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Job satisfaction and attrition among special education teachers

Sophia Mastrantuono

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**JOB SATISFACTION AND ATTRITION AMONG
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS**

by

Sophia Mastrantuono

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
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Thesis Chair: Terri Allen, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Sophia Mastrantuono
JOB SATISFACTION AND ATTRITION AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION
TEACHERS

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Terri Allen, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

It is thought that special education teaching, as a professional entity, experiences high rates of turnover. These high levels of turnover, have been attributed to the demands included in a special education job description. While most previous studies have looked at external factors as the above, few have assessed *if* and *how* job satisfaction or the employers indication that they find their job to be “meaningful” or “fulfilling,” affects their likelihood to remain in the field instead of looking for alternate employment. The current study will investigate to what extent, job satisfaction, alleviates special education teacher’s attrition rates. A survey, relating to job satisfaction and attrition, was administered to full time special education teachers at an out of district Special Services School via staff email. Results of the study, indicated that there was significance between participants who regarded their work to be meaningful and the unlikelihood of looking for another job outside the school district. 59 out of 62 participants from these 5 campuses, of a special services school district, indicated that they found their work to be either “quite meaningful” or “extremely meaningful”, 56 of 63 participants indicated that they are “slightly or “not at all likely” to look for another job outside of the company, with 48 (77.42%) indicating that they are “not at all likely” to leave.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Need for Study

It is believed, as previous research has suggested, that teaching is a profession that experiences high numbers of turnover. Furthermore, these studies have attributed this turnover to the high levels of stress that the profession entails. A lack of resources and funding along with inadequate communication among administrators and teachers are regarded as some of the components adding to teachers stress levels and responsible, in some, for turnover rates. Furthermore, it is also understood that special education teachers, because of the uniqueness of their job and the added level of paperwork that general education teachers do not experience, burnout at even sooner rates. Previous studies have also concluded that schools containing teachers experiencing high levels of job satisfaction are the same schools that also have lower levels of turnover. However, when it comes to both special education and general education, job satisfaction has been defined and measured largely with variables such as the amount of paperwork, benefits, pay, policies and procedures. Because of the uniqueness of the population that special education teachers teach, it is necessary that job satisfaction also considers the fulfilling nature and overall well being that special education teachers experience and should aim to see *if* and *how* this combats/prevents teachers from looking for other jobs. This study will administer an online survey, using *survey monkey* to full time teachers at an out of district Special Services School, asking questions regarding job satisfaction and the likelihood that the teacher will look for another job (attrition).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate if fulfillment/meaningfulness, as it relates to job satisfaction, alleviated the burnout rate of Special Education teachers.

Specific aims are, to see if the attrition rate is dependent on job satisfaction, to explore if special education teachers find their job rewarding and to investigate if special education teachers experience burnout rates sooner than general education teachers.

Hypothesis

This study will examine how job satisfaction affects the attrition rates of special education teachers at an out of district Special Services School, through the use of an online survey. It is expected to find that special educators at this school, who indicate in their survey that they consider their job to be fulfilling and meaningful, will have also indicated that they are not likely to leave their jobs over those special educators who do not regard their job as fulfilling and meaningful. The study is then expected to find that special educators, in this Special Services School, who do not indicate their job to be fulfilling and meaningful, will regard various work related variables, such as pay, policies and procedures, benefits, and administrators, to cause high levels of stress thus adding to sooner burnout rates.

Operational Definitions

This studies research and conclusions are based relatively off the following operational definitions.

Job Satisfaction: A pleasant or positive feeling, which grows in the through evaluating a persons work experience (Locke, 1976 in Yanhan, 2013).

Attrition (in the teaching profession): The amount of teachers at a school or district level, that leave to another district or school, that leave annually is known as annual attrition (Grissmer & Kirby, 1993).

Assumptions

Teachers have a great responsibility to teach a wide variety of students at various types of levels. They sometimes have to teach students who have communication, problem solving, and conflict managing skills (Astrauskaite et al., 2011). According to De Nobile & McCormick (2005), when assessing other types of employment professions, teachers are thought to experience high levels of work related stress. Chang, (2009), attests that this stress can lead to deficits in emotional and intellectual reservations for teachers, which can lead to teachers becoming depressed and physically and psychologically exhausted.

Limitations

This study includes only an out of district Special Services School in the state of New Jersey. It does not include district schools with special education teachers in an inclusive setting. The study is limited to a sample size of 62 teachers. The study does not include teachers or teacher assistants who are not considered full time.

Summary

Special education teachers at this special services school district are responsible for educating and caring for a self-contained population that is often challenging and unique. Teachers of this population, despite the challenges of the profession, may indicate their job to be meaningful and this may be indicative of low attrition rates and the unlikeliness to search for another job outside of their current district

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Importance of Job Satisfaction for Teachers; How it Relates to Attrition

Job satisfaction has been defined in a multitude of ways by various researchers. Paul Spector simply regarded job satisfaction as the extent to which people either liked (satisfied) or disliked (not satisfied) their jobs (Spector, 1985). Lawler (1973), believed job satisfaction was the difference between what a person thought he was supposed to receive compared to what he actually does receive. Continually, Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as, "...the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of ones job values" (p.317).

Teachers, in relation to other types of employees, have been thought to experience high levels of work related stress (De Nobile & McCormick, 2005; Klassen et al, 2010a). Teachers have responsibilities that are lengthy. According to Comber and Nixon (2009), teachers are expected to:

...Educate students, insure their safety and healthy atmosphere, communicate and collaborate with parents, other teachers, specialists and administrators, develop their own skills and knowledge, administer documents, organize school trips and complete a number of other tasks provided by the government and school administration (p.42).

Furthermore, teachers have the responsibility to teach all types of different students and can have difficulty with, communication, problem solving, and conflict managing skills (Astrauskaite et al. 2011). Teachers experience a deficit of emotional and intellectual services, which can, often lead to burnout, depression or other physical and psychological health related issues (Chang, 2009).

In measuring Job satisfaction among teachers, usual instruments of measure are not always ideal because of the unique nature of the job (Astrauskaite, 2011). According to Spector (1997) instruments that mainly look at job satisfaction are variables such as, "...appreciation, communication, coworkers, fringe benefits, job conditions, nature of work, organization itself, organizations policies and procedures, pay, personal growth, promotion opportunities, recognition, security..." and "...supervision...(p.3)." Continually, variables like the above do not always correlate with job satisfaction (Spector, 1997).

It is important that special educators are satisfied with their jobs. Schools that are not able to retain teachers, can be a problem (Macdonald, 1999). Macdonald (1999), attests that there are a number of changing patterns in the work force and that when compared to the work conditions that teachers experience, there are more appealing openings in other places that may cause teachers to leave their schools and possibly the field altogether.

Teaching Special Education Students; Demands, Challenges and Rewards

Special education teachers are at a high risk to develop chronic stress, low job satisfaction and low efficiency (Emery, 2010). The burnout rate is high for special education teachers and can affect the ability of the U.S to retain qualified special educators (Emery, 2010).

Special education students need related services to reach their maximum human potential (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). According to the text by Hallahan, Exceptional Learners (2012), children require special education if they differ from most students in one or more of the listed ways: "...They have intellectual disabilities, learning or

attention disabilities, emotional or behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, disorders of communication, autism, traumatic brain injury, impaired hearing, impaired sight, or special gifts or talents (p.8).” Continually, the typical special education student has no initial notice of a disability. According to the text (2012) this type of student, is a male, in elementary or middle school and has continuing problems in learning and behaving appropriately in school (Hallahan, 2012).” Furthermore,

...his problems are primarily academic and social or behavioral and may not be apparent to many teachers until they have worked with him for a period of weeks or months. His problems persist despite teacher’s efforts to meet his needs in the regular school program in which most students succeed. He is most likely to be described as having a learning disability or to be designated by an even broader label indicating that his academic and social progress in school is unsatisfactory owing to a disability (p.33).

In looking at the implications of special education teaching, for purposes of this study, it is imperative to look at special educators who specifically teach children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This is because, one of the campuses, contains special education teachers who teach exclusively to this student population and they will be included in survey results. Continually, the word autism derives from the Greek work *autos* meaning “self” (Frith, 2003). This is because, when the label came about in the early 1900’s, autistic individuals were thought to have a very restrictive ability to personal relationships and had very little interactions with their environment (Hallahan, 2012). Furthermore, individuals who are Autistic are many times misunderstood (Hallahan, 2012). This is due mainly in part to the fact that Autistic

people, generally speaking, do not understand social cues. Their nature and appearance is typically odd and they are not aware of the effect this can have on others (Hallahan, 2012).

Leo Kanner, along with Hans Asperger, physicians, were the first to develop scientific papers related to the field of Autism. Kanner's paper (1943) involved a study of 11 children from the Child Psychiatric Unit at John Hopkins University. The results of the study found that the following were characteristic that indicated a child was autistic:

1. An inability to relate to others in an ordinary manner
 2. An extreme autistic aloneness that seemingly isolated the child from the outside world
 3. An apparent resistance to being picked up or held by the parents
 4. Deficits in language including...echolalia
 5. Extreme fear reactions to loud noises
 6. Obsessive desire repetition and maintenance of sameness
 7. Few spontaneous activities such as typical play behaviors
 8. Bizarre and repetitive physical movement such a spinning or perpetual rocking
- (Scheurmann & Weber, 2002, p.2)

When discussing the educational considerations of individuals and students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, it is essential to note that the symptoms associated with autism are categorized as relatively unusual and possess educational methods that may not be rooted in substantial treatment methods (Hallahan, 2010).

Simpson (2004) states, " The ASD [autism spectrum disorders] field is particularly well known for its willingness to embrace and/or maintain a liberal tolerance toward unproven

and controversial interventions and treatments. A number of these purposely effective methods appear to have neither empirical nor logical foundation (p.139).”

Of some of the educational programming that exist in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is a largely used approach that teaches functional and life skills with regular and frequent assessment. ABA, based mainly in part by behavioral and operant learning theory, uses positive reinforcement as a motivator for behavior change. In its original form, ABA also mean to punish the student or individual with negative reinforcement whereas contemporary ABA leans relatively far away from any use of punishment as research has proved it to be ineffective for students and individuals with ASD (Sallows & Graupner, 2005). ABA and its use of positive reinforcement has been viewed as a successful teaching method for students with autism spectrum disorder (Simpson et al., 2005). ABA, as a form of teaching uses a specific set of techniques for behavioral management of students with severe autism that results in biting, hitting, kicking and screaming. Experts in the field recommend that a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and a positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) should be used as tools to curb the negative behaviors some autistic students may have (Horner, Albin, Sprague, & Todd, 2000). A teacher, can use a FBA to understand what events trigger the behavior, where and when the behavior occurs and what happens after the behavior, to better attempt to reduce the said behavior.

For purposes of this study, it is also imperative to look at the literature for special education teachers who teach students with emotional and behavioral disorders, because, the majority of the teachers answering these survey questions, deal with this student population. According to Wisniewski & Gargiulo (1997), these types of special education

teachers have a challenging work environment in conjunction with a very challenging student population. Teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders, on top of the challenging work environment they face, are concerned with student discipline (Lawrenson & Mckinnon, 1982). They are also relatively worried about physical and verbal abuse (Johnson, Gold, & Vickers, 1982). Kaff's (2004) study looked at special education teachers who were considering leaving their current field, and found that 57 percent attributed this consideration to the heavy caseloads and the various disabilities in their caseloads. Paperwork is in large part responsible for the attrition rates special education teachers' experience (Kaff, 2004). This along with the regulatory issues, were described as a, bureaucrats worst nightmare (Kaff, 2004).

Burnout Rate Theories; General Education vs. Special Education, Indicators, Factors and Cost

Large attrition rates are related to burnout (Billingsley, 2004). Burnout, in the workplace, can produce high levels of chronic situational stress and personal investment (Emery, 2010). Edelwich and Brodsky, (2010), described burnout as, a continuum of loss of energy and purpose that is experienced by people in the helping profession because of the type of work they do. Furthermore, Maslach added to the definition; burnout needs to account for all of the emotional difficulties of dealing largely with other individuals, especially when they are troubled or are having problems (Maslach, 1982). Pines (1993) argued that burnout took place when 'situational stressors' got in the way of fulfilling personal work goals.

Special education teachers, when committed to their job and dedicated to the academic progress off their students, are susceptible to burnout if there are large

overbearing demands and challenges placed on them (Emery, 2010). For teachers, these demands and interferences can make it challenging to reach their professional goals (Emery, 2010). A person, who experiences burnout, may also experience emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion can lead to feelings of depersonalization and feelings of inadequacy, that can happen for individuals, particularly, who do 'people work' (Maslach, 1982). Additionally, Maslach clarifies that emotional exhaustion is not from being bored or overtired from tedious work but rather a result from exacerbating, an individuals resources overtime (Maslach, 1993).

Furthermore, in terms of curriculum, special education teachers have largely more responsibilities that that of general education teachers (Kilgore, Griffin, Otis-Wilborn, & Winn, 2003). Moreover, special education teachers tend to have to work through several grade levels and different areas of content, sometimes on a daily basis. Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore (2005), suggest that special education teachers are sometimes expected to teach different content areas that they don't even know themselves. In article *Supporting New Special Education Teachers*, a new teacher admitted she was surprised in having to teach government, social studies, and science and reported she was actually learning the material herself as she was teaching it (Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005). While learning the material inside the classroom presents a challenge for special education teachers, research suggests that special education teachers spend a relatively large amount of time outside the classroom in order to understand students IEP's and how to connect it to their curriculum and abilities (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007).

The stress that special education teachers experience, according to White and Mason's (2006) studies, seems to be similar across states. Their study showed that 84%

of special education teachers indicated that they needed help with students IEP's and paperwork; 74% needed assistance with referrals, placement, and evaluation; 70% needed more materials; 60% needed further assistance with behavioral management of students; 66% wanted to be better acclimated to the school; 58% needed more instructional strategies; 54% needed assistance with students assessments; 54% wanted collaboration with general educators; 48% needed support in parent/family conferences; and 46% reported needing help with learning and using the curriculum.

It is imperative to understand teacher attrition in hopes of preventing it. Macdonald (1999) argued its importance, especially in school districts, where from an economical and social standpoint the costs of attrition are unbearable. Furthermore, teachers are becoming increasingly professional and are geographically mobile and have new management regimes; this could change the nature of teachers work (Hatcher, 1994 in Macdonald, 1999). Suggestions have also been made that teacher attrition needs to be looked at in a *timely* manner (Macdonald, 1999). Moreover, attrition should be distinguished between cultures, socioeconomic statuses and the age and type of teacher (Chapman, 1994; Gritz & Theobald, 1996). Some researchers have suggested that much of the problem with retaining teacher's stems from the instability in the definitions and methodological problems, associated with teacher attrition. Macdonald (1999) suggests that, previous research has looked at *wastage* when it comes to attrition rates and they are not the same thing. He addresses that wastage differs from turnover in that turnover represents the annual rate of teachers leaving their particular position. Continually, turnover is representative of the wastage along with the *lateral* movement of teachers throughout the schooling systems. Furthermore, William (1979), clarified that wastage,

can be considered the amount of teachers that leave a full-time teaching position, in either the preschool, primary or secondary education through because of circumstances such as death, retirement, resignation, dismissal, temporary withdrawals and resignation within the education system. Furthermore, in studying attrition the focus needs to be placed on teachers who are leaving on their own will, both voluntarily and prematurely. Macdonald (1999) has also suggested that there should be a clarification as of to who is being considered a teacher. He assesses that statistics, only include, individuals who leave from full-time employment and this often times, ignore the shifts in larger, part-time sectors of the work force (MacDonald, 1999).

Teacher attrition has been viewed by researchers in many different ways. Quantitative data has been widely used in reporting teacher attrition and turnover. Although cost-effective, quantitative data has ruled the majority of research on this topic, Willett and Singer (1991), recommend, survival analysis and event history analysis which can yield more longitudinal data. In studying teacher attrition, *human capital theory*, has ruled much of the research. Human capital theory, attests that teachers, consider monetary values such as income and promotion and non-monetary concerns such as physical environment, convenient hours and their relationships with their co-workers. These are regarded as important factors in deciding whether or not to remain in the teaching field.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants

The sample size consists of 62 teachers employed at 5 different campuses at the designated Special Services School. The 5 campuses are: Elementary, Junior/Senior, High School, Vision Quest, and The Pioneer Autism Sensory Center. The Elementary campus has 20 teachers, JR/SR, 18, Vision Quest, 26, High School 25, and PASC (Pioneer Autism Sensory Center), 19. The population of the 62 special educators includes a variety of minorities and contains both male and female gendered teachers. The surveys were conducted anonymously, the participants were not compensated and there was no risk involved.

Materials

A survey, was given by the researcher from questions relating to Job Satisfaction and Attrition, constructed by Survey Monkey. The researcher choose each question from a variety of survey monkey certified questions. Questions pertaining to the subjects regard for the meaningfulness of their work, along with questions regarding work how often the subjects looked forward to going to work and how much they “liked” their job were all assessed. Other questions were chosen based on the literature on job satisfaction, that suggests job satisfaction for teachers is also based on the quality of their administrator’s effort (Comber & Nixon, 2009). For this reason questions such as, “How well does your supervisor motivate you to do your best work?” were also assessed. The survey used a 5 or 7-point likert scale.

Design

This study examined the correlation between meaningfulness of work (job satisfaction) and how likely the employer is to look for another job (attrition). The survey questions will be measured using a 5 or 7-point likert scale. For example, the first question, “How meaningful is your work?” had the following options for participants to choose, “Not at all meaningful, slightly meaningful, moderately meaningful, very meaningful, and extremely meaningful.” Continually, the study compared that initial question with the survey’s later question, “How likely are you to look for another job outside the company?” with the following options for participants to choose: “Not at all likely, slightly likely, moderately likely, very likely and extremely likely.” The first question was designed to measure meaningfulness, and the other question is used to measure attrition. A survey was used to collect information between the items that were described. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were used to describe population parameters and potential associations in order to investigate the hypothesis.

Procedure

School administration granted permission to contact staff at each of the campuses within the special services school. Through email, the teachers were asked to voluntarily participate in a survey looking to assess job satisfaction and attrition in order to aid a graduate student in her Masters research. If the teachers choose to participate in the study they were asked to click on the link attached in the email in which took them directly to the first page of the survey. The first question in the survey asked the participants if they were 18 years or older and were voluntarily taking the survey; with a yes or no response.

This study is deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants and that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated with this research will not be greater than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Chapter 4

Results

Analyses of Sample Population

The researcher expected there to be a correlation between participants who regarded their work to be meaningful and their unlikelihood of looking for another job and remaining in their current school district. The participants in this study indicated this hypothesis, with a near majority. Furthermore, the teachers in this study that indicated they regarded their job to be meaningful, also indicated that they were likely to remain in their current position and were thus unlikely to look for a job elsewhere.

Analyses Investigating Overall Job Satisfaction

59 out of 62 participants from these 5 campuses, of a special services school district, indicated that they found their work to be either “quite meaningful” or “extremely meaningful”, with a 46 (74.19%), of the participants indicating they find their work to be “extremely meaningful”. Furthermore, only 3 participants indicated they found their job either “moderately meaningful” (3.23) or “slightly meaningful” (1.61), with no participants indicating they find their work to be “not at all meaningful” (0.00%).

Table 1

Survey Response Indicating Job Satisfaction, “ How Meaningful Do You Feel Your Work Is?”

Answer Choices	% of Responses	# of Responses
Extremely Meaningful	74.19%	46
Quite Meaningful	20.97%	13
Moderately Meaningful	3.23%	2
Slightly Meaningful	1.61%	1
Not at all Meaningful	0.00%	0

Analyses Investigating Overall Attrition

The researcher also expected, if participants regarded their work as meaningful that they would also be unlikely to leave their school district. The likeliness or unlikeliness of the participants looking for another job outside the company is an indicator of attrition. Moreover, 56 of 63 participants indicated that they are “slightly or “not at all likely” to look for another job outside of the company, with 48 (77.42%) indicating that they are “not at all likely” to leave. Moreover, as seen in the chart below, only 3 respondents (4.84%) indicated they were “very” or “extremely likely” to look for another job outside of the company. However, the researcher did find that these 3 participants (participant 20.60.61) indicated that they did regard their work to be “extremely meaningful.” This would then indicate that for these individuals despite their regard for the meaningfulness of their work, are likely to look for another job. When looking further at how these participants answered the remaining questions, it is clear that they are “always (2 respondents)” or “most of the time (1 respondent)” *stressed* at work. The implications of these findings agree with the research conducted by Denobile & McCormick (2005) on work related stress and attrition. They attested that, teachers, in relation to other employers, have been thought to experience high levels of work related stress. In addition Chang (2009), adds that this stress can lead to inadequacies in emotional and intellectual tools, which can, “...sometimes lead to burnout, depression or other physical and psychological health related issues.”

Continually, these 3 respondents also find their work to be “extremely challenging (2 respondents)” or quite challenging (1 respondent).” Gehrke and McCoy (2007), suggested that special educators face a variety of difficult challenges. Their research

suggests that special education teachers spend a relatively large amount of time outside the classroom in order to understand students IEP's and how to connect it to their curriculum and abilities. This aspect of "challenging" may be a possible reason why these 3 respondents are wanting to look for another job. Nevertheless, 2 of these 3 respondents "extremely likely" to look for another job outside their school district, did indicate that they like their job "a great deal" and "always" look forward to going to work and are also motivated by their supervisor, "extremely well." It is possible than that, for these respondents, the nature of their job being challenging, which in turn may resonate in increased stress levels, are the prominent factors responsible for the their, "extremely likely" response to looking for another job outside the company.

Table 2

Survey Responses Indicating Attrition, “How Likely Are You To Look For Another Job Outside The Company?”

Answer Choices	% Of Responses	# Of Responses
Extremely Likely	3.23%	2
Very Likely	1.61%	1
Moderately Likely	4.84%	3
Slightly Likely	12.90%	8
Not at all Likely	77.42%	48

Chapter 5

Discussion

Overview of the Study

Job satisfaction has been largely related, as the above literature suggests, to attrition and burnout rates for teachers. However, when it comes to specifically special education teachers, the uniqueness of their student population, and the rewarding nature it may entail, it was necessary to conduct this study and assess if these implications combat or affect attrition rates for this population of participants. Results were obtained from an anonymous study via the Internet through Survey Monkey secured questions relating to job satisfaction and attrition.

The current study predicted to find that teachers who indicated that they find their job to be meaningful will thus be unlikely to look for another job outside of their company. For purposes of this population, this meant that the special education teachers who find their work to be meaningful, will not be likely to seek employment outside of their current school district. The study found that there was an association between these two variables; teachers who found their work to be meaningful are not likely to look for another job outside of their company, and those that indicated that they do not regard their work to be meaningful, are likely to look for another job outside of their company.

Implications

The implications of this study suggest that special education teachers who regard their work to be meaningful are not likely to look for another job outside of their school district, despite how challenging they regard their work to be. Furthermore, the implications also suggest that special education teachers who regard their work to be

“moderately” to “slightly” meaningful are likely to look for another job outside of their current school district. It should also be noted that no participant indicated that they do not find their job to meaningful whatsoever (“Not at all meaningful”). Furthermore, implications of this study may also suggest that special education teachers, although possibly dealing with more challenges with their students compared to those general education teachers, are less likely to experience burnout and attrition, because they find their work to be meaningful and rewarding.

Explanations and Limitations

The current study utilized a survey to gain participant responses on questions relating to job satisfaction and attrition. Considerable limitations include that the questions, although not developed by the researcher, were picked by the researcher and molded into one survey as the researcher saw fit in relation to job satisfaction and attrition. Other substantial limitations to consider are that because this self reported measure uses ordinal data, the distances between the answer choices cannot be measured. For example, some participants may not appropriately understand the difference between “moderately meaningful” and “quite meaningful”. This is a definite limitation of ordinal data and likert scales. Furthermore, because the email was sent through work email and carried out in a work environment and not personal email, or at home, there may be unconscious bias towards certain positive responses, as participants may feel their superiors may want them to answer (even though they were assured their answers would remain anonymous).

Sample size is another probable limitation and it is possible that those who are not happy with their work environment are the same people who would not care to fill out the

said survey. In regards to the sample size, no demographic information was asked or assessed. This is a limitation as there may be variability depending on the length of time the teacher has been teaching at that current school district, and in turn, this may affect attrition rates. Also, there is a sample bias because the designated school is a public program but is exclusively a special education program. Furthermore, because of this, the researcher cannot generalize to special education teachers in other typical situations.

The question on the provided survey regarding attrition read, “How likely are you to look for another job outside of the company.” A limitation of this exists in that it is unclear whether or not this means current teachers are looking for another job outside of their school district in another school district or they are looking for another job outside of teaching altogether. This is a definite limitation that should be considered.

Future Directions

There are a multitude of options for future directions. Furthermore, future research should look to see how “stress” plays a part in job satisfaction and attrition and how teachers are defining stress themselves. It would also be useful to see how “length or time” at a specific school district plays a role in ones regard for the meaningfulness of their work and how it relates to their feelings of burnout. When discussing some of the most prominent reasons why teachers, on all levels, experience high levels of burnout and attrition, the literature tends to suggest that challenges, stress and support play a key role in both satisfaction and attrition for this profession. As mentioned previously, this population of participant teachers, were teachers from a Special Services school with self-contained classrooms to fit the needs of their special needs students. For example, some campuses served just the needs of autistic children while some campuses served the

needs of students with behavioral and emotional issues. Future research may prove useful in seeing how this compares to special needs students in a district school, with a more inclusive setting of teaching and to assess whether or not meaningfulness of ones regard for their work is still as high as it was for this population of participants. The assumption being that a Special Services school with the increased ability and support for their students, may add to both the meaningfulness and therefore make teachers more likely to stay within that school. Teachers in this population, have resources easily accessible, such as constant collaboration with speech, physical, and occupational therapists, school psychologists, social workers, BCBA's BCaBA's, behavior interventionists, Learning disability consultants and a variety of other educational specialists. Vice versa, teachers in a district school who work with special needs students in a general education population, may not have the added level of support such as speech, physical and occupational therapists, school psychologists, Behavior analysts and so on. This in turn could affect the progress of their special needs students and may affect said teachers regard for the satisfaction of their job which may then affect their likelihood to stay within their school district.

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Appendix

Job Satisfaction and Attrition

1. I am 18 years or older and am voluntarily taking this survey

yes

no

Other (please specify)

2. How meaningful do you feel your work is?

Extremely meaningful

Quite meaningful

Moderately meaningful

Slightly meaningful

Not at all meaningful

3. In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work?

Always

Most of the time

About half of the time

Once in a while

Never

4. How challenging is your job?

Extremely challenging

Quite challenging

Moderately challenging

Slightly challenging

Not at all challenging

5. How likely are you to search for a new job in the next 30 days?

Extremely likely

Quite likely

Moderately likely

Slightly likely

Not at all likely

6. How often do you look forward to going to work?

Always

Most of the time

About half the time

Once in a while

Never

7. How well does your supervisor motivate you to do your best work?

Extremely well

Quite well

Moderately well

Slightly well

Not at all well

8. Do you like your job, neither like nor dislike it, or dislike it?

Like a great deal

Like a moderate amount

Like a little

Neither like nor dislike

Dislike a little

Dislike a moderate amount

Dislike a great deal

9. Does your supervisor take too much time to make decisions, too little time, or about the right amount of time?

Much too much

Somewhat too much
Slightly too much
About the right amount
Slightly too little
Somewhat too little
Much too little

10. How important is team work to your employer?

Extremely important
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not at all important

11. How comfortable do you feel voicing your concerns to your supervisor?

Extremely comfortable
Quite comfortable
Moderately comfortable
Slightly comfortable
Not at all comfortable

12. How often did you feel your contributions were recognized?

Always
Most of the time
About half the time
Once in a while
Never

13. How likely are you to look for another job outside the company?

Extremely likely

Very likely

Moderately likely

Slightly likely

Not at all likely