfaction and retention challenges may require systemic changes and points to the need for differentiated support for educators at different stages in their careers.

Lastly, the research concludes that while financial compensation is an essential element of job satisfaction, it alone is not enough. Professional fulfillment and respect play crucial roles in maintaining high levels of job satisfaction and ensuring longevity in the profession. As motivational factors evolve with the length of service, adaptive retention strategies are called for. Moreover, the influence of social connections in the workplace, including those with colleagues, students, and their families, emerges as a critical component for staff satisfaction and retention.

Limitations of the Study

This study faces certain limitations. Its generalizability is constrained by its focus on a mid-sized suburban school district in Oregon, with retention factors likely varying across different educational settings. Methodological limitations include the mixed methods approach which, due to time and resource constraints, may have limited the depth of data analysis. Despite rigorous efforts, qualitative analysis carries inherent subjectivity, potentially introducing bias from the interpretation of open-ended responses. Voluntary participation could also lead to response bias.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data posed challenges, complicating the synthesis of findings, although efforts were made to triangulate the data. Moreover, while the study examines the influence of self-efficacy, relationships, and

administrative support on staff retention during and post-pandemic, it may not capture all pertinent factors, particularly given the continuously evolving educational landscape and dynamics post-pandemic. Thus, certain elements affecting instructional staff retention may not be fully represented in this study's findings.

Future Research Directions

Future research may benefit from exploring the specific types of training that enhance educators' sense of efficacy and significance within their organizations. An in-depth investigation into how collegial relationships interact with perceptions of training adequacy to affect job satisfaction and performance could provide valuable insights. Additionally, a closer examination of the causal relationship between clear behavioral expectations at schools and increased parental support is recommended. There is also a need for a nuanced analysis of resource allocation, particularly in scenarios where compensation is satisfactory but the resources remain insufficient.

Further research should assess the long-term impact of professional development on staff morale and retention, and explore how educator self-efficacy in different domains correlates with job satisfaction. The role of interpersonal relationships and the extent of administrative support in creating supportive teaching environments warrants deeper study. A comparative analysis of administrative support strategies tailored to the diverse needs of staff at varying career stages could yield important findings. Finally, systemic changes aimed at enhancing job satisfaction and retention should be evaluated to determine the most effective interventions, alongside a focused study on the influence of social connections in the workplace on staff retention and satisfaction. These research

directions could significantly contribute to the development of targeted retention strategies and leadership practices in the education sector.

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Appendix A

Survey About Instructional Staff's Feelings and Opinions

Survey About Instructional Staff's Feelings and Opinions

Code for each participant's name Alpha and numeric

Years teaching:

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20 and above

Grade Level of Job Assignment

- Elementary
- Middle
- High

Job Assignment

- Classified
- Licensed

On a scale from 1 – 4, with 1 being the least important and 4 being the most important, indicate how important each of these items are to making you feel as if you belong in the school and/or district.

1 = Least Important 2 = Somewhat Important 3 = Important 4 = Most Important

Research Question 1: How does the feeling of self-efficacy impact the retention of instructional staff in public schools?

Self-Efficacy

Feeling like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful.	1	2	3	4
Feeling like you are having an impact on student success.	1	2	3	4
Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization.	1	2	3	4
Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements.	1	2	3	4
Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work.	1	2	3	4

Research Question 2: How do relationships within the school setting impact the retention of instructional staff in public schools?

Relationships

Building collegial relationships with colleagues.	1	2	3	4
Feeling connected to the students.	1	2	3	4
Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive	1	2	3	4

disciplinary climate.				
Feeling supported by parents.	1	2	3	4
Receive mentoring/direct support from a colleague.	1	2	3	4

Research Question 3: What supports provided by the administrator(s) have the largest impact on the retention of instructional staff?

Administration

Pay and/or compensation commensurate with job responsibilities.	1	2	3	4
Provided with the necessary resources to do your job.	1	2	3	4
Provided enough time to complete the requirements of your job.	1	2	3	4
Receive necessary support from your principal and/or direct supervisor.	1	2	3	4
Feeling safe to ask for help or to provide input.	1	2	3	4
Receive clear communication from the school and/or district.	1	2	3	4
Receive effective feedback from your administration.	1	2	3	4

In each section below, the responses are attached to the following research questions:
First five statements: Research Question 1 (Self-Efficacy)
Second five statements: Research Question 2 (Relationships)
Last seven statements: Research Question 3 (Administration)

Since returning from the pandemic closures have you considered leaving the education profession?

If yes, please choose the top three reasons you considered leaving, by placing a 1, 2, 3, next to your top choices.

_ Lack of monetary compensation (pay and/or benefits)
_ Excessive job expectations, making it difficult to be successful
_ Not feeling you are having an impact on student success
_ Don't feel like an integral part of the organization
_ Haven't received proper training for new initiatives or job requirements
_ Don't feel respected or trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work
_ Lack of collegial relationships
_ Don't feel connected to students
_ Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations
_ Lack of support by parents
_ Lack of mentoring/direct support by a colleague or administration
_ Haven't been provided with the necessary resources to do the job
_ Lack of time to complete the requirements of your job
_ Lack of support from your principal and/or direct supervisor
_ Don't feel safe to ask for help or to provide input
_ Lack of clear communication by the school and/or district
_ Lack of effective feedback from your administration

If no, please indicate the top three reasons you chose to stay by placing a 1, 2, or 3, next to your top choices.

_ Monetary compensation (pay and/or benefits)
_ Feel like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful
_ Feel like you are having an impact on student success
_ Feel like you are an integral part of the organization
_ Received proper training for new initiatives or job requirements
_ Feel respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work
_ Built collegial relationships with colleagues
_ Feeling connected to students
_ Strong behavioral expectations for students and or a positive disciplinary climate
_ Feel supported by parents
_ Mentoring/direct support by a colleague
_ Pay and/or compensation commensurate with job responsibilities
_ Provided with the necessary resources to do your job
_ Provided enough time to complete the requirements of your job
_ Receive necessary support from your principal and/or direct supervisor
_ Feeling safe to ask for help or to provide input
_ Receive clear communication from the school and/or district
_ Receive effective feedback from your administration

Are you planning to continue in the profession? Yes or No

If no, please indicate the top three reasons you are choosing to leave the profession, by placing a 1, 2, or 3, next to your top choices.

_ Lack of impact on student success
_ Excessive job expectations, making it difficult to be successful
_ Not feeling you are having an impact on student success
_ Don’t feel like an integral part of the organization
_ Haven’t received proper training for new initiatives or job requirements
_ Don’t feel respected or trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work
_ Lack of collegial relationships
_ Don’t feel connected to students
_ Disciplinary climate/lack of student expectations
_ Lack of support by parents
_ Lack of mentoring/direct support by a colleague or administration
_ Haven’t been provided with the necessary resources to do the job
_ Lack of time to complete the requirements of your job
_ Lack of support from your principal and/or direct supervisor
_ Don’t feel safe to ask for help or to provide input

_ Lack of clear communication by the school and/or district
_ Lack of Receiving effective feedback from your administration
_ Lack of monetary compensation (pay and/or benefits)

Open-ended questions:

1. What factors contribute to your job satisfaction as a teacher or instructional assistant?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Have you ever considered leaving the education profession? If yes, what were the main reasons?

   _____
   _____
   _____

3. What support or resources do you feel are necessary to thrive in your current school?

   _____
   _____
   _____

4. What type of professional development are you able to engage in and do you feel it helps increase your job expertise?

   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Have you received mentorship or guidance from experienced teachers, instructional assistants, or administrators? If yes, how has it impacted your job satisfaction and retention?

   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Do you feel valued and appreciated as a teacher in this district? Please indicate why or why not.

   _____
   _____
   _____

7. What improvement or changes would you suggest to enhance the retention of teachers and/or instructional assistants?

_____
_____
_____

8. What type of opportunities are you provided to collaborate with other instructional staff (teacher and/or instructional assistants) in your school and how often are the opportunities provided?

_____
_____
_____

9. What opportunities have you been provided to take on leadership roles or participate in decision-making processes within the school?

_____
_____
_____

10. What role do you think the school administration can play in supporting the retention of instructional staff (teachers or Instructional assistants)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B

Self-Efficacy, Staff Retention, and Staff Satisfaction

Table 11

Self-Efficacy, Staff Retention, and Staff Satisfaction

Correlations

		Feeling like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful.	Feeling like you are having an impact on student success.	Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization.	Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements.	Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work.	Building collegial relationships with colleagues.	Feeling connected to the students.	Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate.	Feeling supported by parents.	Receive mentoring/direct support by a colleague.
Feeling like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful.	Pearson Correlation	1	.414**	.272**	.373**	.147	-.058	.278**	.198*	.058	-.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	.004	<.001	.126	.545	.003	.038	.547	.740
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you are having an impact on student success.	Pearson Correlation	.414**	1	.180	.209*	-.093	-.154	.471**	.131	.032	-.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.059	.028	.332	.109	<.001	.172	.740	.959
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization.	Pearson Correlation	.272**	.180	1	.345**	.158	.188*	.089	.333**	.102	.174
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.059		<.001	.099	.050	.357	<.001	.289	.069
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements.	Pearson Correlation	.373**	.209*	.345**	1	.260**	-.063	.281**	.197*	.116	.289**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.028	<.001		.006	.512	.003	.040	.228	.002
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work.	Pearson Correlation	.147	-.093	.158	.260**	1	.149	-.046	.168	.147	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.332	.099	.006		.121	.633	.080	.125	.729
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Building collegial relationships with colleagues.	Pearson Correlation	-.058	-.154	.188*	-.063	.149	1	-.072	.128	.218*	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.545	.109	.050	.512	.121		.458	.184	.022	<.001
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling connected to the students.	Pearson Correlation	.278**	.471**	.089	.281**	-.046	-.072	1	.117	.093	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	<.001	.357	.003	.633	.458		.225	.332	.500
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Strong behavioral expectations for students and/or a positive disciplinary climate.	Pearson Correlation	.198*	.131	.333**	.197*	.168	.128	.117	1	.183	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.172	<.001	.040	.080	.184	.225		.055	.558
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling supported by parents.	Pearson Correlation	.058	.032	.102	.116	.147	.218*	.093	.183	1	.240*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.547	.740	.289	.228	.125	.022	.332	.055		.012
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Receive mentoring/direct support by a colleague.	Pearson Correlation	-.032	-.005	.174	.289**	.033	.402**	.065	.056	.240*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.740	.959	.069	.002	.729	<.001	.500	.558	.012	
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix C

Correlations Between Various Factors Related to Job Satisfaction, Performance, and Support

Table 12

Correlations Between Various Factors Related to Job Satisfaction, Performance, and Support

Correlations

		Pay and/or compensation commensurate with job responsibilities.	Provided with the necessary resources to do your job.	Provided enough time to complete the requirements of your job.	Receive necessary support from your principal and/or direct supervisor.	Feeling safe to ask for help or to provide input.	Receive clear communication by the school and/or district.	Receive effective feedback from your administration.	Feeling like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful.	Feeling like you are having an impact on student success.	Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization.	Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements.	Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work.
Pay and/or compensation commensurate with job responsibilities.	Pearson Correlation	1	.247**	.128	.136	.058	.279**	.087	.117	.022	.147	.248**	.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009	.182	.157	.547	.003	.367	.222	.820	.126	.009	.003
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Provided with the necessary resources to do your job.	Pearson Correlation	.247**	1	.550**	.291**	.243*	.387**	.311**	.381**	.156	.199*	.436**	.167
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009		<.001	.002	.010	<.001	<.001	<.001	.104	.037	<.001	.081
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Provided enough time to complete the requirements of your job.	Pearson Correlation	.128	.550**	1	.264**	.141	.302**	.361**	.288**	-.063	.322**	.247**	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.182	<.001		.005	.142	.001	<.001	.002	.510	<.001	.009	.072
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Receive necessary support from your principal and/or direct supervisor.	Pearson Correlation	.136	.291**	.264**	1	.433**	.436**	.379**	.046	-.007	.266**	.281**	.218*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.157	.002	.005		<.001	<.001	<.001	.635	.945	.005	.003	.022
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling safe to ask for help or to provide input.	Pearson Correlation	.058	.243*	.141	.433**	1	.579**	.382**	.203*	.006	.088	.346**	.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.547	.010	.142	<.001		<.001	<.001	.033	.953	.360	<.001	<.001
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Receive clear communication by the school and/or district.	Pearson Correlation	.279**	.387**	.302**	.436**	.579**	1	.410**	.180	.030	.199*	.369**	.377**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	<.001	.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	.060	.757	.037	<.001	<.001
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Receive effective feedback from your administration.	Pearson Correlation	.087	.311**	.361**	.379**	.382**	.410**	1	.128	.062	.361**	.368**	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.367	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		.182	.520	<.001	<.001	.179
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you can meet the expectations of the job and be successful.	Pearson Correlation	.117	.381**	.288**	.046	.203*	.180	.128	1	.414**	.272**	.373**	.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.222	<.001	.002	.635	.033	.060	.182		<.001	.004	<.001	.126
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you are having an impact on student success.	Pearson Correlation	.022	.156	-.063	-.007	.006	.030	.062	.414**	1	.180	.209*	-.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.820	.104	.510	.945	.953	.757	.520	<.001		.059	.028	.332
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you are an integral part of the organization.	Pearson Correlation	.147	.199*	.322**	.266**	.088	.199*	.361**	.272**	.180	1	.345**	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.037	<.001	.005	.360	.037	<.001	.004	.059		<.001	.099
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling like you receive proper training for new initiatives or job requirements.	Pearson Correlation	.248**	.436**	.247**	.281**	.346**	.369**	.368**	.373**	.209*	.345**	1	.260**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	<.001	.009	.003	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.028	<.001		.006
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Feeling respected and trusted to make decisions about your teaching/work.	Pearson Correlation	.277**	.167	.172	.218*	.380**	.377**	.129	.147	-.093	.158	.260**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.081	.072	.022	<.001	<.001	.179	.126	.332	.099	.006	
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).