Psychosocial Predictors of Intention to Stay in their Job among Special Education Teachers

Evangelista, Kristine Joy T.
Bullecer, Ma. Fatima V.

The research explored the psychosocial predictors of intention to stay in their job. The researcher focused on the special education special education teachers’ intent to remain in the field as well as its psychosocial predictors such as job satisfaction, commitment, motivation, and school administrator support. Using Quantitative Design, 52 Special Education Teachers ages 30 year-old and up, from various educational institutions who were at 7 years and up experience were given the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), Intention to Stay Survey, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), Work Motivation Inventory, and Support of Supervisor Inventory. Using a multiple regression, the results showed that all independent variables such as, job satisfaction (p=.000, p<.01), commitment (p=.060, p<.03), motivation (p=.000, p<.01), and support of supervisor (p=.892, p<.07) are significant predictors of the dependent variable. Findings then suggest that the best psychosocial predictor of intention to stay in their job among special education teacher was job satisfaction.

Keywords: special education teachers, job satisfaction, commitment, motivation, school administrator support, intention to stay, psychosocial predictors

Every student with special needs deserves a great special education teacher. To meet this goal, there must be an adequate supply of certified and well-prepared educators. Specifically employed to work with children and young people who need extra support or required an advanced program of learning in order to reach the full education potential. It takes a lot of patience, caring and understanding to be a good Special Education teacher. A key aspect of working in the field is identifying individual need and being responsible for creating a safe, stimulating and supportive environment. Special Education is a very challenging career that is why it has a higher rate of turnover than in found in most other professions (Scott, 2013). In 2014, a study by Kraft & West suggested that the national shortage of highly qualified special education teachers is 11.2%. In other words, approximately 45,514 of those serving as special education teachers do not meet required standards. In addition, special education teachers are particularly under qualified – one report found that between 82% and 99% of secondary special education teachers are not highly qualified in the academic content areas that they teach (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). Also, the lack of skills/experience includes fewer hours of teaching, less credentials, more alternative sources of credentials, and less pre-service preparation than other special educators (Henderson, Klein, Gonzalez, & Bradley, 2005). Some believe that the problem of high attrition rates stem directly from this lack of adequate preparation, insinuated by the suggestion to end alternative special education teacher certification avenues (Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). Understanding these reasons why special education teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Westat Research Association (2001), special educators have determined that they were more likely to stay in teaching when their task was convenient, their school was supportive of staff and students, and paperwork did not interfere significantly with their teaching. In addition, workforce conditions that encourage their capabilities and emphasize the worth of individuals contribute to greater retention (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). Billingsley (2003) explained that professional commitment and job satisfaction are important influence for the study of teachers who intend to stay in the organization and building a strong teaching force. In addition, examine the connection of commitment and job satisfaction should help us learn what might be done to enhance commitment and job satisfaction among special education teachers (Billingsley, 2003). Also, by acting on significant and sufficient solutions, the result will help raise the quality of teaching personnel while maintaining a sufficient pool of trained educators. That is why the researcher study about the psychosocial predictors that contribute to those special education teachers intent to stay. The four major psychosocial predictors are: (1) Job Satisfaction, (2) Commitment, (3) Motivation, and (4) School Administrator support.

Understanding the Job Satisfaction among Special Education Teachers

Stephen & Fish (2010) explained the factors that have contributed towards job satisfaction in special education teachers. Most of the participants within this study stated that, they were satisfied with their jobs because, it gave them the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of students with special needs.
In addition, special education teachers experienced an average level of job satisfaction, it also found out that difference in some levels of job satisfaction among different races, but not in genders (Strydom, Beukes, Esterhuyse, and Westhuizen, 2012). Significant correlations were determined in all factors of efficacy, at the same time it is correlated to the nine factors of job satisfaction (McLeod, 2015). Previous studies were related to job satisfaction and work environment, but did not specify the gender differences or gender role. Based on the reviewed studies, a research question was formulated such as is job satisfaction a psychosocial predictor of intention to stay in their job among special education teachers?

Special Education Teachers’ Commitment towards Organization

Special education teachers have a dilemma about a serious shortage (Cancio, Johns & Albrecht, 2013). As a result, concerns over the quality of special education teachers’ professional experiences have risen (Andrews & Brown, 2015). A quantitative research by Bogler & Nir (2015) explained at exploring the common means that may improve organizational effectiveness by focusing on two main facets of organizational qualities: special education teachers commitment and job satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis was used to explain the single variable that predicted the organizational commitment and professional commitment and both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. In addition, a study by Ibrahim, et.al. (2013) showed that inspirational motivation was a factor to teachers’ efficacy and teaching experience. Besides, teachers’ efficacy and teaching experience were predictors of teachers’ commitment to organization, teaching profession and students’ learning. Previous studies were mostly about commitment to organization and lack involvement in other domains of commitment such as profession and teaching, indicate the necessity for leadership. The reviewed studies lead to a research question, is commitment to organization a psychosocial predictor of intention to stay in their job among special education teachers?

Understanding the Motivation for choosing a career as Special Education Teacher

A study conducted by Bremer (2012) explored the influence of motivation on choosing special education as a career has been an ongoing problem. Special education teachers are appreciated mostly for their duty to serve a broad dimensional group of children with educational needs, which is one of the most concentrated and most difficult jobs in the field of education (Payne, 2005). A study by Chong, Forlin & Au (2007) was relevant to teachers in special education combined with, among others, teachers’ characters and determination for inclusion. Given this was noticed as such a significant area, few international studies have been carried out to distinguish pre-service teachers’ care and preparedness for teaching diverse learners (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle, 2006). Among the current studies, there are evidences applicable from the current literature that relates teachers’ career motivation to their opinion towards special and inclusive education and their motivation for their craft (Feng, 2012). Even fewer focus on the special teachers’ motivation for their career choices. The reviewed studies lead to a research question, is motivation a psychosocial predictor of intention to stay in their job among special education teachers?

Understanding the support of School Administrators among Special Education Teachers

School administrators set the tone for the implementation of special education within their schools (Schaaf, Williamson, & Novak, 2015). According to Duhon et al (2014), Special education teachers communicated directly with school administrators about the instructional supports they needed. Such as, special education teachers’ collaborative instructional design and delivery efforts by focusing on collective expertise development and dissemination, implementation strategies, and the development of assessment expertise (Ketterlin-Geller, Baumer, & Lichon, 2015). In addition, Gray (2014) stated that school administrators proactively gather information about instructional needs, like in, some school administrators sends out regular emails asking for the feedback about the special education teacher needs. Previous studies mostly tackled about how school administrators support the needs of special education teachers. The reviewed studies lead to a research question, is school administrators support a psychosocial predictor of intention to stay in their job among special education teachers?

Synthesis

Special Education often incorporates related services, to meet the educational, social, emotional, and
vocational needs of students with disabilities. Special education teacher attrition rates continue to challenge the profession (Guerra et.al., 2015). For over a decade, the shortage of special education teachers has been a primary problem facing in the field of special educators (Berry, 2012). In many cases, positions remain vacant each year because of the special education teachers that are quitting or in a retirement age, and some special education teachers stays in the field (Jones et al., 2013). It is the reason why the researcher would like to study about the psychosocial predictors that contributed to those special education teachers’ decision to remain on the special education career path. The researcher focused on the special education teachers’ intent to remain in the field as well as its psychosocial predictors such as job satisfaction, commitment, motivation, and school administrator support. It specifically sought to answer the following questions: 1) What is the level of intention to stay among Special Education Teachers? and 2) Which among the selected psychosocial factor is the best predictor of intention to stay among Special Education Teachers?

Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative descriptive correlational design was used by the researcher in gathering the data needed. The said design was chosen because, according to Abawi (2008), it determines whether the predictive generalization of a theory hold true. Having said that, the researcher has a goal to know the psychosocial predictors that contribute to the intent to stay among special education teachers.

Participants

A purposive sampling method was used in obtaining the representative sample of the target population, who are Special Education (SPED) teachers here in the Philippines. A total of fifty-two (N=52) SPED teachers, ages 30-year-old and up, from various educational institutions who were at 7 years and up of experience were given the survey questionnaires.

Instruments

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The JSS by Paul Spector (1994) is a 36-item, nine facet scale to assess employee attitudes about the job and aspects of the job. Each facet is assessed with four items, and a total score is computed from all items. A summated rating scale format is used, with six choices per item ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". This questionnaire captures nine facets such as: Coefficient alpha ratings of .75 for Pay, .73 for Promotion, .82 for Supervision, .73 for Fringe Benefits, .76 for Contingent Rewards (performance based rewards), .62 for Operating Procedures (required rules and procedures), .60 for Coworkers, .78 for Nature of Work, and .71 for Communication. The scoring will be 36 to 107 for dissatisfaction, 144 to 216 for satisfaction, and between 108 and 143 for ambivalent.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). The OCQ by Mowday, Steers, and Porter, (1979) is a 15-item questionnaire requires the respondent to answer each item on a 6-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has a reliability of Cronbach’s alpha were .70 and .68. An "R" denotes a negatively phrased and reverse scored items. Those who got 90 to 54 have a strong commitment in their career and for those who got 53 to 15 have a low commitment in their career.

Work Motivation Inventory. The Work Motivation Inventory is a self-made test consist of a 10-item questionnaire requires the respondent to answer each item on a 6-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has a reliability of Cronbach’s Alpha=.924 computed through SPSS.

Support of Supervisor Inventory. The Support of Supervisor Inventory is a self-made test consist of a 10-item questionnaire requires the respondent to answer each item on a 6-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has a reliability of Cronbach’s Alpha=.924 computed through SPSS.

Intention to Stay. The intention to stay by J. P. Gall & M. D. Gall, (1998) is a 28-item questionnaire requires the respondent to answer each item on a 6-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has a reliability of Cronbach’s Alpha=.876. For scoring, those who got 168 to 118 have a higher tendency to stay in their field, 117 to 70 for ambivalent, and for those who got 69 to 28 wants to leave their career.
Procedure
As all the given consents from the authors’ scales, the researcher did a pilot study on organizational commitment questionnaire and intention to stay survey and then revised its scoring and interpretation. Afterwards, the researcher modified and revised items for intention to stay survey, then come up with motivation survey and supervisor support survey. The researcher created a formal letter of consent, which includes the purpose of the study and explanation on what the participation entails. The researcher waited for their confirmation and then go back to distribute the survey questionnaires. The researcher waited for the special education teachers to finish the survey questionnaires, which was done on their convenience, and go back to collect the questionnaires. A total of fifty-two (N=52) survey questionnaires. After gathering the survey questionnaires, the researcher tallied the scores from the survey.

Data Analysis
The researcher used Multiple Regression as statistical instrument since the researcher predicted the value of the dependent variable based on the value of the independent variable.

Results & Discussion
Research Question #1: What is the level of Intention to Stay among Special Education Teachers?

Table 1. Level of Intention to stay among Special Education Teachers (SPED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the levels of intention to stay among special education teachers, on leave level respondents were computed as (M=0.73, SD=0.32); ambivalent (M=0.69, SD=0.26); and stay (M=2.56, and SD=0.45). In addition, the general level (M=3.83) and standard deviation (SD=0.81) was also computed. They choose to stay as a special education teacher because they have the desire to find meaning and significance in a career by making positive difference in a child life and the stimulation and rewards associated with the challenge of working with students with special needs. Special education teachers perceived that retention factors were important (Lynch, & et.al., 2009). Sped teachers’ ratings of importance of retention factors were significantly higher than ratings of frequency factors (Cochran-Smith, M., et.al., 2005). Some teachers leave because of a failure to achieve personal satisfaction in their work (Johnson, 2006). However, not all teachers who are dissatisfied leave. Dworkin (2009) emphasized that although some teachers quit because of job dissatisfaction, many teachers who are dissatisfied and want to leave cannot, because they do not have the skills necessary for employment elsewhere. Strauss (2012) found that teachers who perceived greater employment opportunities were more likely to indicate intent to leave than those perceiving fewer opportunities. Chapman and Green (2005) also found that special education teachers who taught continuously believed that it would be less easy to find a job with similar salary and benefits than did intermittent teachers.

Research Question #2: Which among the selected psychosocial factor is the best predictor of intention to stay among Special Education Teachers?

Table 2. Regression Table
The Bedan Journal of Psychology 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>79.420</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (Intention to Stay)</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.751</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (school admin.)</td>
<td>.892</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the result of the analysis stating that all independent variables job satisfaction (p=.000, p<.01), commitment (p=.060, p<.03), motivation (p=.000, p<.01), and support (p=.892, p<.07) are significant predictors of the dependent variable. Moreover, job satisfaction obtains the largest beta weight (β=.751, p<.01) and has the largest contribution in the regression equation making it the best predictor of all other independent variables. The findings suggest that job satisfaction perceived the respondents’ psychosocial predictor of intention to stay in their job among Special Education Teachers. Result also shows that job satisfaction is the best psychosocial predictor of intention to stay, as supported by the study of Ferguson & et.al. (2012), job satisfaction was a significant and positive psychosocial predictor of intention to stay among special education teachers. Job satisfaction predict the intent to remain in the profession based on gender, age, and number of experiences in teaching for special education teachers (Horrison-Collier, 2013). This study aligns with Biscay (2009), who conducted job satisfaction and motivation as predictors that correlated significantly with responsibility genders, age, race and years of experience in teaching. In addition, a study made by Malik (2010), identify the predictors that influence special education teachers’ intention to stay in their job. It is said that, cross validated regression results, suggest that intention to stay predictors, such as administrative support, commitment and job satisfaction, are better predictors of intention to stay among special education teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Special education teachers are an important role of students with special needs and youth who have a variety of disabilities, for they are the ones who provide support to help the student to achieve their highest potential and strive to progress beyond their limitations. However, due to commitment, job satisfaction, motivation, colleague support, and administrative support. These factors are all contributed to special education teachers’ intention to stay. Majority of the special education teachers in this study has a strong connection in psychosocial predictors, such as job satisfaction, commitment, motivation and support of administrator. Job satisfaction was the best psychosocial predictor for intention to stay among special education teachers, followed by motivation, and commitment and least psychosocial predictor is the support of administrator. For future study, it would be more effective if the future researcher will use mixed method to gather in-depth information to further expound the findings from the quantitative research. Another suggestion for the future researcher would be to add more psychosocial predictors of intention to stay, so that the researcher could give more information. Duplicating this study with a larger number of respondents would also be suggested, as more respondents would provide more significant data. One last suggestion for future study for the school administrator would be school administrator should have an immense role play in the retention of special education teachers. Support of the
school administrator was reported to get the lowest item in this study. School administrator should ensure an appropriate work environment - both in materials and moral.

REFERENCES


Chapman, P., & Green, M., (2005). Special education teacher attrition: It all depends on where you are standing. Special Education, 28, 109-116


Ferguson, K., Frost, L., & Hall, D. (2012) Predicting Special Education Teacher intent to stay on Commitment and Job Satisfaction. Journal of Teaching and Learning, 8(1)


Gray, S., (2014) Identifying Teachers’ needs. Electronic Theses and Dissertations


Jones, N., & Youngs, P., & Frank, K., (2013). The Role of School-Based Colleagues in Shaping
the Commitment of Novice Special and General Education Teachers. *Exceptional Children*, 79(3) 365-383.


Kraft, B., & West, J., (2014) Shortage of Special Education Expertise Among Teachers and Higher Education Faculty. *Higher Education Consortium for Special Education*


Strauss, A., (2012). Once is not enough: Former special educators who return to teaching. *Special Education*, 9(3)

