

**SOCIAL SUPPORT, PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS
AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AS PREDICTORS
OF INTENTION TO STAY**

JEANNÈ HIGGS

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SUPERVISOR: DR. ELRIE BOTHA

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REMARKS

Please take note of the following:

As prescribed by the policy of the Programme for Industrial Psychology at the North-West University, this study made use of the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA).

This mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

DECLARATION

I, JEANNÈ HIGGS, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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SUMMARY

TITLE: Social support, psychological conditions and work engagement as predictors of intention to stay

KEYWORDS: Social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, intention to stay, teachers, education, mediation.

Education in South Africa plays an important role in the economy and in the future of the people of our country. There is a major shortage of suitably qualified teachers, not only in South Africa but worldwide. Other problems that exist within the teaching profession are teacher strikes, large number of learners in classes, violence, depression, anxiety, to name a few. Many teachers leave the profession as they are faced with all these different problems. It is therefore necessary to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Some teachers find pleasure from all these stressors and they can be described as engaged in their work. Hence, a shift towards a positive psychology mind-set is needed for teachers to stay in the teaching profession. Social support can be regarded as a positive mechanism between co-workers to show concern for each other's feelings and to encourage good work performance. Social support is therefore a key factor in retaining teachers.

The psychological conditions (psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability) are included in this study to examine how teachers experience themselves at the school and how psychological conditions influence their work engagement. The more social support colleagues receive, and the more engaged they are in their work, the more likely they are to stay in the profession.

The general objective of this study was to investigate teachers' intention to stay in the teaching profession. A cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. A quantitative approach was followed by selecting a convenience sample of participants (N=233) in the Gauteng East district. The measuring instruments that were administered include the Work Experiences Scale and the Work Engagement Scale (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004), and the Intention to Stay Scale (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007). The statistical analysis was carried out by using the SPSS programme (SPSS, 2009).

Statistically significant relationships were found between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay. The results confirmed that social support and work engagement were significant predictors of intention to stay. The relationship between social support and work engagement was mediated by psychological conditions.

Some of the recommendations include that schools should implement formal or informal support groups to maintain productivity as well as to create an environment that is safe. These support groups will make teachers more available to each other in order to discuss different challenges and initiatives. Regarding the recommendations for future research it came about that qualitative research would show the potential to identify vital factors that have not been recognised by this study where only certain questionnaires were used to find data amongst teachers.

To conclude, this study suggests that social support and work engagement are vital constructs to consider when conducting research on the intention to stay of employees, and that psychological conditions plays a role in the relationship between social support and work engagement. Therefore, these dimensions also seem to have an influence on teachers' work and their intention to stay in the teaching profession.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Problem Statement

Education plays an important role in the economy of South Africa. Gibb (2010) argues that cognitive skills promote gross domestic product (GDP) growth through increased productivity and innovation. Furthermore, he states that for South Africans to succeed in modern economy, basic academic skills need to be made available. According to SAinfo (2007), South Africa's rate of spending on education is high when compared with international standards. Education utilises 6.6% of the country's GDP and includes 17.7% of the government's total spending. Besides the fact that a large amount of money is spent on education, there is a big need for positive teachers in order to contribute to the quality of education.

Worldwide there is a shortage of teachers and a problem with the retention of teachers with qualifications. Issues of salary, low status, and morale give rise to these problems (Cockburn, 2000). According to Ingersoll (2001), up to 50 percent of teachers quit the teaching profession in their first 10 years of teaching. Research, reports that among the teachers that stay in the teaching profession, half of them change careers, whereas only a quarter retired (Feng, 2005; Mbanjwa, 2010).

The Department of Education mentions that there is a need for 20 000 teachers each year, but only about 8 000 teachers are produced. Moreover, the South African Democratic Teacher Union reveals that teaching is not as attractive as it used to be, as they don't receive the necessary support (Mbanjwa, 2010).

In addition, there are major issues that trouble education in South Africa, such as racism, violence, teacher strikes and unskilled personnel (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005; Jackson, Rothmann & Van der Vijver, 2006).

Jansen (2002, 2005) identified a lack of suitably qualified and motivated teachers, appropriate textbooks and learning material. Additionally, quite a few studies indicated that depression, anxiety and job dissatisfaction are experienced by more and more educators today (Pomaki & Anagnostopoulou, 2003; Sari, 2004; Van Tonder & Williams, 2009).

In the work context there are many problems that have been reported, such as poor relationships with colleagues, unsatisfactory school management and administration, work pressure, unsatisfying working conditions, limited promotional opportunities, educational procedures and policies, and pupil behaviour and attitudes (Clarkson & Hodgkinson, 2007; Zeffane & McLoughlin, 2006). Furthermore, Buthelezi (2003) listed other shortages, like inadequate training, vandalism and a scarcity of classrooms.

Currently, even internationally, teachers face many pressures. Factors contributing to this are: dissatisfaction with the quality of education taking place, along with schools that face challenges such as staff shortages and shifting levels of parental involvement (Ingersoll, 2001; Sari, 2004; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Thus, the above factors or issues can lead to a decrease in the quality of education. A process of solving these immense problems can be subscribed to social support. A key role of social support in the workplace is the encouragement of good work performance (Gates, 2000). Langford, Browsher, Maloney, and Lillis (1997) define social support as the assistance and protection given to others, especially individuals. Social support can be explained by the type of support one is receiving or expects to receive from individuals that regularly come into contact with that person in some way.

An individual's social environment and changeable levels of support in times of need are characteristics of social support (Snow, Swan, Raghavan, Connell, & Klein, 2003). Research suggests that principals have to engage in a number of support behaviours such as feedback, encouragement, acknowledgement, problem solving and participant decision making. Employees that perceive high levels of social support tend to feel obligated to the organisation, and therefore will be more committed to their work. Research shows that teachers who perceive support express more engagement and motivation (Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

The psychological conditions is researched in order to investigate the degree to which teachers engage

in their work. In several studies mediating effects of psychological conditions have been researched (Khan, 1990; May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Olivier and Rothman, 2007). The three psychological conditions include psychological meaning, psychological safety, and psychological availability.

Khan (1990, P.703-704) defines psychological meaningfulness as “a feeling that one is receiving a return on investment of one’s self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy”. In a teaching environment, Aelterman, Engels, van Petegem and Verhaeghe (2007) comment that general wellbeing can be determined by the way a teacher derives meaning from experiences and factors surrounded by the school. A variety of job characteristics like effective communication, advancement, good relationships with colleagues and opportunities to learn and participate, enable psychological meaningfulness for individuals (Jackson et al., 2006).

Teachers must show an increased openness to new ideas, and be encouraged to show an interest in personal development. This approach may serve to bridge the gap between current practices and new initiatives. However, this can only be done by creating a psychological safe environment (Lipton & Wellman, 2007). May et al. (2004) explain that individuals who feel comfortable enough in their environment to express their true self are likely to experience “safety” at work.

Khan (1990) and May et al. (2004) state that colleagues’ relationships that are supportive and trustworthy in nature are expected to create feelings of safety at work.

Moreover, Khan (1990) explains that individuals with pleasing interpersonal interactions, along with support from others, encourages a sense of belonging and a sense of social character which enhances psychological safety. Psychological safety is defined by Khan (1990, p.708) as “feeling able to show and employ oneself without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career”.

Khan (1990, p.14) defines psychological availability as, “the sense of having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to engage at a particular moment.” Non-work proceedings, physical and emotional draining, along with insecurity and as a lack of support, can predict negative outcomes and may influence psychological availability (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Psychological availability

considers the willingness and confidence of individuals to engage in their work (May et al., 2004).

With the emergence of positive psychology there has been a greater interest in the constructs that emphasise the strengths of the individual; i.e. those that can be seen in the concept of work engagement. Much research has been conducted on work engagement in a variety of contexts, including the teaching profession (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Freeney & Tiernan 2009; Hansen, Sandvik, & Selnes, 2003; Jackson et al., 2006; Khan, 1990; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007).

Khan (1990, p.694) defines engagement as, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Even though the state of education is not as effective as it is supposed to be, and that teachers are faced with many problems, there are still some teachers that show devotion towards the teaching profession. This devotion can be referred to as work engagement.

Engaged teachers feel vigorous, motivated and optimistic in their work (Jackson et al., 2006) and this state can play an essential role when confronting and eliminating problems. Some individuals experience enjoyment despite being exposed to high job demands and long working hours (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) explain that from a positive psychology perspective these individuals could be described as being engaged in their work. The positive cognitive appraisal of situations can enhance an individual's well-being. Job characteristics such as good relationships with colleagues, opportunities to participate, role clarity, effective communication, and independence generate meaningfulness and security among individuals, which is essential in order to feel engaged with one's job (Khan, 1990; May et al., 2004).

Work engagement, and the extent to which employees are motivated in their work, have been shown to have a direct influence on an employees' intention to stay in their profession (Torquati, Raikes, &

Huddleston-Casas, 2007). Several studies conclude that a positive relationship was found between work engagement, commitment and the intention to stay (Ferguson, 2007; Hansen et al., 2003). According to Cho, Johanson and Guchait (2009), employees experiencing work engagement have a tendency to believe in the values and goals of the organisation, invest effort in the achievement of these organisational goals, and are likely to stay longer.

Tett and Meyer (1993), define intention to stay as the employee's conscious and deliberate wilfulness to stay with an organisation. Much research has been conducted regarding the attachment to work, the value individuals place on work, and variables that can influence an employee's intention to continue or stay at work (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007; Shacklock, Brunetto, & Nelson, 2009; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Torquati et al., 2007).

The most important determinants of intent to stay in teaching are workplace conditions, job satisfaction and role related problems, principle support and stress (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Research has found that support is an essential aspect of intention to stay (Khowaja, Merchant, & Hirani, 2005). Similarly, managers that use supportive measures such as recognition appear to have greater success with employees' intention to stay at work (Sourdif, 2004). Teachers (especially new teachers) are likely to leave the profession when they are facing numerous problems (Blair-Larsen, 1998). Conditions under which a person works are crucial to determine engagement and intention to stay. Teachers that show tenure in the profession are found to be more likely to remain in the field (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Positive attitudes toward work have an effect on the intention to continue in the profession.

Working together on problems and issues can facilitate the development of a collaborative mind-set (Huxham & Vangen, 2004). Therefore, teachers will be more inclined to stay in the teaching profession if schooling conditions like good support, psychological conditions and work engagement are created. To address these issues and problems, motivated and vigorous educators are needed (Jackson et al., 2006). Thus, it is necessary to change the mind-set of teachers into a positive psychology perspective in order for them to want to stay in the teaching profession.

The following figure explains the relationships that are hypothesised in this study. It is hypothesised

that social support and work engagement will predict intention to stay. Another hypothesis explains that psychological conditions will mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement.

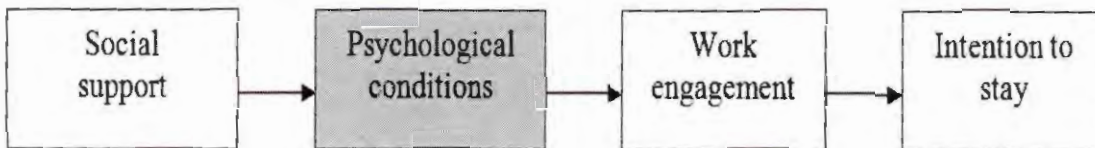


Figure 1: Hypothesised relationship between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay

1.1.2 Research questions

The following research questions emerge from the problem statement:

- How are social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay conceptualised in the literature?
- Do statistically significant relationships exist between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay?
- Does social support predict intention to stay?
- Does work engagement predict intention to stay?
- Do psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement?
- What recommendations can be made for future research?

1.1.3 Expected contribution of the study

Contribution for the individual

- Principals, teachers and the governing body can become aware of the impact that wellness has to reflect best practices.
- Teachers and principals will recognise the importance of a positive mind-set which may change the way they perceive their job.

- Individuals can recognise that being engaged in one's work can contribute to a better quality of education.
- Teachers will be able to provide support to other employees if they are supported in the different tasks and activities that they perform.

Contribution for organisations in South Africa

- The results of this study can help organisations or educational departments to implement interventions.
- Much higher standards can be achieved if teachers receive enough social support and, in the long term, address teachers' intention to stay.
- The Department of Education can realise that the conditions under which individuals work will have an effect on teachers' intention to stay in the profession and they may try to control these conditions.
- The Department of Education may recognise that teachers who show good social support are more likely to be proactive and meet the goals set for the school.

Contribution for industrial and organisational psychology literature

- Little information exists about teachers' intent to stay in the teaching profession, especially in the South African context.
- A good understanding on how schools can retain teachers, and also more importantly, contribute to teachers' engagement, which can impact on the quality of education, will be highlighted.
- The Industrial or organisational psychologist will gain sufficient knowledge about the wellness of teachers and their intent to stay in the teaching profession.
- Industrial psychologists, together with educational departments can implement interventions as a supportive measure in order to change teachers' mind-sets about the profession.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate teachers' intent to stay in the teaching profession.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To determine how social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay are conceptualised according to the literature.
- To determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay.
- To determine if social support predicts intention to stay.
- To determine if work engagement predicts intention to stay.
- To determine if psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement.
- To make recommendations for future research.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.3.1 Research approach

A quantitative research approach is used for this study. Struwig and Stead (2001) describe quantitative research as a form of conclusive research involving large representative samples and moderately structured data collection procedures. For the purpose of this study, a cross-sectional field survey will be followed. Primary data will also be used.

1.3.2 Research method

The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The results are reported in the form of a scientific research article.

1.3.2.1 Literature review

In phase 1 a complete review regarding social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay are conducted. The sources that will be consulted includes: EbscoHost, Emerald, Google Scholar, ProQuest, SACat, and SAePublications. The keywords that are utilised is social support, psychological conditions (psychological meaning, psychological safety and psychological availability), work engagement, job engagement, intention to stay, intention to continue, teacher retention, education and teachers, and mediation.

1.3.2.2 Research setting

The participants that will be approached for this study is primary school teachers mainly in the Section 21 schools. Section 21 schools (previously referred to as Model C schools) are partially supported by Government funds, but are still responsible for purchasing their own textbooks, stationery, paying their own water and electricity bills etc.

The cluster where the participants is situated is the Gauteng Ekurhuleni district, which is part of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). The major characteristics of this setting are that it includes only one cluster (primary schools) and the sample element will only consists of teachers.

1.3.2.3 Establishing researcher roles

Before any data could be collected, the GDE needed to give approval for the research to be conducted. The GDE required a complete research proposal and a description of the instruments to be used.

1.3.2.4 Research participants

In this study a non-probability (convenience) sample ($n = 233$) is used. According to Struwig and Stead (2001) the advantages of convenience sampling are flexibility and time efficiency. The sample consists of primary school teachers in the Gauteng Ekurhuleni district, which forms part of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). The participants from both male and female gender groups are approached. Different racial groups such as African, Coloured, Indian and Whites will be asked to participate in this study. The participants will also differ in terms of their age and marital status, as well as level of education, whereby the lowest level of education will be Grade 12 and the highest will be tertiary education.

1.3.2.5 Research procedure

Permission from the principal will be requested to arrange a meeting for data gathering. A meeting will be scheduled with each school. A consent letter will be provided to each teacher, as well as the principal of each school, in order to indicate their willingness to participate and address issues such as confidentiality, anonymity of results, and informed consent. The researcher will explain the nature of the study along with the measuring instruments. The motivation and contribution of the research will be discussed, along with the ethical considerations, before the questionnaires will be handed out.

The individuals will complete the questionnaire during the time scheduled for the meeting. The questionnaires will be collected directly after the participants had completed it. This ensures that teachers have sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. Guaranteed participation will be the result of this approach. A report will be provided to every school after the research was conducted.

1.3.2.6 Measuring instruments

A Biographical Questionnaire is used to identify teachers' personal characteristics. This questionnaire includes gender, age, marital status, race, language and level of education.

Social support is measured by the Work Experiences Scale of May et al. (2004). The sections that are used for this particular measurement is "Rewarding co-worker relations" and "Supportive supervisor relations". Both rewarding co-worker relations and supportive supervisor relations consist of 10 items.

Examples of the measuring items are: "My co-workers value my input" (rewarding co-worker relations) and "Employees are treated fairly by my supervisor" (supportive supervisor relations). All items used are measured with a 5-point Likert format varying from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The reliability (alpha coefficients) are 0,93 and 0,95 respectively. In the study of Oliver and Rothmann (2007) the reliability coefficients were 0,95 and 0,96 respectively.

Psychological conditions are measured using the Work Experiences Scale of May et al. (2004). All the items that are used by this scale are measured with a 5-point Likert format varying from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. Examples of the questions are: "The work I do on this job is meaningful to me"; "I am afraid to express my opinions at work"; "I am confident in my ability to think clearly at work". Alpha coefficients of the different measures are respectively 0,90 (psychological meaning), 0,71 (psychological safety) and 0,85 (psychological availability). In a South African study (Olivier and Rothman, 2007) Cronbach alpha coefficients varied between 0,41 (Psychological safety) and 0,92 (Psychological meaningfulness).

The Work Engagement Scale of May et al. (2004) is used to measure work engagement levels. The scale consists of 13 items ($\alpha = 0,77$), where four items are reversed scored. All the items used by this scale are measured with a 5-point Likert format varying from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The measuring instrument is divided into three sections: cognitive ("Performing my job is so absorbing I forget about everything else"), emotional ("I get excited when I perform well on my job") and physical ("I stay until the job is done").

Mayfield and Mayfield's (2007) Intention to Stay Scale will be used for this study. The scale consists of seven items, where three items measure positive feelings ("I would like to work for my current employer until I retire") and four items measure negative feelings towards the organisation ("I am actively looking for another job").

Positive feelings correlate with the teachers' desire to remain within the teaching environment, whereas negative feelings capture the teachers' intention to separate from the environment. This instrument is measured with 5-point agree-disagree responses, where 1 represents strongly disagree, and 5 represents strongly agree. The study of Mayfield and Mayfield (2007) shows reliability coefficients of 0,77 and 0,66 for negative effects and positive effects respectively.

1.3.2.7 Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis will be carried out using the SPSS programme (SPSS Inc., 2009). Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse data by determining the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis. Cronbach alpha coefficients will be used to measure the validity and also the reliability of the constructs of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). The cut-off point for coefficient alpha used will be 0,70.

The relationship between the variables will be specified using Pearson product-momentum correlations. The level of statistical significance is set at $p < 0,01$. Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) will be used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The practical significance of correlation coefficients are set with a medium effect ($p \geq 0,30$) and a large effect ($p \geq 0,50$). The American Psychological Association (APA) supports the reporting of effect sizes in their Publication Manual (APA, 2009).

Regression analysis will be conducted to determine whether social support predicts intention to stay. The same applies for determining whether work engagement predicts intention to stay. Furthermore, regression analysis will also be conducted to investigate if psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement. Baron and Kenny (1986) recommend four steps in order to test for mediation. According to these authors, beta coefficients of different regression equations must be compared. Firstly, the mediator should be predicted by the independent variable. Secondly, the dependent variable should be predicted by the mediator, and thirdly, by the independent variable. Lastly, the dependent variable should be regressed on the independent variable, controlling for the mediator. If all steps prove significant, perfect mediation holds when, controlling for the mediator, the influence of the independent variable on the dependant variable decreases to a non-

significant level.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a thorough background was presented in terms of the problems teachers are faced with. A detailed literature review was conducted on the variables that are included in this study. The variables include social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay. General and specific objectives are set in order to meet the intended outcome of the study. The GDE gave their permission to conduct the study. Statistical analyses are performed using the SPSS programme (SPSS Inc., 2009).

1.5 ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research Article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, recommendations and limitations

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**CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Social support, psychological conditions and work engagement as predictors of intention to stay

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate teachers' intention to stay in the teaching profession. A cross-sectional survey design was used, where a convenience sample (n=233) of teachers were taken in the Gauteng East district. The Work Experiences Scale, Work Engagement Scale and Intention to Stay Scale were administered. Statistically significant relationships were found between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay. The results confirmed that social support and work engagement were significant predictors of intention to stay. The relationship between social support and work engagement was mediated by psychological conditions.

Introduction

South Africa is facing a critical shortage of teachers (Bush, Joubert, Kiggund, & Van Rooyen, 2010; Roberts, 2009). The lack of qualified and experienced teachers becomes a serious crisis in schools, as a number of new teachers cannot replace the experience being lost (Pampillas, 2004).

Like other countries, education is essential for the economy and for forming a future generation that will not only have an influence on our future, but also on the future of our children and grandchildren. The Department of Education is aware of the shortage of experienced teachers and is addressing the problem by training more teachers (SAPA, 2010). However the assumption is that they have a tendency to ignore the needs of the current teachers causing them to leave the profession (Roberts, 2009), therefore the problem is not solved.

Salary issues, low morale, lack of support, motivation, promotional opportunities, classrooms shortages and teacher strikes give rise to the above mentioned problems (Ingersoll, 2001; Jackson, Rothmann & van der Vijver, 2006; Mbanjwa, 2010; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Research shows that up to 50 percent of teachers leave the teaching profession in their first 10 years of teaching, and among the

teachers that stay in the profession, half of them change careers and a quarter retire (Feng, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Mbanjwa, 2010). As a result, teachers' intent to stay in the profession is very important (Pampallis, 2004).

The main objective of this study was to investigate teachers' intent to stay in the profession. In this study the researcher attempted to explore social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay.

Literature conceptualising

A key role of social support in the workplace is the encouragement of good work performance and commitment (Gates, 2000). Langford, Browsher, Maloney and Lillis (1997) define social support as the assistance and protection given to others. Social support can be explained by the type of support one is receiving, or expects to receive, from individuals that regularly come into contact with that person in some way. An individual's social environment and changeable levels of support in times of need is a considerable characteristic of social support (Snow, Swan, Raghavan, Connell, & Klein, 2003).

Supervisors who are supportive show concern for employees' needs and feelings; they give constructive feedback, include employees in decision making, and help them solve problems at work (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004). Interpersonal relationships can be regarded as positive support between employees (Khan, 1990).

In contrast, some researchers found a negative side of social support, such as inappropriate help, criticism, anger, overprotection and insensitivity (Chien-Huey & Schaller, 2009; Cimarolli & Boerner, 2005) which affected individuals' feelings of personal control (Shirey, 2004). Similarly, Rhoads and Eisenberger (2002) show that low levels of perceived organisational support forecast job strain (fatigue, anxiousness) in employees. Snow et al. (2003) report that psychological strain and physical ill health conditions can be predicted if there is a lack of social support. Thus, the support from colleagues might make a significant impact among employees.

Brouwers, Tomic, and Boluijt (2011) report that colleague support helps prevent depersonalisation and exhaustion among teachers. Frequent and regular interaction with employees and supervisors evolves to greater colleague support that will help employees to be better informed, encourage discussion, build consensus, solve issues, and trust one another (Collins, 2008). Furthermore, this kind of support might enhance the well-being of employees and improve their work engagement. Therefore, it could be argued that it is important for principals to encourage interpersonal relations within their schools as a method of support.

Research suggests that principals have to engage in a number of support behaviours, such as feedback, encouragement, acknowledgement, problem solving and participant decision making (Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Joubert & van Rooyen, 2009). A low intensity of support is related to employee disengagement and low work productivity (Attridge, 2009). On the other hand, employees that perceive high levels of social support tend to feel obligated to the organisation, and therefore will be more engaged in their work.

Research shows that teachers who perceive support express more engagement (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Moreover, Singh and Billingsley (1996) report that if supervision is adequate, teachers are more likely to stay in their profession. Consequently, for teachers to stay in the profession, a great amount of work engagement must be experienced.

Khan's study (1990) examines how individuals' experiences of themselves and their work context influence moments of personal engagement and disengagement. He argues that individuals ask themselves three fundamental questions in each role situation: "a) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? b) How safe is it to do so? c) How available am I to do so?" (p.703). According to Kahn (1990), these three psychological conditions affect employees' engagement.

Psychological meaningfulness refers to the relation of the work goal and the individual's distinctive morals and values (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Psychological safety is associated with social systems that create an environment where individual's can express themselves and is non-threatening (May, et al., 2004). Psychological availability is associated with various resources which help or hinder

individual's to engage in their daily tasks (Khan, 1990). According to Khan (1990), May et al. (2004) and Olivier and Rothmann (2007) it is theorised that the psychological conditions will affect the degree of an individuals' work engagement. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the mediating effect of psychological conditions on the relationship between social support and work engagement.

The recent focus on positive psychology and positive organisational behaviour suggests that work engagement draws much attention to the strength and positivity of employees (Kong, 2009). Work engagement is defined as the "harnessing of organisations' members' selves to their work roles [by which they] employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances" (Khan, 1990, p.694).

Engaged teachers feel vigorous, motivated and optimistic in their work (Jackson et al., 2006) and can play an essential role to meet and eliminate problems. More specifically, a recent study of school teachers confirmed that high levels of social support lead to an increase in work engagement (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007). Work engagement, and the extent to which employees are motivated in their work, have been shown to have a direct influence on an employee's intention to stay in their profession (Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston-Casas, 2007).

A study by Hansen, Sandvik, and Selnes (2003) concludes that a positive relationship is found between work engagement and the intention to stay. According to Cho, Johanson, and Guchait (2009), employees experiencing work engagement have a tendency to believe in the values and goals of the organisation, invest effort in the achievement of these organisational goals, and are likely to stay longer.

Mayfield and Mayfield (2007, p.91) define intention to stay "as the complement or positive measure of a worker's intent to turnover; in other words, a worker's intent to remain with an organization". Accordingly, intention to stay can be defined as employees' conscious and deliberate wilfulness to stay with an organisation (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Singh and Billingsley (1996) conclude that some of the most important determinants of intent to stay in teaching are support and workplace conditions. Research finds that recognition is an essential aspect of intention to stay (Khowaja, Merchant, &

Hirani, 2005). Similarly, managers that use supportive measures such as recognition appears to have greater success with employees remaining at work (Sourdif, 2004).

Teachers (especially new teachers) are likely to leave the profession when they are facing numerous problems (Blair-Larsen, 1998). Conditions under which a person works are crucial to determine engagement and intention to stay. Teachers that show tenure in the profession are found to be more likely to remain in the field (Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Positive attitudes towards work have an effect on the intention to continue in the profession. Support can improve an employee's work performance, absenteeism and loyalty, and as a result lead to a greater intention to stay (Angelle, 2006; Bogler, 2001; Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006).

A well designed job affects teachers in a positive manner, as they are more likely to feel involved in their work and show intention to stay in the profession (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). Working together on problems and issues can facilitate the development of a collaborative mind-set (Huxham & Vangen, 2004). To address the issues and problems above, motivated and vigorous educators are needed (Jackson, et al., 2006). The following figure represents the hypothesised relationship between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay.

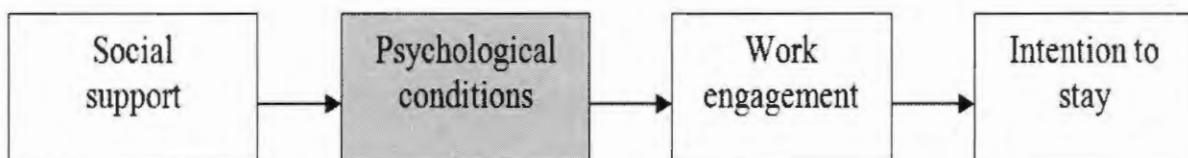


Figure 1: Hypothesised relationship between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the above:

- Hypothesis 1: A statistically significant relationship exists between social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay.

- Hypothesis 2: Social support predicts intention to stay.
- Hypothesis 3: Work engagement predicts intention to stay.
- Hypothesis 4: Psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

A cross-sectional survey design was used in this study, where a sample is drawn from a population at one time (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). A quantitative approach was followed and primary data were collected through standardised questionnaires. The design is also used to assess inter-relationships among variables within a population and will therefore help to achieve the various specific objectives of this research (Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Research method

Participants and procedure

Schools were conveniently selected from an alphabetical list of school names in the Gauteng East area. All the educators at the selected schools were asked to complete the questionnaire. The relevant authorisation from the Gauteng Department of Education was obtained before data were collected.

Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was maintained. Questionnaires were given to 330 educators, of which 233 participated (response rate = 70,61%).

Table 1 below indicates that the respondents were mostly female (78,5%). The characteristics of the participants showed that 74,7% of the study population were white. A great amount of respondents fell into the 'older than 50 years' age group (28,3%). Most of the teachers were married/remarried (62,2%). Educational levels revealed that the majority (49,8%) of participants had a diploma. Most participants were general educators (74,2%).

Table 1

Characteristics of the participants

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	49	21,0
	Female	183	78,5
	Missing	1	0,4
Racial Group	African	36	15,5
	Coloured	5	2,1
	Indian	17	7,3
	White	174	74,7
	Missing	1	0,4
Age	19-30 years	50	21,5
	31-40 years	50	21,5
	41-50 years	65	27,9
	Older than 50 years	66	28,3
	Missing	2	0,9
Marital Status	Single/widow/widower	39	16,7
	Engaged/in a relationship	28	12,0
	Married/remarried	145	62,2
	Divorced	18	7,7
	Separate	3	1,3
Level of education	Grade 12	15	6,4
	Diploma	116	49,8

	Degree	58	24,9
	Post-graduate	41	17,6
	Missing	3	1,3
Type of staff	Educator	173	74,2
	Head of Department	36	15,5
	Deputy principal	17	7,3
	Principal	6	2,6
	Missing	1	0,4

Measuring instruments

Three measuring instruments were used for the purposes of this study: The Work Experiences Scale and the Work Engagement Scale (May *et al.*, 2004), as well as the Intention to Stay Scale (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007). All the measuring instruments used a 5-point agreement-disagreement Likert format varying from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). A biographical questionnaire was included to determine the characteristics of the participants.

The Work Experiences Scale of May *et al.* (2004) was used to measure social support (co-worker relations and supportive supervisory relations). Both rewarding co-worker relations and supportive supervisory relationships were measured with 10 items, with $\alpha = 0,93$ and $\alpha = 0,95$ respectively (May *et al.*, 2004). Examples of the items include: “My co-workers and I have mutual respect for one another” (co-worker relations) and “My supervisor praises good work” (supportive supervisory relationships). In a South African study conducted by Olivier and Rothmann (2007) alpha coefficients of 0,95 and 0,96 were found.

Furthermore, the Work Experiences Scale was also used to measure psychological conditions (psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability) with alpha coefficients, 0,90; 0,71; 0,85 respectively, in previous studies (May *et al.*, 2004). The study by Olivier and Rothmann (2007) reported alpha coefficients for psychological meaningfulness (0,92),

psychological safety (0,41) and psychological availability (0,85). Examples of the items are: "The work I do is very important to me", "I'm not afraid to be myself at work", and "I'm confident in my ability to think clearly at work". This study made use of the psychological conditions as a whole with all 14 items to measure the psychological conditions. This is due to the fact that Psychological safety was insignificant when measured on its own, but as a whole psychological conditions was significant.

The Work Engagement Scale of May *et al.* (2004) was used to determine reactions of educators to different aspects of their work and their work situation. Examples of the items include: "Time passes quickly when I perform my job" and "I really put my heart into my job". Work engagement was measured by 13 items, in the study by May *et al.* (2004) with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,77. The same work engagement scale used in the study by Olivier and Rothmann (2007) found the alpha coefficient to be 0,72.

The Intention to Stay Scale of Mayfield and Mayfield (2007) was used to determine educators' desire to remain within the teaching environment. The scale consists out of 7 items ($\alpha = 0,77$) with the following example: "I expect to be working for my current employer one year from now" (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007). The latter was found in the study of Mayfield and Mayfield (2007).

A biographical questionnaire was included to indicate the gender, age, racial group, marital status, level of education and type of staff of the participants.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the use of the SPSS programme (SPSS Inc., 2009). Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data by determining the means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. Cronbach alpha coefficients (α) were used to measure the reliability of the measuring instruments (Pallant, 2007). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0,01$.

Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The practical significance of correlation coefficients were set with a medium effect ($p \geq 0,30$) and a large

effect ($p \geq 0,50$). The American Psychological Association (APA) supports the reporting of effect sizes in their Publication Manual (APA, 2009).

Multiple regression analyses were carried out to investigate whether social support and work engagement predict intention to stay. Moreover, multiple regression analyses were also used to determine if psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement. Baron and Kenny (1986) recommend four steps in order to test for mediation. According to these authors, beta coefficients of different regression equations must be compared. Firstly, the mediator should be predicted by the independent variable. Secondly, the dependent variable should be predicted by the mediator, and thirdly, by the independent variable. Lastly, the dependent variable should be regressed on the independent variable, controlling for the mediator. If all steps prove significant, perfect mediation holds when, controlling for the mediator, the influence of the independent variable on the dependant variable decreases to a non-significant level.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients

The descriptive statistics and the alpha coefficients of the measuring instruments are reported in Table 2. The Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained on all the measuring instruments varied from 0,69 to 0,90. The alpha coefficient of work engagement was the lowest ($\alpha = 0,69$).

According to Nunnaly and Burnstein (1994), Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0,69 are still acceptable in statistical analysis of social sciences. The scores on the social support, work engagement and intention to stay scale were normally distributed. It therefore appears that the measuring instruments have acceptable levels of internal consistency.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Social support	72,55	12,12	-0,12	0,44	0,90
Psychological conditions	53,47	5,90	-0,53	0,28	0,80
Work engagement	43,00	3,98	0,21	0,17	0,69
Intention to stay	17,47	2,88	-0,15	0,43	0,85

Pearson product-moment correlations

As can be seen in Table 3, a statistically significant correlation was found between social support and psychological conditions ($r = 0,43$; medium effect).

The correlation between social support and work engagement was 0,19 (small effect) and between social support and intention to stay it was 0,37 (medium effect).

Psychological conditions and work engagement were significantly correlated ($r = 0,39$, medium effect). The correlation of intention to stay and psychological conditions was significant ($r = 0,33$ medium effect). In addition, work engagement correlated significantly with intention to stay ($r = 0,40$ medium effect).

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients between Social Support, Psychological Conditions, Work Engagement and Intention to Stay

	1	2	3	4
1. Social support	1,00			
2. Psychological conditions	0,43 ^{***}	1,00		

3. Work engagement	0,19**	0,39*** ⁺	1,00	
4. Intention to stay	0,37*** ⁺	0,33*** ⁺	0,40*** ⁺	1,00

* Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level

⁺ Correlation is practically significant $r > 0,30$ (medium effect)

*** Correlation is practically significant $r > 0,50$ (large effect)

Multiple regression analysis

The results in Table 4 show that approximately 14% of the variance in intention to stay (as measured by the Intention to Stay Scale) is predicted by social support. A statistically significant increase in the R^2 was obtained when work engagement was entered into the regression analysis (change in $R^2 = 12\%$). The results in Table 4 indicate that social support ($\beta = 0,37$) statistically significantly predicted intention to stay and work engagement ($\beta = 0,35$), and statistically significantly predicted intention to stay.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis with Social Support and Work Engagement as Independent Variables and Intention to Stay as Dependant Variable

Model		Unstandardised		Standardised	t	p	F	R	R2	$\Delta R2$
		Coefficients		Coefficients						
		B	SE	Beta						
1	(Constant)	9,08	2,35		3,85	0,00*	32,44	0,37 ^a	0,14	0,14
	Social support	0,18	0,03	0,37	5,70	0,00*				
2	(Constant)	-7,65	3,66		-2,09	0,04*	35,10	0,51 ^b	0,26	0,12
	Social support	0,15	0,03	0,30	4,94	0,00*				

Work engagement	0,41	0,07	0,35	5,72	0,00*
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* $p < 0.05$ statistically significant

Subsequently, a series of multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether social support and work engagement predicted intention to stay and to test whether psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement. Baron and Kenny (1986) recommend four steps in order to test for mediation. According to these authors, beta coefficients of different regression equations must be compared. Firstly, the mediator should be predicted by the independent variable. Secondly, the dependent variable should be predicted by the mediator, and thirdly by the independent variable.

Lastly, the dependent variable should be regressed on the independent variable, controlling for the mediator. If all steps prove significant, perfect mediation holds when, controlling for the mediator, the influence of the independent variable on the dependant variable decreases to a non-significant level. As a number of regression procedures are required to test mediation, Kahn (2006) suggests that an explanation of plain language and a figure could be the simplest way to report mediation. Therefore the following figure represents the results for the test of mediation.

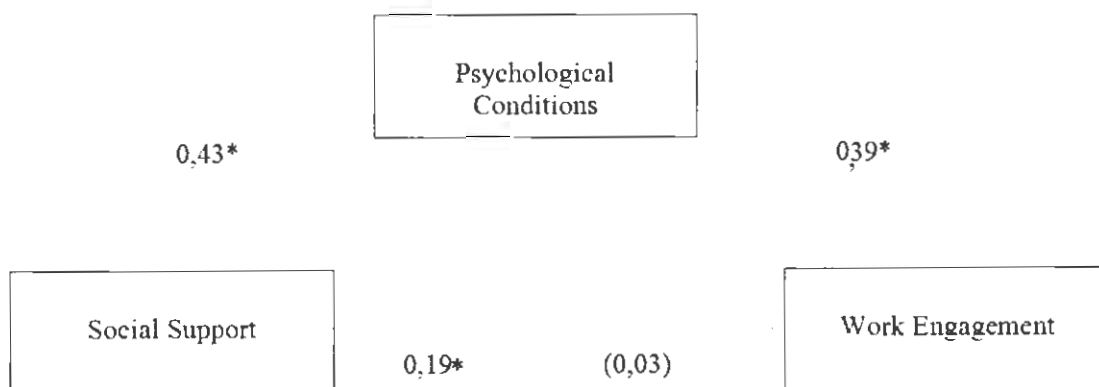


Figure 2: Standard regression coefficients for the relationship between social support and work engagement with psychological conditions as mediator

In parentheses is the standard regression coefficient of the relationship between social support and work engagement when controlling for psychological conditions.

All steps in the regression analyses were significant. In Figure 2 it is evident that the relationship between social support and work engagement decreased from $\beta = 0,19^*$ to a non-significant level of 0,03. Full mediation was therefore established. Therefore, the 4th hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The first objective of this study was to examine the relationships between several constructs that were hypothesised; namely social support, psychological conditions, work engagement, and intention to stay. A second purpose was to establish whether social support and work engagement predict intention to stay. Lastly, it aimed to investigate if psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement.

There were statistically significant correlations between all the variables, which provide evidence to accept hypothesis 1. These findings may be true to the fact that teachers who experience high support have an increase in psychological conditions. The same counts for higher psychological conditions, leads to higher work engagement, and consequently more probability of intention to stay.

The results of this study showed that social support statistically significantly predicts intention to stay in the teaching profession, explaining 14% of the variance. A finding of Cho, Johanson, and Guchait (2009) that employees' perceptions of support are effective in increasing employees' intention to stay is confirmed by this study. Consistent with another study, teachers are more likely to stay in the teaching profession and stay with their current school if a supportive environment is experienced (Ingersoll, 2001). Therefore, the findings of Singh and Billingsley (1996) are supported; namely that principles have an important influence on role-related problems, job satisfaction, and eventually teachers' intention to stay. Hypothesis 2 can therefore be accepted.

From the results it is clear that work engagement together with social support, explaining 26% of the

variance, is the biggest predictor of intention to stay. Findings are conceptually consistent with the study of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), where results show that work engagement is a mediator between job resources, such as supervisory support and turnover intention. Furthermore, the participants in the qualitative study of Kirkpatrick (2007) reveal that work engagement is essential for their retention in the teaching profession. These results are evidence to accept hypothesis 3.

The results of this study confirm that psychological conditions mediate the relationship between social support and work engagement. The work engagement model in the study of Kahn (1990) conceptualises psychological conditions which mediates the effects of specific constructs on employee engagement. The mediating effect of the psychological conditions has been shown in this study. The study of May *et al.* (2004) can be partially supported by this study, in as far as co-worker relationships and supervisory relationships are positively related to psychological conditions. This implies that teachers need to have enough social support at school to fulfil their psychological conditions (in other words, to find meaning in their work, to feel safe in their work, and to make themselves available) in order to be engaged in the work they do. Hypothesis 4 is therefore also accepted.

To conclude, this study suggests that social support and work engagement are important constructs to consider when conducting research on retention or intention to stay, and that psychological conditions play a role in the relationship between social support and work engagement. Therefore, these dimensions also seem to have an influence on teachers' work and their intention to stay in the teaching profession.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter focuses on the conclusions that can be drawn from the study. Findings from the literature as well as empirical results are included in this chapter. The recommendations for future research and limitations will be thoroughly discussed.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS FROM LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

This study explored teachers' intention to stay in the teaching profession. Other variables that were examined from the literature study were social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay.

Literature suggest that social support can be seen as an individual's internal representation of the encouragement and motivation of the social context in which individuals is surrounded and which can be accessed to help to cope with various problems within the workplace as well as personal issues (Snow, Swan, Raghavan, Connell, & Klein, 2003). Overall, findings suggest that social support influences work engagement. Social support from colleagues is essential in positively influencing coping, well-being, work engagement and intention to stay (Attridge, 2009; Shirey, 2004). Social support have a positive effect on reducing burnout, absenteeism, job satisfaction, intent to leave, and organisational commitment (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Research suggests that principals have to engage in a number of support behaviours, such as feedback, encouragement, acknowledgement, problem solving and participant decision making.

In numerous resources it is mentioned that psychological conditions consists out of: Psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability and psychological safety (Khan, 1990; May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). In the literature it was found that psychological conditions were mediating factors for various constructs such as work engagement, rewarding co-worker relationships, supportive supervisory relationships, resources etc. Thus, this study concluded that psychological conditions significantly mediate the relationship between social support and work

engagement.

Research reported that teachers, who perceive support, express more engagement and motivation (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Work engagement and the extent to which employees are motivated in their work, have shown to have a direct influence on an employees' intention to stay in their profession (Torquati, Raikes & Huddleston-Casas, 2007). Some studies conclude that a positive relationship was found between work engagement and the intention to stay (Hansen, Sandvik, & Selnes, 2003; Torquati et al., 2007).

Literature concluded that the most important determinant of intent to stay in teaching was colleague support influences, workplace conditions, job satisfaction and role related problems and stress (Singh. & Billingsley, 1996). Research found that work engagement is an essential aspect of intention to stay (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001).

Through improved understanding of these variables, possible reasons for teacher turnover can be noted. The literature suggests that a number of other factors play a role in teachers' intentions to stay, such as greater rewards and salaries/incentives, passion for children, job satisfaction, commitment, work-role fit etc. The findings of this study conclude that social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay are conceptualised by the literature as reasons to retain teachers.

The variables in this study correlated significantly. As social support increases, an increase in the level of work engagement and the degree to which teachers will stay within the profession can be experienced. The same applies for psychological conditions. Thus, the findings of the study support the hypothesis that social support, psychological conditions, work engagement and intention to stay correlate significantly. In other words, if teachers get the necessary support from their co-workers and principals, they will experience more engagement towards the work they do, which will most probably motivate them to stay in the teaching profession.

It was observed that social support definitely forecasts teachers' intention to stay in the teaching profession. Social support statistically significantly predicts intention to stay in the teaching profession.

explaining 14% of the variance. Therefore, the hypothesis that social support predicts intention stay is accepted by the study. Work engagement has also a significant influence on teachers' intention to stay. Another objective of this study was to investigate if work engagement predicts intention to stay. From the results it is clear that work engagement together with social support, explaining 26% of the variance, is the biggest predictor of intention to stay. This hypothesis was also accepted, due to the fact that the more engaged employees are in the work they do, the more likely they are to stay in their profession, in spite of different stressors or issues that they might face.

The psychological conditions are indeed a mediating factor between social support and work engagement. In other words, the more teachers find meaning in the work they do, are able to express themselves, and have the necessary resources available, the more they are engaged in their work.

Thus, it can be concluded that the teacher shortage is a demand dilemma that can be solved by retaining qualified and trained teachers. It is important for teachers to receive a supportive environment and good psychological conditions at school in order to become engaged in their work, and in the long term, stay in the profession.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.1 Recommendations for schools

Schools should implement formal or informal support groups to maintain productivity as well as to create an environment that is safe. These support groups will make teachers more available to each other in order to discuss different challenges and initiatives. Regular meetings should be scheduled in order for principals and teachers to communicate effectively and to minimise problems (Ingersoll, 2001 Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Principals should realise, through regular meetings and class visits, the impact supported and engaged teachers have in order to reflect best practices at the school (Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994). Being supportive, creating a safe environment, and being available for each other should reveal a change in teachers' mind-sets about the teaching profession. Principals need to mirror objectivity and engagement to make an impact in the quality of education by retaining qualified teachers.

3.2.2 Recommendations for the Department of Education

The Department of Education should consider performing extensive interventions to determine the degree of social support teachers are receiving, the psychological conditions they face at school, their extent of engagement at work, and their intention to stay within the teaching profession. Through these interventions the Department of Education should be able to recognise challenges at schools and implement changes to achieve higher standards. The Department ought to be more involved with schools and their principals to communicate changes, as well as being a support mechanism for principals as they also need support.

Workshops can be implemented to give support to teachers in order for them to feel needed in the work they do, which might help them to be more proactive and thus meet the goals of the school (Pampallis, 2004). By performing these interventions and workshops, teachers will want to stay in the teaching profession.

3.2.3 Recommendations for future research

The present study examined intention to stay in the teaching profession, but not intention to stay at a particular school; it is possible that some participants intend to leave their school for opportunities in other schools (private or public schools) that offer better salaries and workplace support. Future research might find interesting results by conducting research on whether teachers want to leave the teaching profession or just the school they work for (Torquati et al., 2007). Qualitative research would show the potential to identify vital factors that have not been recognised by this study where only certain questionnaires were used to find data amongst teachers.

It is important to recognise that this was a small scale study. Nevertheless, it has raised several important questions which merit further research. How representative are the data collected? How do the majority of teachers feel about their jobs? Which factors in particular contribute to their intention to stay or to leave? Do similar issues play an important role for other professionals? How, and by whom, might teachers be encouraged to view their job in a more positive light?

This study implies that there is a need for future research. It is becoming clear that issues of teacher retention and recruitment are a serious concern.

3.3 LIMITATIONS

This study had various limitations. Firstly, some limitations were detected before the study was conducted. For instance, in this study a cross-sectional design was used and it was not possible to determine the causality of relationships. The small number of participants might also have a significant influence on the results and it is recommended that in future research greater numbers of participants need to be included. It was also recognised that the results could have been more in detail and specific if a qualitative design was followed.

Lastly, after conducting this study a number of limitations were identified. The different subscales of the work experiences scale (psychological meaning, safety and availability) yielded insignificant results. Therefore, it was used as a single construct. More extensive research is necessary for the measurement of psychological safety in South African organisations.

Future research should use a longitudinal approach as well as investigate the mediating effects of different psychological conditions on social support and work engagement in other work contexts. It is also recommended that a qualitative research approach should be followed to determine other antecedents that have an impact on teachers' intention to stay.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study were presented. Conclusions that were discussed were drawn out of the literature and empirical results. Detailed recommendations were considered for the school, for the Department of Education and for future research. Limitations of this study were also summarised.

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