



# Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion

Einar M. Skaalvik\*, Sidsel Skaalvik

Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Education, 7491 Trondheim, Norway

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 13 October 2010

Received in revised form

30 March 2011

Accepted 1 April 2011

### Keywords:

Teacher job satisfaction

Teacher motivation

Belonging

Emotional exhaustion

School context

Values

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relations between school context variables and teachers' feeling of belonging, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and motivation to leave the teaching profession. Six aspects of the school context were measured: value consonance, supervisory support, relations with colleagues, relations with parents, time pressure, and discipline problems. The participants were 2569 Norwegian teachers in elementary school and middle school. The data were analyzed by means of SEM analyses. All six school context variables were related to job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession. These relations were primarily indirect, mediated through feelings of belonging and emotional exhaustion.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction and purposes

The shortage of well-qualified teachers is a significant problem in many countries (Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). This problem is increasing because of teacher attrition, i.e. the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs. For example, 25 percent of beginning teachers in the US leave teaching before their third year, and almost 40 percent leave the profession within the first five years (Chang, 2009). Additionally, the majority of teachers leave the profession before they reach retirement age (McDonald, 1999). The high rate of teacher attrition is reported not only in the U.S., but also in other countries around the world regardless of differences in their educational system, for instance in Australia, China, and England (Hong, 2010). In Norway, where we have conducted the present study, there are no official statistics showing either teacher attrition (teachers leaving the teaching profession) or teacher turnover (teachers moving between schools). However, a study by Schøne (1999) revealed that from November 1995 to November 1996 8.8 percent of the teachers left their positions, 4.6 percent left the teaching profession whereas 4.2 percent moved to another school.

More alarmingly, Köber, Risberg, and Texmon (2005) found that 84 percent of those with a teacher's degree who were under 67, which is the retirement age in Norway, were employed in the autumn of 2003, though only 57 percent were employed in the education sector. Moreover, they reported that 49 percent of all teachers leaving their teaching positions in 2003 went to jobs in non-educational sectors.

The attrition rate seems to follow a U-shaped curve, with the highest attrition rate early and late in teachers' careers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Rinke, 2007). Teacher attrition has been studied in relation to working conditions as well as the personal characteristics of teachers, teachers' life situation, and teachers' roles, responsibilities, and status. Similarly, Day, Sammons, Stobard, Kington, and Gu (2007) discriminate between "situated factors," "personal factors," and "professional factors." In this study, we were concerned with school context variables, which also may be termed working conditions or situated factors. Recent research reveals that working conditions are important predictors of teacher attrition (see a meta-analysis by Borman & Dowling, 2008). A study of 1.066 teachers who left their teaching positions in England also showed that an excessive work load was the most important factor leading to teacher attrition (Smithers & Robinson, 2003; see also Buchanan, 2010), while a study by Weiss (1999) found that supportive environments were related to teachers' motivation to stay in the profession.

Although the present study was inspired by the problem of teacher attrition, this article does not examine teacher attrition directly. Instead, we examine assumed antecedents of teacher

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +47 73591954/+47 73571016/+47 97169572; fax: +47 73591890.

E-mail addresses: [einar.skaalvik@svt.ntnu.no](mailto:einar.skaalvik@svt.ntnu.no) (E.M. Skaalvik), [sidsel.skaalvik@svt.ntnu.no](mailto:sidsel.skaalvik@svt.ntnu.no) (S. Skaalvik).

attrition, namely teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession. One purpose of the study was to examine relations between school context variables and teacher job satisfaction, as well as the motivation among Norwegian teachers to leave the teaching profession. Understanding the relations between school context variables and teacher job satisfaction is important because the school context or working conditions may be changed and improved. Another purpose was to analyze whether the relations between school context variables on the one hand, and teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession on the other, were, at least partly mediated through teachers' feeling of belonging and physical and emotional exhaustion.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the profession

In the research literature, job satisfaction is regarded as the positive or negative evaluative judgments people make about their jobs (Weiss, 2002). For instance, Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job. In accordance with these definitions, we conceptualize teacher job satisfaction as teachers' affective reactions to their work or to their teaching role (see Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010a; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004).

A problem with the research on teacher job satisfaction is that there is no agreement about how to measure the construct (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, 2010a), which has been studied as both: (a) a facet-specific job satisfaction measuring the extent to which teachers are satisfied with specific aspects of their job, and (b) an overall sense of satisfaction with the job (Moe, Pazzaglia, & Ronconi, 2010; Sargent & Hannum, 2005). Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2010a) point out that a problem with the facet-specific approach is that different circumstances may be important to different teachers. As a result, such measures overlook the fact that the impact of different circumstances on overall job satisfaction is dependent on how important each of the circumstances is to the individual teacher. In this study, we therefore measured teachers' overall sense of job satisfaction and analyzed the degree to which teachers' perception of school context variables predicted overall job satisfaction. Teacher job satisfaction is closely associated with teacher absenteeism and attrition (e.g., Huberman, 1993; Sargent & Hannum, 2005; Wriqi, 2008; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). Hence, we also expect that teacher job satisfaction predicts teachers' motivation to leave the teaching profession.

Teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by a number of variables. Dinham and Scott (1998) suggested that the sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction may be classified into three domains: (a) intrinsic rewards of teaching, (b) factors extrinsic to the school, and (c) school-based factors. The intrinsic rewards of teaching concern the actual work of teaching, working with the students, and seeing students learn and develop, all of which are primary motives for becoming a teacher and a main source of satisfaction among teachers (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001). Factors extrinsic to the school include imposed educational change, external evaluation of schools, negative portrayal of teachers in the media, and a decrease in the status of teaching. School-based factors or contextual variables at school may include relations with colleagues, parents, and the school leadership, as well as time pressure, disruptive student behavior, and the values emphasized at the local school. The present study focuses on relations between these school-based factors, which we term contextual variables, and how they relate, both directly and indirectly, to teacher job satisfaction. The indirect relations that we

hypothesize are that the impact of school context variables on job satisfaction are mediated through teachers' feeling of belonging at school and emotional exhaustion.

### 2.2. Feeling of belonging

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (see also Deci & Ryan, 2000). To our knowledge, teachers' feeling of belonging to the school where they are teaching has not been systematically studied in research on teachers, whereas students' sense of belonging to the school has been shown to be positively related to both motivation (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1993), satisfaction, and positive affect (McMahon, Parnes, Keys, & Viola, 2008; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Mantague, 2006).

Although we lack systematic research on teachers' sense of belonging to their school, we expect that similarly to findings in student research, the teachers' feeling of belonging is positively related to satisfaction and positive affect. Hence, we expect that belonging is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to the motivation to leave the profession. An important question for this study was whether teachers' feeling of belonging mediated the relation between social relations and value perception on the one hand and job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession on the other hand (see discussion of "Teachers' perception of the school context").

### 2.3. Emotional exhaustion

Research in different cultures indicates that school teachers are among those professionals with the highest level of job stress (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Most teachers cope successfully with such stress, for instance through active problem solving, social and emotional support from colleagues, reorganizing their teaching situation, cooperating with parents, or changing their teaching strategy. However, burnout may be the endpoint of coping unsuccessfully with chronic stress (Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003).

Emotional exhaustion is the core element of burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and results from long-term occupational stress, particularly among human service workers, including teachers (Jennett et al., 2003). Emotional exhaustion is characterized by low energy and chronic fatigue (Pines & Aronson, 1988; Schwarzer, Schimtz, & Tang, 2000).

Studies in different cultures have found that measures of teacher burnout, including emotional exhaustion, predict both subjective and objective health as well as teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. For instance, Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006) demonstrated that emotional exhaustion correlated negatively with self-rated health as well as work ability among Finnish teachers. Also, in a study of teachers in Hong Kong, Leung and Lee (2006) found that the exhaustion dimension of burnout predicted teachers' intentions of leaving the profession (see also Jacobsen, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010a) concluded that emotional exhaustion predicted the level of job satisfaction among Norwegian teachers. An important question for the present study was whether emotional exhaustion mediates the relations between work-related stressors and job satisfaction as well as the motivation to leave the teaching profession (see discussion of "Time pressure" and "Discipline problems").

### 2.4. Teachers' perception of the school context

We included teachers' perception of six school context variables in this study: value consonance, supervisory support, relations with

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/374355>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/374355>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)