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Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intention of Online Teachers in the K-12 Setting

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JOB SATISFACTION, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT,
AND TURNOVER INTENTION OF ONLINE TEACHERS
IN THE K-12 SETTING
by
Ingle M. Larkin

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Education
In
Instructional Technology
In the
Bagwell College of Education
Kennesaw State University

Dr. Laurie Brantley-Dias, Chair
Dr. Julia S. Fuller
Dr. Anissa Lokey-Vega

Kennesaw, GA
2015

DEDICATION

With immeasurable love and gratitude, I dedicate this body of work to my family. To my Mom, Gale Boyd Larkin, who has been by my side through every adventure and misadventure, I have no words to express the depth of my appreciation, admiration, and love for you.

I offer a very special dedication to the two most influential men in my life, my Father, Col. Thomas W. Larkin, and Grandfather, Dr. Stanley M. Boyd, both of whom I lost in March of 2014. While on earth, both men exemplified integrity, ambition, commitment to one's word, and lifelong learning. My Grandfather instilled in me his thirst of knowledge, often cautioning: *A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring. There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again* (An Essay on Criticism - Alexander Pope, 1709). My Father, who never shied from any challenge, professed and lived by the maxim *Nothing Impossible* (174th Assault Helicopter Company, Vietnam). Without my Father's influence, I would have lacked the tenacity to begin or finish this challenge.

Finally, I dedicate this degree, and my life, to my God. Through heartache and loss, spiritual and physical ailment, I am still standing, albeit more humbly and gratefully. *Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.* (Amazing Grace - John Newton, 1779)

ABSTRACT

JOB SATISFACTION, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, AND TURNOVER
INTENTION OF ONLINE TEACHERS IN THE K-12 SETTING
by
Ingle M. Larkin

The purpose of this study was to measure and explore factors influencing K-12 online

teacher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions K-12 online

education. Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of

Satisfaction (1959, 1968), Meyer and Allen's measure of Organizational Commitment (1997),

and Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior (1975), this mixed-

methods study was conducted in public, private, charter, for-profit, and not-for-profit K-12

online schools in a single Southeastern state. The researcher used a sequential explanatory design

by collecting and analyzing quantitative data and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases.

Using a quantitative survey design, the study included responses from 105 participants. The

results revealed that K-12 online teachers have a moderate-high level of job satisfaction, which

correlates to their affective commitment to their organization and their intent to remain teaching

in the online setting in the immediate, intermediate, and long-term future. Participants identified

flexibility, meeting student needs, technical support and their professional community as the

most satisfying aspects of their job, while compensation, workload, missing face-to-face

interaction with students, and inactive students were identified as least satisfying. A logistic

regression model indicated schedule flexibility, mentoring, number of students, number of years

iv

teaching experience, and affective commitment are predictors of online teacher's likelihood of turnover. In the second phase of the study, eight qualitative focus group interviews were conducted and analyzed using a constant comparative method; these results confirmed and expounded upon the quantitative findings in phase one. These results inform K-12 online school leaders who seek to retain new hires of statistically significant variables that influence teacher retention.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

As more students and school districts make the move to online platforms for

teaching and learning, various modes of online education have emerged, including state,

local, private, and nonprofit agencies, all varying in the extent and type of courses offered

(Archambault & Crippen, 2009). Some virtual schools include a curriculum that is

entirely online, while others offer a hybrid model of online and traditional instruction,

still others provide specific distance education courses in addition to the traditional

courses offered at a "brick and mortar" school, (Roblery & Marshall, 2003). With online

student enrollment increasing each year, there is also an increasing demand for qualified

online teachers to meet the growing needs of 21st century learners. However, the United

States is continuously faced with the threat of teacher shortages resulting from a

combination of retiring teachers, increasing student enrollment, and teachers leaving the

profession to pursue other careers (AEE, 2014; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014;

Riley, 1999). New teachers are leaving the classroom to pursue other careers at a rate of

30-50% within three to five years of entering the field of education, and in some cases,

attrition is outpacing retention (AEE, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Dawson, 2001;

Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ingersoll 2002; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). When

considering the long-term trajectory of online learning, employing and retaining a critical

body of K-12 online teachers becomes a pressing concern and establishes a need to

investigate the satisfaction and commitment of K-12 online teachers and their intent to remain employed in the K-12 online setting.

Background and Rationale

When evaluating the need for investigating the satisfaction and commitment of K-12 online teachers, one must take into account the rapid and continual growth of K-12 online teaching and learning, budgetary constraints that are propelling the online learning movement, the lack of consistent policy governing online teacher preparation and quality, and the staggering rate of teacher attrition. Collectively, these phenomena increase the need to better understand K-12 online teachers' professional satisfaction and commitment as we look towards the sustainability and quality of K-12 online learning.

Emergence and Growth of Online Learning

Since its infancy in the 1990s, K-12 online learning, whether blended, hybrid, or fully online, has escalated in prevalence. Since 2000, the number of K-12 students enrolled in online education courses has skyrocketed from 45,000 to upwards of 5 million students (iNACOL, 2012; Watson, Pape, Murin, Gemin, & Vasahw, 2014). With the number of students taking online and blended courses continuing to accelerate, the number of school districts offering online courses is also accelerating (Deubel, 2008; Fournier, 2013; Picciano, Seaman, & Allen, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) recently reported that more than half of all U.S. school districts are offering their students some form of virtual education option as of the 2009-2010 school year. As of 2011, 30% of high school students and 19%of middle school students surveyed reported having enrolled in at least one online or blended learning course, thus making virtual schooling the fastest growing alternative to traditional K-12 education (Glass & Welner, 2011). Based on the current trajectory, "it is conceivable that by 2016

online enrollments could reach between 5 and 6 million K-12 students" (Picciano, Seaman, & Allen, 2010, p. 18).

Budgetary considerations. Educational Testing Services (2011) predicted that shortfalls in national, state, and local budgets will likely lead to a surge in online learning activity as states turn to online textbook adoptions and virtual learning options as a means to save money (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, & Rapp, 2011). A budget task force in Georgia claimed the state could save more than $4.5 million if one percent of its students enrolled in two online courses (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Similarly, the largest K-12 virtual school in the nation, Florida Virtual School (FLVS), cited a cost savings of 33% per full-time virtual student, as compared to a full-time traditional student (2011). School districts are also realizing the enormous potential savings as fewer and smaller schools would be built and maintained. With online students only reporting to campus occasionally and not all at the same time, some virtual schools are operating facilities less than half the size of a traditional school (ETS, 2011).

State of online teacher preparedness. According to the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL, 2007), K-12 online learning is growing at the rate of approximately 30% annually, and with this arises an increased demand for experienced, highly qualified online teachers. Teachers who are successful in the traditional classroom will not necessarily make for a successful online teacher, as there is a paradigm shift in the online teacher's role, requiring a revision in the "perceptions of instructional time and space, virtual management techniques, and ways of engaging students through virtual communications" (Davis & Roblyer, 2005, p. 401).

Notwithstanding the exponential growth in K-12 online learning and the projections for further growth, research regarding online professional practice has not kept the same pace and is sorely lacking in both availability and merit (Barbour, 2012; Barbour & Reeves, 2008; ETS, 2011; Reeves, 2006). Because online teaching and learning is still a relatively new and quickly evolving field of K-12 education, the present lack of valid, reliable, and generalizable research could potentially encumber online teacher preparation programs' ability to design, deliver, and support the preparation of pre-service and in-service online teachers.

The U.S. Department of Education supposed that the development of a model for integrating online or virtual school preparation in pre-service teacher education programs, accompanied by an appropriate assessment of a range of the acquired virtual competencies, would be a significant and much needed innovation (Davis & Roblyer, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education further advocated the "provision of guided observations and effective mentoring to develop the candidates' practice in live K-12 virtual classroom(s) needs to be creatively developed, so that beginning teachers join the profession with an ability to assist other teachers in VS [Virtual Schools] or have teacher experience in VS" (Davis & Roblyer, 2005, p. 402). Despite this, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards does not acknowledge the need for teacher candidates to learn methods or pedagogy of online teaching and learning. Licensure standards are designed for traditional face-to-face teaching, with few U.S. states having adopted policies that address licensure or endorsements for online teaching, thereby, adding another dimension to the issue of online teacher quality, retention, and attrition (Archambault & Kennedy, 2014).

Teacher turnover. Turnover among teachers is significantly higher than other professions and quite costly in terms of quality of instruction, student learning, financial overhead in recruiting and training replacement teachers, and employee morale (Chovwen, Balogun, & Olowokere, 2014; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), teacher attrition costs the nation in excess of $7 billion annually for recruitment, administrative processing and hiring, and professional development training of the replacement teachers (NCTAF, 2007). The problem of attrition does not result from the retirement of teachers, but in the school's inability to retain qualified teachers, with more than a third of all new teachers leaving the classroom within the first five years of employment (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). Teacher attrition is an epidemic that researchers are trying to control through understanding the problem of job satisfaction, as teacher's satisfaction may influence whether they choose to stay or leave the profession of teaching (Tillman & Tillman, 2008). Presently, there is no available research or information on the attrition rate of K-12 online teachers.

Problem

With the exponential and continual growth of K-12 online schools, there is an urgent need to prepare and retain a skilled body of online teachers who can successfully engage learners in blended, hybrid, or fully online environments. Even with such growth in the practice of K-12 teaching and learning, the available and useful research to guide that practice has not kept pace (Barbour, 2012). The number of online students is quickly outpacing the relative number of online teachers; with states passing legislation requiring

students to complete online classes prior to receiving their diploma, the demand for online teachers will only escalate. Given the lack of policy, inconsistent teacher preparation requirements, and a deficiency of available research, the task seems even more insurmountable when taking into consideration the historically high rates of teacher turnover, thereby raising concerns that the field of online education may experience the same exodus of online teachers that has plagued traditional, face-to-face schools. There is a critical need to determine the job satisfaction of K-12 online teachers and identify the factors that influence satisfaction or dissatisfaction as they relate to the teachers' intent to remain in the field of online teaching. In so doing, school leaders, institutions of higher education, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners can draw upon their collective strengths, experience, and knowledge to meticulously design and execute programs for online learning that will prepare and retain high quality online teachers that can meet the demands of 21st century learners.

Purpose of the Study

Much literature exists concerning job satisfaction across many professions, including teacher job satisfaction, (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Chaney, 1991; Hagedorn, 2000; Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Green, Alejandro, & Brown, 2009; Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008; Sirin & Sirin, 2013; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Vroom, 1964; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). While there is a growing body of knowledge about K-12 online schools and students, there is a limited body of knowledge concerning K-12 online teachers (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Archambault & Crippen, 2009; Deubel, 2008; Fournier, 2013), and no research available concerning K-12 online teachers' level of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or turnover

intention. Research exists on the job satisfaction of online instructors in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Bolliger, Inan, & Wasilik, 2014; Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Green et al, 2009; McLawhon & Cutright, 2011; Picciano, Seaman, & Allen, 2010), and while this research provides a starting point for the benefits and challenges inherent to teaching online, it does not completely transfer to the realm of K-12 teaching, largely due to the different challenges of teaching K-12 learners verses adult learners.

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of job satisfaction of K-12 online teachers and to identify what variables contribute to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The researcher also presents the online teachers' organizational commitment and intent to remain teaching in the K-12 online setting. Upon conclusion of the study, the researcher used the information gleaned from the participants to recommend opportunities for further investigation in the field K-12 online teaching, with particular regard to improving job satisfaction and organization commitment in an effort to retain high quality online teachers, while also contributing to the deficit body of research in K-12 online teaching and learning.

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed by a combination of the theory of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Each theory is steeped in research throughout the twentieth century, providing seminal works through which the researcher built the foundation for this research study. The theories of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention have been paired together in research from various academic and professional fields, thereby lending credible results for

examination and comparison against their unchartered application to K-12 online teachers.

Theory of Job Satisfaction

Several theories contribute to the theoretical framework of job satisfaction. Maslow (1954) explained that job satisfaction is achieved when the job and its environment meet the needs of the individual. Maslow organized these needs in a hierarchy, including physiological, social-emotional, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and intellectual; however, intellectual needs cannot be met until all of the lower and most basic human needs are satisfied. Once the most basic level of need is satisfied, the needs on the next level become the priority. When one feels connected, safe, and a sense of belonging at their place of employment, only then can the higher level needs, such as esteem and self-actualization surface and be achieved.

Vroom (1964) built upon the work of Maslow to develop expectancy theory, adding that individuals make decisions about their work based on their perceived abilities to successfully perform the tasks and receive the reward. Under expectancy theory, employees' decisions are made considering three variables: expectancy (perceived ability), instrumentality (connection between success and reward), and valence (value of the expected reward). McLawhon and Cutright (2011) explained, "When all three variables achieve a high level, motivations rise commensurately, and subsequently, so do performance choices" (p. 342).

Motivation can also play into the theory of job satisfaction because motivation is closely tied to personal and professional satisfaction (Maslow, 1954; Vroom, 1964). Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) combined Maslow and Vroom's work and asserted that most cognitive theories assume people's behavior results from the individual's perception

of their capacity to respond and their perceived estimation of possible rewards and consequences; therefore, individual motivation is the balancing of self-efficacy, personality, and perceived rewards (McLawhon & Cutright, 2011). Collectively, the theory of job satisfaction is dependent upon how closely a person's abilities match the requirements of the job and the degree to which the person's needs are met by reinforcers in the work environment (Weiss, Dawis, Lofquist, & England, 1966).

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) categorized variables affecting a worker's job satisfaction into two factors: *motivators* and *hygienes*. Motivators are intrinsic factors, including such items as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement, while hygiene or extrinsic factors include pay, job security, work conditions, supervision, and interpersonal relationships. Herzberg et al. (1959) proposed that these motivators are intrinsic factors that produce job satisfaction, while hygienes are extrinsic factors of the job that may lead to job dissatisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959) theorized that individuals are more motivated by intrinsic than extrinsic factors in their work, further explaining, "factors that lead to positive job attitudes do so because they satisfy the individual's need for self-actualization in his work" (p. 114). Herzberg (1968) found that five factors contribute to job satisfaction, including achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Herzberg (1968) also identified eleven factors that, if inadequate, could lead to job dissatisfaction, including salary, growth potential, interpersonal relationships with subordinates, interpersonal relationships with peers, interpersonal relationships with superiors, status, supervision, company policy, working conditions, personal life, and job security.

Organizational Commitment

The construct of organizational commitment has received wide attention over the years and is classified in a variety of ways in the literature, with little consensus as to the definition or its application. Organizational commitment is traditionally defined as "a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership" (Watson, 2010, p.18). Organizational commitment is thought to be an important part of the psychological condition of the employees, including the attitudes they generalize towards their organization (Sirin & Sirin, 2013). Others define organizational commitment as the extent to which the employees see themselves belonging to the organization (or parts of it) and feel attached to it (Meyer, Kam, Goldenberg & Bremner, 2013; van Dick, 2004). Nagar (2012) asserted "organizational commitment is essential for retaining and attracting well qualified workers as only satisfied and committed workers will be willing to continue their association with the organization and make considerable efforts towards achieving its goals" (p.43).

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) defined the organizational commitment construct as three dimensional, consisting of compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance is the early or first stage of commitment to the organization, representing a superficial commitment out of expectation of reward or fear of punishment in regard to fulfilling duties. During the identification stage, the individual receives a sense of value from affiliation with the organization and the opportunity to maintain relationships with others in the organization. In the final stage, internalization, the individual and

organizational values are congruent as the individual accepts the norms and values of the organization as their own, without coercion, obligation, or fear of punishment.

The most popular and widely used commitment structure was put forward by Meyer and Allen (1990) and postulates affective, normative, and continuance commitment components. *Affective commitment* expresses the emotional attachment of the employees to their organization, their desire to see the organization succeed in its goals, and a feeling of pride at being part of that organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cohen, 2003; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Nagar, 2012; Porter, Crampon & Smith, 1976; Meyer, Kam, Goldberg & Bremner, 2013). Those employees with a higher degree of emotional commitment are more likely to continue working for the organization voluntarily and eagerly because they feel integrated within the organization and identify with the norms and values of the organization (Nagar, 2012). *Normative commitment*, by contrast, does not correspond to any individually felt attachment of the organization members, but rather reflects their moral or ethical obligation towards the organization because maintaining membership is viewed as "the right thing to do" (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Nagar, 2012; Wiener, 1982). Wiener and Gechman (1977) suggested that normative commitment manifests from the socialization and induction process of newcomers to the organization so that the individual is "indebted to his organization for having invested its time and resources on him and feels responsible to repay for the benefits that he gets from the organization by putting effort on the job and staying on the job" (Nagar, 2012, p. 48). *Continuance commitment* refers to the individual's perceived need to continue with the organization because, when weighing the pros and cons, leaving the organization would be costly. Those employees with continuance

commitment find it difficult to give up membership to their organization due to the fear of the unknown, such as having few or no appealing professional alternatives, and therefore remain with their organization because they feel they *must* stay (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

Commitment to teaching has been defined in multiple ways, though according to Firestone (1996) a common theme inherent in all definitions is the existence of a psychological bond between the person and the object to which they are committed. Tsui and Cheng (1999) conceptualized organizational commitment amongst teachers as the relative strength of their identification with and involvement in a particular school, characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the school's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the school, and a strong desire to continue membership in the school. The two key forms of teacher commitment include commitment to the profession and commitment to the school (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011). Professional commitment refers to the degree of psychological attachment that a teacher has toward the teaching profession in general (Coladarci, 1992). In contrast, commitment to the school, or organization, refers to the level of identification and involvement that an individual has with their particular school or organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). According to Mowday et al. (1979), organizational commitment is reliant on the individual's approval and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, his or her motivation to exert effort in support of the organization, and the desire to remain a member of the organization.

Park (2005) affirmed that teachers who have high organizational commitment are likely to exert more effort for the betterment of the school and are more likely to remain

teaching at the school. Teacher commitment has been shown to be a predictor of teacher attrition, turnover, and absenteeism, but also teacher performance (Day, 2008; Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005). Moreover, teachers who are less committed to the organization make fewer plans to improve the quality of their teaching (Firestone, 1996). Building on this, Hopkins and Stern (1996) explained that organizational commitment drives teachers to improve upon their teaching practice, even in the face of adversity, such as students' negative attitudes or difficult behavior. Greater teacher commitment also positively impacts students through increased student engagement, effort, and achievement, and is considered the most effective path to school success. (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Firestone, 1996; Louis, 1998; Louis & Smith, 1992; Park, 2005).

Turnover Intention

According to Fishbein & Ajzen, "the best single predictor of an individual's behavior will be a measure of the intention to perform that behaviour" (1975, p. 369). Empirical evidence supports the position that an employee's intent to stay or leave is strongly and consistently related to voluntary turnover (Dalessio, Silverman & Shuck, 1986; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Intention to stay is defined as employees' intention to continue in the present employment relationship with their current employer on long-term basis. Inversely, Vandenberg and Nelson (1999) defined employees' intention to quit as an individual's estimated probability that they are permanently leaving their organization at some point in the near future. Intention to stay mirrors an individual's level of commitment to his organization and their willingness to remain employed (Hewitt, 2004). Several research studies have suggested that the concept of intention is the most important determinant of actual turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993; Igharia & Greenhaus, 1992). When individuals are committed to an organization, their intent to remain with the

organization and work towards the organization's goals is high (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Conversely, if commitment to the organization is low, the employee's intention to leave is high (Mowday et al., 1982). Dalessio et al. (1986) proposed that more emphasis and concern should be given to employee's intention to stay (retention) rather than intention to leave (attrition), as whenever an employee does exit, an organization incurs the cost of recruiting, training, and retaining another employee.

Convergence of Theories

This study was grounded in two prominent academic theories: Theory of Job Satisfaction and Theory of Organizational Commitment. These dual lenses served as the conceptual foundation to frame the discussion of K-12 online teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment as it relates to their intent to remain teaching in this particular setting. The theory of job satisfaction provided the psychological foundation to explain internal motivation and external demotivation with regard to how employees view their job based on their individual needs and expectations, and the organization's ability to satisfy those needs. The theory of organizational commitment provided a model to explain how and why people decide whether to leave or remain in their current position of employment, which is tied to their level of job satisfaction. Therefore, the researcher proposed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment have a reciprocal relationship and are the antecedents of the formation of individual's turnover intentions (Figure 1). Furthermore, both theories offer seminal works with solid pedigrees and have been used as the foundation for hundreds of studies in a variety of fields and professions, including education, and therefore a binding theoretical construct for this investigation.
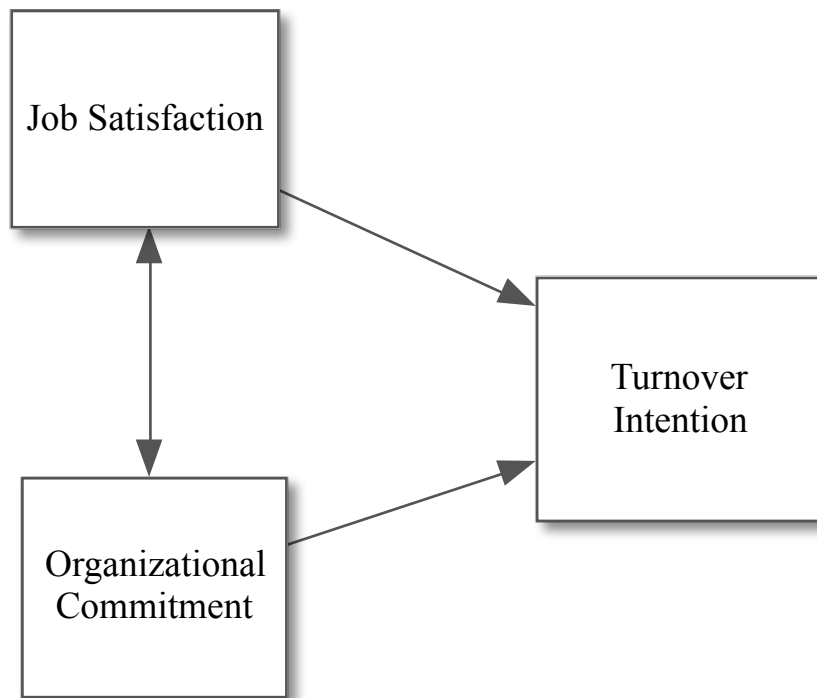
Figure 1. Convergence of Theoretical Frameworks

Research Questions

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to identify the level of job

satisfaction among K-12 online teachers and identify the variables that influence their

satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as well as measure participants' organizational

commitment, and K-12 online teachers' intent to remain in the field of online education.

Therefore, the following guiding questions and sub-questions were used in this

investigation:

1. What is the level of job satisfaction among K-12 online teachers?

   a. What are the critical factors influencing job satisfaction among K-12

   online teachers?

      b.   What are the critical factors influencing job dissatisfaction among K-12 online teachers?

2. What is the level of organizational commitment among K-12 online teachers?

      a.   Does a correlation exist between organizational commitment and job satisfaction?

3. What is the turnover intention of K-12 online teachers?

      a.   Does a correlation exist between job satisfaction and intent to remain?

      b.   Does a correlation exist between organizational commitment and intent to remain?

Significance of the Study

The theoretical significance to this study was its contribution to the understanding of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions among K-12 online teachers in a single Southeastern state. Although these theoretical constructs have been studied both independently and collectively in different professional contexts (e.g., nursing, higher education, military, banking, management), the researcher has yet to discover a study that examines the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention among K-12 online teachers. The existing literature on the job satisfaction aimed at teachers has not yet focused the satisfaction, commitment, or turnover of K-12 online teachers (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Archambault & Crippen, 2009; Deubel, 2008; Fournier, 2013). By understanding the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of K-12 online teachers, educational leaders can provide a more satisfying experience in the work environment in an effort to retain quality online teachers. Recruiting teachers who will remain committed to the online classroom beyond only a

few years, providing quality preparation programs, new teacher induction and support are challenges that must be addressed (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Dawson, 2001; Ingersoll 2002; Riley, 1999). The results of this study can inform members of higher education as they plan programming to address the needs within the growing field of K-12 online education.

This study was of practical significance to teachers, school leaders, and members of higher education who work in the field K-12 online education. As teachers responded to the survey instrument, data was analyzed to determine the level of job satisfaction among K-12 online teachers, as well as identified factors that influence the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of K-12 online teachers as it related to their commitment and intent to remain in the field of online education. Administrators of online schools can utilize this information when considering professional development, policy planning, hiring practices, and school culture. Collectively, as the level of job satisfaction and factors influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction were discovered, suggestions for supporting and retaining K-12 online teachers were generated and shared with participating schools.

Study Design Limitations

As a new and evolving field of practice and research, the review of literature found nothing specifically addressing the topic of K-12 online teacher job satisfaction. A modest body of knowledge exists addressing the practice of K-12 online teaching and learning, as well as online teaching in a higher education setting (Bolliger & Wasilik 2009; Green, Alejandro, & Brown, 2009; McLawhon & Cutright, 2012; Wright, 2012). As a relatively unchartered topic of research, there is no gold standard on which to build

a foundation for understanding the research problem that was investigated; therefore, it was necessary for the researcher to construct a theoretical framework and instrument.

The small sample size of the population limited the researcher's ability to draw significant relationships or conclusions from the data. Statistical tests normally require a larger population size to ensure it is representative of the population and that the results are generalizable. This research study utilized a convenience sample, which can be criticized for facilitating systematic bias, wherein the results from the study are not generalizable and may differ significantly from the entire population, thus skewing the data. Because the results were not generalized and cannot speak for the entire population, the external validity of the study was compromised. Along the same lines, the study's research design was further limited by the use of a self-report instrument, in which participants may over or under report a phenomenon. Finally, the study lacked the component of follow-up, in which the researcher could compare participants' turnover intentions (stay or leave) verses their actual turnover actions.

Terms and Definitions

Due to the variety of implementation models of online schools, many terms have emerged to describe these settings, including "e-learning," "hybrid courses," "asynchronous learning," "web-based learning," and "virtual learning," thus adding to the confusion when defining and researching this particular field of education (Archambault & Crippen, 2009). Listed below are the operational definitions for the technical terms that are used throughout this document. These definitions guided the application of the specific terms within the context of this study.

Affective Commitment - Expresses the emotional attachment of the employees to their organization, their desire to see the organization succeed in its goals, and a feeling of pride at being part of that organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Attrition – A reduction in employees due to retirement, leaving education to pursue other professional fields, or an employee transfer to another site or organization.

Continuance Commitment - Refers to the individual's perceived need to continue with the organization because, when weighing the pros and cons, leaving the organization would be costly due to the fear of unknown alternatives (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

Hybrid or Blended School – Courses that blend online and face-to-face delivery. A substantial portion of content, approximately 30% to 79% is delivered online and typically uses online discussions, and reduces the number of face-to-face meetings (Allen and Seaman, 2013). Students may or may not report to a brick-and-mortar building depending on the model.

Hygienes - Extrinsic factors related to job dissatisfaction, including pay, job security, work conditions, supervision, and interpersonal relationships (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, 1959).

Intent to Leave – Defined as an employees' intention to quit as an individual's estimated probability that they are permanently leaving their organization at some point in the near future (Vandenberg and Nelson, 1999).

Intent to Remain – Denotes the employees' level of commitment to their organization and their commitment to remaining employed with that organization and is an important determinant in attrition and retention (Vandenberg and Nelson, 1999).

Job Satisfaction – Job satisfaction is the favorable or unfavorable subjective feeling with which employees view their work. Job satisfaction is dependent upon how closely a person's abilities match the requirements of the job and the degree to which the person's needs are met by the reinforcers in the work environment (Weis, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967).

Motivators - Intrinsic factors related to job satisfaction, including items such as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, 1959).

Normative Commitment - Does not correspond to any individually felt attachment of the organization members, but rather reflects their moral or ethical obligation towards the organization because maintaining membership is viewed as "the right thing to do" (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Nagar, 2012; Wiener, 1982).

Online School – A school in which 80% or more of the courses and content are delivered online and typically will have no face-to-face meetings (Allen and Seaman, 2013). Online school may or may not have a physical campus to which students and teachers report, and may or may not offer face-to-face extensions and enrichment, such as field trips. Instruction may be delivered synchronously and/or asynchronously.

Organizational Commitment - A strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership (Watson, 2010).

Retention - Retaining employees within their current organization and/or position for continued employment.

State-Affiliated School – Notates online schools that receive state funding, licensing, support and/or accountability; does not necessarily mean the state-run online school.

Traditional School – Course delivery in a brick-and-mortar school in which students receive face-to-face instruction delivered orally, through writing, and/or through some media or web facilitation. The proportion of content delivered online may vary from 0-29% (Allen and Seaman, 2013).

Turnover – The voluntary and involuntary permanent withdrawal from an organization (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2009).

Turnover Intention – The extent to which an employee intends to continue or leave their present employment relationship with their current employer (Lacity, Lyer and Rudramuniyaiah, 2008).

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the need to investigate the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction amongst K-12 online teachers. The challenges of a lack of available research, a growing demand for online teachers, and historically high levels of teacher attrition have been discussed and validate the need to understand how K-12 online teachers perceive their level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, what variables they attribute to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, their commitment to their organization, and their intent to remain in the field of K-12 online teaching. The guiding premise for the study was the measure of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions of K-12 online teachers, which was expounded upon using follow-up focus group interviews. In addition to investigating general levels of satisfaction, which variables teachers report as influencing their satisfaction or

dissatisfaction was analyzed. Finally, the significance of the study lies within its contribution to the needed body of research concerning K-12 online teachers and the development of an instrument that can be used to measure job satisfaction and serve as a predictive model for K-12 teachers' intent to remain employed in the online setting. In the subsequent chapters, a literature review further framing the study is presented, as well as the researcher's methodology.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview and Introduction

This research study endeavored to explore teachers' level of teacher job

satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain teaching in public, state-

run, charter, and/or private K-12 online schools in a single Southeastern state. When

considering the long-term trajectory and sustainability of online learning, employing and

retaining a critical body of K-12 online teachers becomes a pressing concern and

establishes a need to investigate how satisfied teachers are with their jobs, their

commitment to the organization of online teaching, and their intent to remain employed

in the K-12 online setting. The researcher systematically explored the literature to

establish both a need and background knowledge to support the study. Barbour and

Reeves (2008) claimed that most available research and literature reviews related to

virtual schools is generated by the unpublished theses and dissertations of graduate

students; while this phenomena portrays a growing interest and scholarship in the field of

online learning, the work is deficit of rigorous peer review, and lacks validity and/or

reliability due to the highly contextualized nature of the studies. In the absence of valid

research, it is important to note this literature review investigated studies related to

satisfaction and commitment that were not necessarily specific to the field of education,

yet applied to the present study conceptually. In addition to reviewing literature on job

satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, the researcher also

discussed literature related to the retention and attrition of traditional K-12 teachers and online teachers of higher education. These two populations were examined in an effort to fill the present gap in research related specifically to K-12 online teachers. In its entirety, the review of literature addressed deficits in the literature and identified important research opportunities for the future.

The review of literature was conducted using the databases Galileo, Eric, Ebscohost, and Academic Search Complete. Searches were filtered by peer-reviewed and full-length texts. Search terms included *teacher job satisfaction, online teacher job satisfaction*, *teacher attrition*, *teacher retention*, *organizational commitment*, *teacher's intent to remain*, *turnover intention,* and *teacher's intent to stay*. The researcher also scanned the reference pages of relevant articles in an effort to identify related or seminal works for further reading. The search for literature continued until the point of saturation, at which point the databases or references pages generated the same authors, theorists, and research studies.

This chapter is organized topically and summarizes the salient literature on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain. A historical overview of job satisfaction and organizational commitment is presented, along with current definitions and prominent theories. Teachers' intent to remain or turnover intentions, as it relates to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, will be addressed. Determinants and measurements of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention are also included in this chapter. Finally, studies exploring the topics of traditional teacher attrition and retention are presented.

Job Satisfaction

Historical Overview of Job Satisfaction

At the turn of the 20th century in the United States, the industrial manufacturing industry became interested in the correlation between working conditions and worker productivity (Gruneburg, 1979; Sirin & Sirin, 2013). At the time, industrial psychologists were primarily interested in the influences of the environmental or physical workspace conditions on worker productivity verses the personal welfare of employees (Gruneburg, 1979). In the early 1900s, Fredrick Taylor (1911) published his theory and practice of scientific management, wherein a task-oriented optimization of work breaks the work down into smaller tasks that were quickly completed by unskilled workers. Workers were economically and easily trained to complete a repetitious and finite task in the scheme of a larger task or product. Most notably, Taylor's theory of scientific management was successfully applied by Henry Ford, who hired Taylor as a consultant in his attempt to mass-produce automobiles. The operationalization of the assembly line enabled Ford to greatly reduce the assembly time of each automobile at a reduced cost (Eyewitness to History, 2005). Taylor's operational approach largely focused on capital rather than human interest, viewing workers as machines to be made efficient by eliminating unnecessary or wasted effort, and as a result workers worked harder but became dissatisfied with their working environment because their personal needs were neglected, drawing criticism from other theorists interested in industrial and organizational psychology.

The concept of job satisfaction received much attention during the landmark Hawthorne Studies at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago between 1927-1932. Elton Mayo and colleagues Roethlisberger and Dickson sought to

discover the influence of fatigue and task monotony on worker's productivity and learn if fatigue and monotony could be controlled by manipulating variables such as humidity, temperature, hours of work, work breaks, social structure, and monetary incentives (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Mayo and his team discovered that work groups arrived at norms of what they considered a fair day's work, and that the relationships supervisors created with their employees influenced the manner in which employees were willing to carry out the supervisor's directives (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Later, Schultz (1982) claimed that the 20,000 interviews conducted by Mayo, Roethlisberger, and Dickson revealed the Hawthorne employees were not mere human machines, but that their collective capital of knowledge, experience, and feelings related to job productivity.

Jointly, the formative works of Taylor and Mayo advanced the fields of industrial, organizational, and management psychology and served as a conduit to the theory of job satisfaction. As a result, theorists recognized that in addition to the physical working conditions and tasks, social dynamics and interpersonal factors influenced productivity and job satisfaction. This movement emphasized the influences of social work groups and supervisory relationships towards the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). As researchers continued to explore multiple factors contributing to workers' job satisfaction, Hoppock (1935) proposed that many factors outside of the job itself, including relationships, health, and social status, contributed to job satisfaction. Researchers also began to recognize a relationship existed between job satisfaction with the mental health and general life satisfaction of workers (Gruneburg, 1979). By the 1950's, more job satisfaction trends evolved, including those focusing on

the challenges and interest of the job itself, the need for mentally challenging work, personal growth, and responsibility (Locke, 1976; Maslow, 1943; Vroom, 1964).

Definition of Job Satisfaction

Despite its presence and popularity in the research community for over a century, researchers have yet to distinguish a clear and valid way for defining the construct of job satisfaction. Katz and Van Mannen (1977) stated, "There is perhaps no area in social science fraught with more ambiguity, conflicting opinion, or methodological nuance than that of work satisfaction" (p. 469). The definition of job satisfaction tends to hold some ambiguity due to its highly contextual and personal application. In general terms, job satisfaction is defined as favorable or unfavorable subjective feeling with which employees view their work (Ohari, 2013). Historically, job satisfaction has been described as the congruency or discrepancy between the job requirements and the employee's expectations (Dawis, Lofquist, & England, 1966; Vroom, 1964). Locke (1969) offered the following definition:

> Job satisfaction is the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values. Job dissatisfaction is the unpleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as frustrating or blocking the attainment of one's job values as entailing disvalues. Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and what one perceives it as offering or entailing. (p 316)

Theories of Job Satisfaction

Several theories contribute to the theoretical framework of job satisfaction. The survey of literature revealed that theorists divide job satisfaction theories into two main

areas of study, content theories and process theories. As with the definition of job satisfaction, there is no agreed upon theoretical approach to the study of job satisfaction, though there is a general consensus that the construct of job satisfaction is complex and hard to understand, with most theories possessing their own strengths and weaknesses (Hagedorn, 2000). Hadedorn conceded that much of the current literature on job satisfaction relies heavily on the historic models, as presented in this chapter, but "...in truth, no single conceptual model can completely and accurately portray the construct" (2000, p. 6).

Content theories. Content theories focus on identifying the workers' needs, goals, incentives, and their prioritization in order for the worker to achieve job satisfaction (Gruneburg, 1979). Most content theorists prioritize worker needs into a hierarchy or establish groups based on needs of primary, secondary, and tertiary importance. Two of the most widely used and cited content theories are Maslow's theory of motivation and satisfaction and Herzberg's two-factory theory of job satisfaction.

Maslow's theory of motivation and satisfaction. Maslow (1954) explained that job satisfaction is achieved when the job and its environment meet the needs of the individual. However, the individual's needs are influenced both by the importance attached to various needs and the level or depth to which an individual wants to fulfill these needs (Karimi, 2008). Maslow (1943) organized these needs in the following five-level hierarchy:

1. Physical needs (food, clothing, shelter, sex)
2. Safety needs (physical protection)
3. Social (develop close associations with others)

4. Esteem/Achievement needs (prestige given by others)

5. Self-Actualization (self-fulfillment and accomplishment through personal growth)

Maslow (1943) rationalized that intellectual or self-actualization needs cannot be met until all of the lower and most basic human needs are satisfied. Maslow stipulated, "If all these [physiological] needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply nonexistent or be pushed into the background" (1987, p.16). Once the most basic level needs are satisfied, the needs on the next level become the priority. When one feels connected, safe, and a sense of belonging at their place of employment, only then can the higher level needs, such as esteem and self-actualization, surface and be achieved. Additionally, employees in lower-level jobs may be more motivated by lower or more basic level needs, while employees in high-level jobs are more likely to have already satisfied their basic needs and are consequently more interested in fulfilling higher order needs (Maslow, 1954).

Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) categorized variables affecting a worker's job satisfaction into two factors: *motivators* or intrinsic factors and *hygienes* or extrinsic factors. Motivators are intrinsic factors and include such items as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement, while hygienes are extrinsic factors such as pay, job security, work conditions, supervision, and interpersonal relationships. Herzberg et al. (1959) proposed that these motivators or intrinsic factors produce job satisfaction, while hygiene or extrinsic factors of the job may lead to job dissatisfaction. Herzberg et al. theorized that individuals are more motivated by intrinsic than extrinsic factors in their work, further explaining, "factors that lead to positive job attitudes do so because they satisfy the

individual's need for self-actualization in his work" (1959, p. 114). Herzberg's intrinsic motivators correspond with Maslow's higher order needs and represent variables leading to job satisfaction, while Herzberg's extrinsic hygiene factors correspond with Maslow's lower order needs and lead to dissatisfaction when not present in the job.

Herzberg (1968) theorized that the causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are separate and distinct and cautioned that one is not the inverse of the other. It's important to note that the "opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but rather no job satisfaction; and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but no job dissatisfaction" (Herzberg, 1968, p. 56). Simplified, the presence of motivators leads to job satisfaction, while the absence of motivators does not lead to job dissatisfaction. Rather, the absence of motivators prevents employees from reaching job satisfaction. Likewise, based on his two-factor theory, Herzberg (1968) maintained that only the presence of hygiene factors leads to job dissatisfaction, while the absence of hygiene factors does not produce job satisfaction.

Herzberg (1968) found that five factors contributed to job satisfaction, including achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Herzberg also identified eleven factors that, if inadequate, could lead to job dissatisfaction, including salary, growth potential, interpersonal relationships with subordinates, interpersonal relationships with peers, interpersonal relationships with superiors, status, supervision, company policy, working conditions, personal life, and job security. In recent years, Linda Serra Hagedorn (2000) developed a two-construct model of job satisfaction based on the work of Herzberg. Hagedorn proposed that the two constructs that affect job satisfaction are *triggers* and *mediators*. Hagedorn (2010) defined a trigger as a

"significant life event that may be either related or unrelated to the job" (p. 6) but could affect the entire self and view of life, which subsequently could affect job satisfaction. She defined a mediator as a "variable or situation that influences (moderates) the relationship between variables or situations producing an interaction effect" (Hagedorn, 2000, p. 6). In this model, mediators include Herzberg's motivators and hygienes (demotivators), while triggers included changes in life stage, change in family-related or personal circumstances, change in rank or tenure, transfer to a new school, change in perceived justice, or change in mood or emotional state (McLawhon & Cutright, 2011).

Process theories. Process theories are concerned with understanding how or why employee motivation occurs. These theories endeavor to explain how worker's needs and goals are fulfilled and accepted cognitively, with theories of expectancy and cognition playing dominant roles in the process theories of satisfaction (Luthans, 2005; Perry, Mesch, & Paarlberg, 2006). Widely known process theories include the expectancy theory, work adjustment theory, and equity theory.

Vroom's expectancy theory. Vroom (1964) built upon the work of Maslow to develop expectancy theory, adding that individuals make decisions about their work based on their perceived abilities to successfully perform the tasks and receive the reward. Vroom further stated that when choosing between alternatives involving uncertain outcomes, the individual is affected by their personal preferences and the degree to which they believe in the probability of each outcome. Robbins (1997) explained, "expectancy theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual" (p. 57).

Under expectancy theory, employees' decisions are made considering three variables: expectancy (perceived ability), instrumentality (connection between success and reward), and valence (value of the expected reward). McLawhon and Cutright (2011) elaborated, "When all three variables achieve a high level, motivations rise commensurately, and subsequently, so do performance choices" (p. 342). Vroom (1964) proposed two models of expectancy theory. In the first and subtractive model, Vroom offered that an employee's overall job satisfaction is related to the discrepancy between the employee's needs and the extent to which the job fulfills those needs. Vroom theorized that the less discrepancy between an employee's needs and the job's ability to fulfill those needs, the higher the employee's job satisfaction. Conversely, Vroom theorized that the greater the discrepancy between an employee's needs and the job's ability to fulfill those needs, the less satisfied the employee will be with their job. Because Vroom's subtractive model does not acknowledge the relative needs of individual employees, he subsequently developed a multiplicative model in which the perceived ability of the job to satisfy employee needs was multiplied by the value or rank of importance of the employee's specific individual needs (Gruneburg, 1979).

Work adjustment theory. Motivation can also play into the theory of job satisfaction because motivation is closely tied to personal and professional satisfaction (Maslow, 1954; Vroom, 1964). Based on this principle, Dawis, Lofquist, and England (1966) presented the theory work adjustment, reasoning that job satisfaction is dependent upon how closely a person's abilities match the requirements of the job and the degree to which the person's needs are met by reinforcers in the work environment. Dawis et al.'s research on the Work Adjustment Project at the University of Minnesota led to the

development of the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ), Minnesota Job

Description Questionnaire (MJDQ), Minnesota Satisfactoriness Scales (MSS), and the

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). Half a century later, these tools,

particularly the MSQ, are still widely cited and implemented in job satisfaction research.

    Equity Theory. Equity theory suggests that employees assess what they put into

their job (input) in comparison with what they receive from their job (outcome). Adams

(1963) asserted that this is not a purely economic assessment, but is instead a social

comparison of the input-outcome ratio of other workers. Equity theory assumes that

employees have an idea of what is a fair reward for efforts made on the job and will

compare what they are receiving with what others around them are receiving (Gruneburg,

1979). If individuals find this ratio to be equal with what other workers are receiving for

the same job, then a state of equity exists (Robbins, 2005). However, if the worker is

receiving fewer benefits or less payment than other workers are receiving for the same

job, then the worker being paid less will feel less satisfied with their job, and

consequently may not work as hard, efficiently, or diligently (Gruneberg, 1979). Equity

theory has been studied extensively over the years and it has been found that

compensation and rewards increase employee satisfaction only when these rewards are

perceived as both valuable and equitable (Perry, et al., 2006; Yusof & Shamsuri, 2006).

Table 1 summarizes and the overarching satisfaction theories most salient to this study,

and presents each theorist's main suppositions.

Table 1

Content and Process Theories of Satisfaction

Content Theory		Process Theory	
Identifies workers' needs, goals, incentives, and groups them based on a hierarchy of importance in order for the worker to achieve job satisfaction.		*Concerned with understanding how or why employee motivation occurs, and how needs and goals are fulfilled and accepted cognitively.*	
Theorist	Premise	Theorist	Premise
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)	Proposes that satisfaction is achieved when the job meets the needs of the individual. Lower level needs must be satisfied before higher level needs can be achieved.	Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964)	Employees make decisions considering three variables: perceived ability, connection between success and reward, and value of the expected reward. The less discrepancy between an employee's needs and the job's ability to fulfill those needs, the higher the job satisfaction
Herzberg's Two-Factor Analysis (1959)	Suggests there are two dimensions to satisfaction – intrinsic *motivators* that lead to satisfaction when present and extrinsic *hygienes* that lead to dissatisfaction when present, but a state of neutrality or status quo when absent.	Adam's Equity Theory (1963)	States employees assess what they put into their job (input) in comparison to what they receive from their job (outcome), and compare what they are receiving with what others around them are receiving.

Job Satisfaction Among Teachers

There is a long history of job satisfaction studies in the field of education, often being studied from multiple angles and determinants, including gender, salary, age, leadership, subject area, educational level, opportunities for advancement, rural and urban school settings. The U.S. Department of Education conducted a large-scale investigation on the satisfaction of teachers and found that administrative support and leadership, good student behavior, parental support, a positive school atmosphere, and teacher autonomy were working conditions associated with higher teacher satisfaction (US Department of Education, 1997). In the specific context of their occupation, Podsen (2002) claimed that "teachers measure their job satisfaction by such factors as participating in decision making, using their skills in ways that are valued, having freedom and independence, being challenged, expressing their creativity and having opportunities to learn" (p. 10).

Teachers derive satisfaction from the meaning they attach to their work, indicating that teachers consider psychic or intrinsic rewards as their major source of job satisfaction (Lortie, 1975). In a study of Miami-Dade County teachers, the teachers indicated they experience the most reward when they "feel that they have 'reached' their students" (Lortie, 1975, p. 106). In the same vain, Thompson (1979) explained, "The answer to teacher motivation lies in intrinsic motivation. And intrinsic motivation belongs to self-determining teachers. It does not come from money" (p.43). The claims of Posden (2002), Lortie (1975), and Thompson (1979) further validate Maslow's (1943, 1954, 1987) assertion that higher level, self-actualization needs only come into play after lower level needs are satisfied. These works also support Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivators or intrinsic factors producing job satisfaction.

In studies of job satisfaction among online instructors in higher education, Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) and Bolliger, Inan, and Wasilik (2014) reported that instructors are most satisfied when they experience positive student-to-instructor and student-to-student interaction, institutional support, time and input in the planning and implementation of online programs, and the affordances online teaching provides the instructor and students. Instructors who had frequent and quality communication with their students were found to be more satisfied than those instructors who did not experience frequent or quality communication (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009). Similarly, online instructors also experience increased satisfaction when students are actively engaged in their learning, engage with one another, and share resources (Bolliger et al., 2014). The researchers discovered, "Instructor satisfaction is higher when student performance is better and high levels of student motivation contribute to instructor

satisfaction" (Bolliger et al., 2014, p. 186). Instructors who experience a high degree of institutional support, including adequate training and release time, fair compensation, technical support, and institutional policies that value online programming, also experience a higher degree of job satisfaction than those instructors who do not receive adequate support from their institution (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Bolliger et al., 2014). One of the major concerns of online instructors is the heavy workload involved in the design, preparation, and delivery of online courses; those instructors who were given some degree of input or control over these aspects were more satisfied than instructors who lacked the opportunity to influence course design. Finally, the affordances of online teaching ranked as the most satisfying aspect of online teaching and learning (Bolliger et al., 2014). Affordances include the flexibility of time and location for both the instructor and the student, the ability to reach students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to pursue their educational goals, and the ability to integrate various learning resources, including audio, video, and text.

Job Dissatisfaction Among Teachers

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (Markow & Pieters, 2012) reveals that teacher job satisfaction has dropped 15 points since 2009, from 59% who were very satisfied to 44% who are very satisfied, the lowest level in over 20 years. In this same light, the percentage of teachers who report they are very or fairly likely to leave the profession has increased by 12 points since 2009, from 17% to 29%. Teachers with lower job satisfaction were more likely than satisfied teachers to report increases in: average class size (70% vs. 53%), students and families needing health or social services (70% vs. 56%), students coming to school hungry (40% vs. 30%), students leaving to go to another school (22% vs. 12%), and students being bullied/harassed (17% vs. 10%) (Markow &

Peters, 2012). Other studies attribute the increase in teacher dissatisfaction to the recent overemphasis on testing and achievement benchmarks, the lack of teacher involvement in decision-making processes, lack of administrative support, inadequate instructional resources, increased class size, increased paperwork, few opportunities for career advancement, the decline of society's esteem towards teachers, and the lack of trust in the professional expertise of teachers (Giacometti, 2005; Kelchtermans, 1999; van den Berg, 2002; Vassallo, 2014).

Low teacher salaries are a major dissatisfaction or hygiene factor involved in teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001; Page & Page, 1982). Often, teachers who leave equate higher salaries with a greater sense of professional accomplishment. Based on the ideologies of Adam's (1963) equity theory, teachers who do not believe they are compensated equitably for the work and hardships they endure in comparison to others with similar working hours and education levels are more likely to take action to remedy the inequity by leaving the profession (Giacometti, 2005).

Organizational Commitment

Historical Overview of Organizational Commitment

Organizational Commitment is a theory of organizational, management, and behavioral sciences spanning more than 50 years, being widely popularized by the seminal research conducted by Porter, Setters, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). It has been suggested that organizational commitment is a better predictor of turnover than job satisfaction, so the primary objective of organizational commitment studies has been to empirically determine its primary antecedents and outcomes (Cohen & Lowenberg, 1990). Like job satisfaction, organizational commitment has varying definitions, though certain themes are reoccurring, including those that focus on commitment behaviors and

attitudes (Becker, 1960; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Meyer & Allen, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979; Sirin & Sirin, 2013; Weiner & Grechman, 1977).

  Side-bets approach. In the 1960s, Becker proposed his model of side-bets, wherein employees committed to their job based on placing side-bets, or a cost-benefit assessment. Side-bets refers to the accumulation of investments valued by an employee, which would be lost if the employee were to leave the organization.   Becker (1960) argued that over a period of time costs accrue which make it more difficult for the person to leave an organization because the loss of value in the investment, or penalties, compel the individual to commit to a certain line of behavior. If the individual has few employment alternatives, their commitment to their current organization or occupation is further strengthened. Becker contends that the greater number of side-bets, the greater the commitment of the individual. Over the years as the side-bet model was studied by various researchers, a side-bet index was established to include variables such as age, tenure, education, pay, gender, mobility, seniority, professional connections, organizational level, marital status, number of dependent children, and perceived job alternatives (Alluto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973; Amernic & Aranya; 1983; Aranya & Jacobson, 1975; Ritzer & Trice, 1969; Shoemaker, Snizek, & Bryant, 1977).

  Much debate surrounded Becker's side-bet theory for more than three decades, with many studies either supporting or refuting the side-bet theory on the basis of the strength of the relationship between organizational commitment measures and the side-bet indexes (Cohen & Lowenberg, 1990). Ritzer and Trice (1969) argued there was no relationship between commitment and the side-bet indexes, proposing that commitment was not a structural phenomena but a social-psychological one. Stebbins (1970)

countered that Ritzer and Trice's study failed to distinguish value commitment, which

their study operationalized, and continuance commitment, which was more congruent

with Becker's conceptualization of the theory. Testing Stebbins' claims of Ritzer and

Trice's shortcomings, Alutto et al. (1973) found a positive and significant correlation

between organizational commitment and Becker's side-bet theory once they refined the

measure of commitment. Shoemaker et al. (1977) later conducted a comparison of

Becker's structural theory to Ritzer and Trice's alternative social-psychological theory

and found that the social-psychological factors were stronger correlates of organizational

commitment than the side-bet indexes (Cohen & Lowenber, 1990).

Cohen and Lowenberg (1990) and Meyer and Allen (1984) argued that severe

limitations to past research, including the methodology and instrumentation, deem

previous studies inadequate. An extensive meta-analysis of 50 studies concerning

Becker's side-bet model revealed little or conflicting empirical evidence to support his

theory. Cohen and Lowenberg (1990) found low mean correlations with high confidence

intervals, indicating that there was no meaningful relationship between the side-bet

indexes and organizational commitment. From their meta-analysis, Cohen and

Lowenberg arrived at three conclusions, the first supporting Meyer and Allen's (1984)

suggestion that "the instruments used in tests of side-bet theory may not be measuring

commitment as Becker conceptualized it…in order to test the validity of the side-bet

theory, however, a commitment measure must be used that is congruent with Becker's

conceptualization" (p. 377). The second conclusion Cohen and Lowenberg presented was

the need to find a different strategy to examine the theory of side-bets. Historically, an

employee's age and tenure were used as index variables for determining organizational

commitment, but Cohen and Lowenberg advocate Meyer and Allen's assertion that "individuals' perceptions regarding the number and magnitude of the side-bets that they made" (1984, p. 378) would be a more meaningful determinant of commitment. Finally, the third and most widely embraced conclusion Cohen and Lowenberg (1990) suggested is the acceptance of Ritzer and Trice's (1969) argument that the calculative side-bet theory should be rejected altogether in favor of a value-moral, social-psychological measure to explain the formation of organizational commitment.

Behavioral vs. attitudinal approaches. The next era of organizational commitment research shifted from the tangible side-bets to the psychological attachment one has towards their organization (Cohen, 2007). The literature outlines two major trends in the conceptualization of organizational commitment: behavioral terms and attitudinal terms (Cohen, 2007; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Rusu, 2013c.). According to the behavioral approach, as is characteristic of the side-bet theory, organizational commitment stems from an exchange between the employee and the organization, namely work for rewards (Rusu, 2013c). The personal investments made by employees, whether material, psychological, or social, ensure their continuance in the organization. One of the main objectives of the behavioral approach is to identify those conditions that encourage employees to remain with their organization.

Through the emergence of the attitudinal approach, "the conceptualization of commitment changes from the individual's investments in the organization to the individual's psychological attachment to the organization" (Rusu, 2013c, p. 184). Under these conditions, the employee is more likely to be committed to working to achieve the organization's goals, even if there is no monetary reward or promotion in sight. The

purpose of the attitudinal approach is to show that commitment is associated with desirable results for the organization and to establish the conditions that lead to an increase in commitment (Rusu, 2013c). It could be argued that a cyclical relationship exists between attitudinal commitment and behavioral commitment, with the attitudinal commitment having implications at the behavioral level, and the behavioral level reinforces the attitudinal commitment (Rusu, 2013).

During this time, the prevailing approach was promoted by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) and focused on an attitudinal, rather than a behavioral, approach to organizational commitment, defining it as "…the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization…" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, p. 226). It was also during this time that Porter et al. (1974) proposed measures of commitment as an alternative construct to job satisfaction, and argued that commitment may be a better indicator of turnover than job satisfaction (Cohen, 2007; Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008; Weiner & Gechman, 1977).

Mowday, Steers, and Porter are widely cited for their characterization of organizational commitment into three related factors: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Cohen, 2007; Mowday et al., 1979; Porter et al., 1974; Rusu, 2013c; Watson, 2010). Critics argue that while the first of these three factors, a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, is an attitudinal characterization of organizational commitment, the latter two factors, a willingness to exert considerable

effort and a strong desire to maintain members, are the result or consequences of commitment rather than an antecedent of commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986)

Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian developed a survey instrument called the Organizational Commitment Questionaire (OCQ) that aligns with the three characterizations identified in the above paragraph. While some questions do address the attitudinal notions of organizational commitment, again O'Reilly and Chatman caution that several items of the OCQ address the consequences of commitment. Cohen (2007) explains that "…items on the scale deal with turnover intentions or with performance intentions and that all of the statements are more reflective of behavioral intentions than of attitudes" (p. 339). An analysis of the psychometric properties of the original OCQ revealed trouble with internal consistency, reliability, predictive validity, and respondents' ability to easily manipulate the scores (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Conversely, supporters of the OCQ state that the willingness to perform such behaviors in support of the organization is representative of an attitudinal or psychological commitment.

Due to the criticism and controversy surrounding the OCQ scale, the challenge to develop a new organizational commitment instrument was answered by Meyer and Allen (1984) and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991, 1997) developed an identically named instrument, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) as an alternate to the one developed by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) and Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). The Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) OCQ did not specify a clear delineation among the types of

organizational commitment; therefore, the Meyer and Allen (1997) OCQ was selected as the measure of organizational commitment for this study.

Multidimensional approach. Due to the fact that both behavioral and attitudinal approaches were susceptible to criticisms, finding a conceptualization that contained positive aspects of both approaches emerged. A new direction in the analysis of organizational commitment based on the combination of the two approaches, behavioral and attitudinal, was adopted as a conceptual and operational alternative to organizational commitment (Rusu, 2013c).

The acceptance of organizational commitment as a multidimensional perspective is a conceptual gain, as organizational commitment is no longer treated as a one-dimensional construct but as a multidimensional one, an idea accepted today by most specialists in the field (Rusu, 2013c). The proposed dimensions of organizational commitment vary both in name and number, with some theorists proposing two dimensions of commitment, while others propose three dimensions. The themes that distinguish these dimensions involve some degree of mixing attitudinal and behavioral commitment, with neither being able to exist exclusively without the other.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) defined the organizational commitment construct as three dimensional, consisting of compliance, identification, and internalization. *Compliance* is the early or first stage of commitment to the organization, representing a superficial commitment out of expectation of reward or fear of punishment in regard to fulfilling duties. During the *identification* stage, the individual receives a sense of value from affiliation with the organization and the opportunity to maintain relationships with others in the organization. In the final stage, *internalization*, the individual and

organizational values are congruent as the individual accepts the norms and values or the organization as their own, without coercion, obligation, or fear of punishment.

Today it is widely accepted that commitment is a multidimensional facet, with the "most significant contribution to the development of multidimensional organizational commitment and one of the most used models to investigate the concept" belonging to Meyer and Allen (Rusu, 2013a, p. 193). Meyer and Allen (1991) organized commitment into three components: affective, normative, and continuance commitment, each with related antecedents or consequences. Affective commitment expresses the emotional attachment of the employees to their organization, their desire to see the organization succeed in its goals, and a feeling of pride at being part of that organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cohen, 2003; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Nagar, 2012; Porter, Crampon & Smith, 1976; Meyer, Kam, Goldberg & Bremner, 2013, Rusu, 2013a, Rusu 2013c). Those employees with a higher degree of emotional commitment are more likely to continue working for the organization voluntarily and eagerly because they feel integrated within the organization and identify with and internalize the norms and values of the organization (Nagar, 2012).

Normative commitment, by contrast, does not correspond to any individually felt emotional attachment of the organization members, but rather reflects their moral or ethical obligation towards the organization because maintaining membership is viewed as "the right thing to do" (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Nagar, 2012; Rusu, 2013a; Rusu, 2013c; Wiener, 1982). Wiener and Gechman (1977) suggest that normative commitment manifests from the socialization and induction process of newcomers to the organization so that the individual is "indebted to his organization for having invested its time and

resources on him and feels responsible to repay for the benefits that he gets from the organization by putting effort on the job and staying on the job" (Nagar, 2012, p. 48).

Continuance commitment refers to the individual's perceived need to continue with the organization because, when weighing the pros and cons, leaving the organization would be costly. The conceptualization of continuance commitment was largely inspired by Becker's (1960) side-bet theory, wherein an individual calculates their investments in the organization, what they gain if they retain their membership in the organization, and what they have to lose if they leave the organization. Those employees with continuance commitment find it difficult to give up membership to their organization due to the fear of the unknown, such as having few or no appealing professional alternatives, and therefore remain with their organization because they feel they *must* stay (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993, Rusu 2013a; Rusu, 2013b).

Since the proposal of their three-dimensional organizational commitment model, Meyer and Allen's approach has predominated the study of organizational commitment (Cohen, 2007). Over the years Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991, 1997) and Allen and Meyer (1990 & 1996) investigated and concluded that the three forms organizational commitment, affective, normative, and continuance, do not exclude each other. They further note that it is possible for an employee to have any possible combination of the three forms of organizational commitment at a given time, or they may not develop any form of commitment (Rusu, 2013a).

In 2013, Rusu utilized Meyer and Allen's instrumentation to ascertain the predominant type of organizational commitment among 1500 randomly selected higher education instructors. Rusu found that affective commitment received a much higher

average score among the instructors than did normative or continuance commitment, suggesting they identify with and support the goals and objectives of their university. The significance of the predominating affective commitment is "that in the process of organizational change in which the higher educational institutions are, the educational and managerial policies cannot be imposed from the top down, but they need the support and the initiative of teachers" (Rusus, 2013a, p.196).

Job Satisfaction Vs. Organizational Commitment

By the early 1990's, as interest in the theory of organization commitment increased and expanded as a central concept in organizational psychosocial studies, it was considered a rival construct to job satisfaction (Rusu, 2013b). It is important to note that while job satisfaction and organizational commitment may influence or correlate with one another, the two terms are not synonymous. Mowday et al. (1979) distinguished the two constructs, stating that organizational commitment is more global, reflecting the employee's general affective response to the organization as a whole; whereas, job satisfaction reflects the employee's response to their specific job or aspects of their job. Organizational commitment "emphasizes attachment to the employing organization, including its goals and values, while satisfaction emphasizes the specific task environment where an employee performs his or her duties" (Mowday, et al., 1979, p. 226). Additionally, researchers propose that job satisfaction is more transitory in nature, reflecting the employee's immediate reactions to the day-to-day events in the work place and other tangible aspects of the work environment (Cohen, 2007; Mowday, et al., 1979; Mowday, et al., 1982; Porter et al., 1974; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969; Rusu, 2013b). Conversely, organizational commitment is viewed as somewhat more stable, with

commitment attitudes developing slowly but consistently over time as the employee reflects on their relationship with their employing organization.

Over the years there has been little consensus to the causal relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In some studies organizational commitment appears as a predictor of job satisfaction, while in others job satisfaction is the predictor of organizational commitment (Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008; Weiner & Gechman, 1977). Rusu (2013b) explained that even if the causal order is different, studies still support that there is a significant and positive correlation between job satisfaction and organization commitment. Others hypothesize that a reciprocal relationship exists between the two constructs (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Mathieu, 1991). Yet, others indicate there is no causal relationship, "that there is no basis to assert that satisfaction is a predictor of the organizational commitment and that commitment does not entail any work satisfaction" (Rusu, 2013b). Vandenberg and Lance (1992) suggest that a correlation between satisfaction and commitment would reflect just that both are determined by the same variables, such as characteristics of the job, personal characteristics, demographics, policy, leadership, and group values and norms.

In a 2013 study of 220 secondary school teachers, researchers Akomolafe and Olatomide utilized Allen and Meyer's (1996) popular Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) and Steers' (1991) Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) to investigate job satisfaction's ability to predict organizational commitment. The results indicated that job satisfaction not only significantly ($p < .05$) influenced the organizational commitment of teachers, but also served as a predictor of organization commitment. Akomolafe and Olatomide (2013)

explained that this relationship indicates that the more a teacher is satisfied with their job, the more the teacher is committed to the organization. Other studies yielded similar results, finding that job satisfaction is significantly predictive of organizational commitment (Camilleri, 2002; Kacmar, Carlson, & Brymer, 1999; Oyewobi, Suleiman, & Muhammad-Jamil, 2012). Over the years, researchers have consistently found significant and positive correlational relationships between job satisfaction and Meyer and Allen's (1991) affective and normative dimensions of organizational commitment and a negative correlation between job satisfaction and continuance commitment (Akomolafe and Olatomide, 2013; Bull, 2005; Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993; Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008; Rusu, 2013b; Weiner & Gechman, 1977).

Turnover Intention

Definition of Turnover Intention

Bester (2012) noted that turnover intention is seldom precisely defined in research, which he attributed to the assumption that people perceive the term to be self-explanatory. Intention to remain is defined as employees' intent to continue in the present employment relationship with their current employer on a long-term basis. Lacity, Lyer and Rudramuniyaiah (2008) defined turnover intention as "the extent to which an employee plans to leave the organization" (p. 228), while other researchers described it as the conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave an organization (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978; Mobley, 1982; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Inversely, Vandenberg and Nelson (1999) expressed employees' intention to quit as an individual's estimated probability that they are permanently leaving their organization at some point in the near future. Intention to remain mirrors an individual's level of commitment to his

organization and their willingness to remain employed (Hewitt, 2004).

Turnover as a Predictive Model

Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior hold that the prediction of a planned behavior tends to be negotiated by the intention to perform that behavior. According to Fishbein and Ajzen, "the best single predictor of an individual's behavior will be a measure of the intention to perform that behaviour" (1975, p. 369). Fishbein and Ajzen's concept of "behavior intention" assumes that individuals make decisions, such as to remain at their jobs, in a rational way by "systematically employing accessible information on the costs and benefits of the behavior and the control they have, or believe they have, over carrying it out" (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007, p. 628). Therefore, turnover intention can be described as an individual's behavioral intention, according to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) framework of planned behavior, to leave the employ of their organization.

Turnover intention is a construct of the behavioral, psychological, and organizational sciences, and is considered to be a strong indicator of actual turnover, for which job satisfaction and organizational commitment are considered the antecedents (Bluedorn, 1982; Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008; Sirin & Sirin, 2013). A fundamental principle of traditional turnover thinking is that decisions to withdraw from the organization best foretell future withdrawal (Finster, 2013; Mobley et al. 1979; Price & Mueller, 1986). Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, and Bakker (2003) postulated that the relationship between the independent variables, satisfaction and commitment, and the dependent variable, turnover intention, are predictive in nature. Hofaidhllaoui and Chhinzer (2014) explained that conceptually, behavioral intentions are effective predictors of behavior and therefore turnover

intentions serve as a proxy to actual turnover. Models of turnover intentions, or intentions to stay or leave an organization, have been linked to employees' satisfaction and the strength of their relationship with their organization (Mobley, 1982). Houkes et al. posited, "when employees consider their career opportunities within the organization as limited or absent (unmet career expectations), a withdrawal reaction may be evoked in order to cope with the frustrations. For the individual employee, turnover to an alternative job with better career opportunities may thus be an attractive solution" (2003, p. 429). Farrell and Rusbult (1992) further supported the predictive nature of turnover intention, stating that quitting is a cognitive behavior that occurs before leaving when employees think about quitting and develop intentions to look for a new job.

Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions

Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to consider leaving their jobs. Adeyemo and Afolabi (2007) found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and withdrawal cognition, or intention to quit. Similarly, Blacksburg (2005) found a direct link between job satisfaction and turnover intention. In their 2014 study, Chovwen et al. reported job satisfaction to have a significant predictive effect on turnover intention. Individuals who reported higher levels of job stress or who had a history of "job hopping" had higher levels of turnover intentions. Conversely, the higher the employee's level of satisfaction and sense of equity within the organization, the lower were their turnover intentions, as presented in Figure 2. Work conditions that provide support, resources, opportunities to learn and grow, and encourage autonomy are associated with job satisfaction, leading to low turnover intentions (Laschinger, 2012).
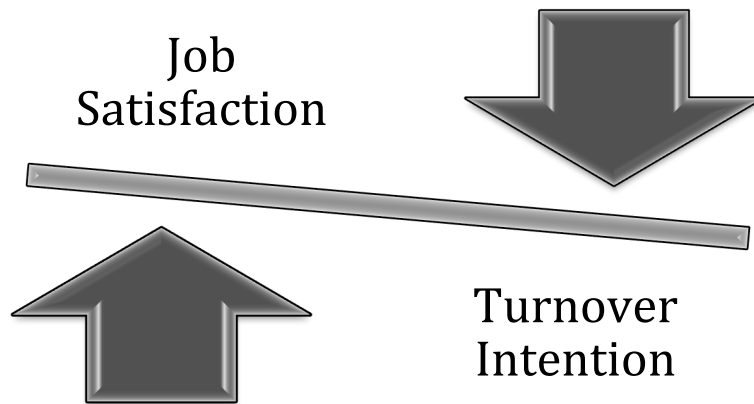
Figure 2. Inverse Relationship of Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

Various theorists and studies suggest that the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover is mediated by the extent to which there is a match between the employee's expectations of the job and the actual experience on the job (Locke, 1975; Porter & Steers, 1973; Ryan, Healy, & Sullivan, 2012; Vroom, 1964). Job related stress that leads to burnout, such as unmanageable workloads, a weak sense of community, perceived lack of equity or fairness, lack of support and resources, and emotional exhaustion, are all attributed to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions (Laschinger, 2012). It is the dissatisfaction with one's job that leads them to search for an alternative job, and that search will increase the likelihood of an alternative being found (March & Simon, 1958).

In a study of 201 public elementary school teachers conducted by Perrachione, Petersen, and Rosser (2008), evidence suggested there is a relationship between job satisfaction and intent to remain in teaching. Those teachers who stated their intent to remain teaching due to the high level of job satisfaction were influenced both by intrinsic (e.g., teaching efficacy, working with students, contributing to society) and extrinsic

variables (e.g., salary, vacation or time off, retirement benefits). Perrachione et al., (2008) findings also reveal that those teachers who did not intend to remain teaching were motivated to leave by solely extrinsic variables (e.g., workload, low salary, unfair policies). These findings supported Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (1966) in that the intrinsic factors or *motivators* of an individual's job produce job satisfaction, and subsequently their intent to remain, but that extrinsic factors or *hygienes* led to job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions.

Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intentions

Individuals who are highly committed to their organizations are less likely to think about leaving. Of the three types of organizational commitment, affective commitment is most positively correlated with employee's intent to remain. Meyer and Allen (1997) promoted the importance of affective commitment by explaining that employees with strong affective commitment would be motivated to higher levels of performance and were likely to make more meaningful contributions than employees who expressed continuance or normative commitment. Cohen (1996) discovered that affective commitment was more highly correlated with job performance and remaining than the other forms of commitment. Cohen revealed that employees, nurses in this case, who remained with the organization because they wanted to (affective) were also more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment to their work, their job, and their career.

Irving, Coleman, and Cooper (1997) investigated the relationship between affective, continuance, and normative commitment and the outcome measures of job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Results revealed that job satisfaction was positively correlated to both affective and normative commitment, though negatively related to continuance commitment; these findings were congruent with the influential works of

Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) and Meyer and Allen (1991). In other words, those

employees who remained with their organization because they had to, due to financial

constraints or a lack of professional alternatives, were less satisfied with their jobs. All

three types of organizational commitment were negatively related to turnover intentions,

with affective commitment showing the strongest negative correlation, meaning that as

affective commitment increases the employee's intention to leave the organization

decreases (Irving et al., 1997; Meyer et al., 1993). The inverse relationship between

organizational commitment and turnover intention is represented in Figure 3.

Organizational
Commitment

Turnover
Intention
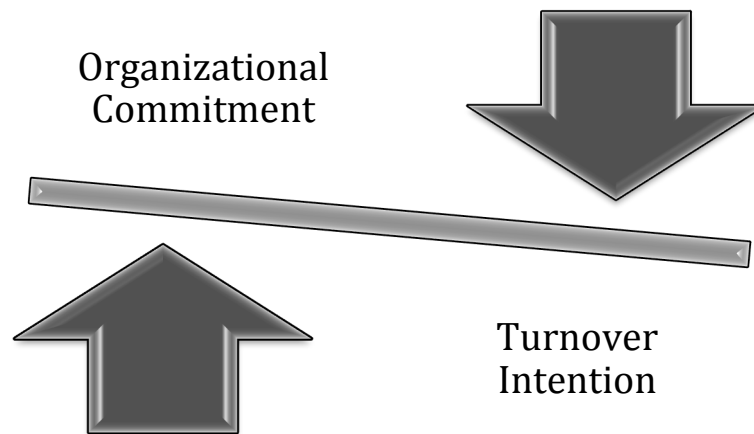
Figure 3. Inverse Relationship of Commitment and Turnover Intention

Similar to job satisfaction, there is evidence that unmet expectations can

undermine organizational commitment. Porter and Steers (1973) refered to this as the

expectations gap, where there is a "discrepancy between what a person encounters on the

job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he or she expected to

encounter is likely to be linked to employers' retention patterns" (Sturges & Guest, 2001,

p. 449). If the employee's expectations about work do not accord with reality, their

psychological contract with their employer may be broken, and thereby their commitment

to the organization undermined (Sturges & Guest, 2001).

In a study of the effectiveness of different teacher preparation programs and candidates' intention to remain teaching (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2012), the researchers found that teachers prepared in a traditional university program felt the most prepared to handle curriculum and instruction, student discipline, and the diverse needs of multicultural learners. These individuals also placed special emphasis on their intern and student teaching experiences, as well as their collaborating grade-level teachers, as the factors that had the greatest influence on their teaching practice. Those teachers entering education as a second career after graduating from post-baccalaureate professional development schools to obtain certification found similar success in the classroom as compared to the traditionally prepared teachers. These teachers felt satisfied with their preparation in relation to their ability and competence in inclusive education, differentiated instruction, student motivation, and the application of learning theories. However, individuals entering the field prior to certification through alternative programs largely reported being less successful at classroom management, differentiation, and commented on feelings of being overwhelmed or generally unprepared. One alternatively certified teacher summarized that after three weeks of summer training, the alternative placement candidates believed they were well prepared until they experienced the reality of teaching in an actual classroom, stating: "I see everything differently now. I had no real appreciation for the amount of energy and emotion that it takes to do this job" (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2012, p. 345), thus summarizing an expectations gap.

Of the three preparation models, the teachers certified through traditional and professional schools felt more inclined to remain in the field of education and expressed

an interest in pursuing additional training towards a Master's degree or even a Ph.D.,

indicating long-term professional commitment, whereas the teachers training and earning

certification while working in the classroom reported less interest in remaining in field of

education, and not one candidate mentioned pursuing higher education in the future

(Sandoval-Lucero, 2012). This study emphasizes the way teachers are prepared to teach

makes a difference in quality, persistence, and turnover intentions. Those candidates

formally exposed to theoretical foundations, methods of classroom management,

curriculum design, and most importantly, the opportunity to be guided and mentored in

the classroom under the supervision of an experienced teacher, felt better prepared than

those entering teaching through alternative programs. In feeling better prepared, teachers

were more likely to experience higher levels of teacher efficacy and satisfaction, accept

more responsibility for student learning, and more likely to remain in the classroom

(Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2012).

Measurements of Turnover Intention

The turnover intention construct is generally applied as a dependent variable in an

investigation of other constructs (independent variables) in an effort to predict the

independent variable's influence on an employee's intent to remain or leave their

organization. In this study, the degrees of K-12 online teachers' job satisfaction and

organizational commitment served as the independent variables mediating the dependent

variable, turnover intention. The measurement of turnover intention is simple, with most

research studies including one to five items at the end of an instrument (Chacon, Vecina,

& Davila, 2007; Irving et al., 1997, Michaels & Spector, 1982; Price & Mueller, 1986).

Many researchers (Chaney, 1991; Chovwen, Balogun, & Olowokere, 2014;

Hofaidhllaoui & Chhinzer, 2014; Price & Mueller, 1986) opt for a 5-point Likert scale

ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Other researchers (Houkes,

Peter, Janssen, de Jonge, & Bakker, 2003; Ryan, Healy, & Sullivan, 2012) assess

turnover with a dichotomous scale; for each intention item, participants must choose Yes

(1) or No (0) to indicate the agreement with questions regarding their immediate and

long-term turnover intentions. Others (Bobbitt, Leich, Whitener, & Lynch, 1994; Finster,

2013) used more specific responses to measure turnover intentions, such as: 1) as long as

I am able, 2) until eligible for benefits, 3) undecided at this time, 4) until a specific life

event, 5) until a more desirable job opportunity comes along, and 6) definitely plan to

leave as soon as I can. Typical turnover items include: "I intend to stay in this job for the

foreseeable future," "I will probably look for a new job within the next year," "I think

about transferring to another school," "If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave

teaching as soon as possible," and "If you could go back to your college days and start

over again, would you become a teacher?"

Turnover Intention Correlations

Based on empirical research and the review of literature, the researcher proposed

that online teaching job satisfaction positively correlates with affective and normative

commitment, while negatively correlating with continuance commitment (Figure 4).

Furthermore, the researcher predicted that if the employee is satisfied and committed to

their job, data will show a positive correlation in their intent to remain with their

organization and a negative correlation with intentions to leave. Contrariwise, if the

employee is not satisfied with their job and displays continuance commitment, there will

be a positive correlation with their intent to leave and a negative correlation with

intentions to remain.
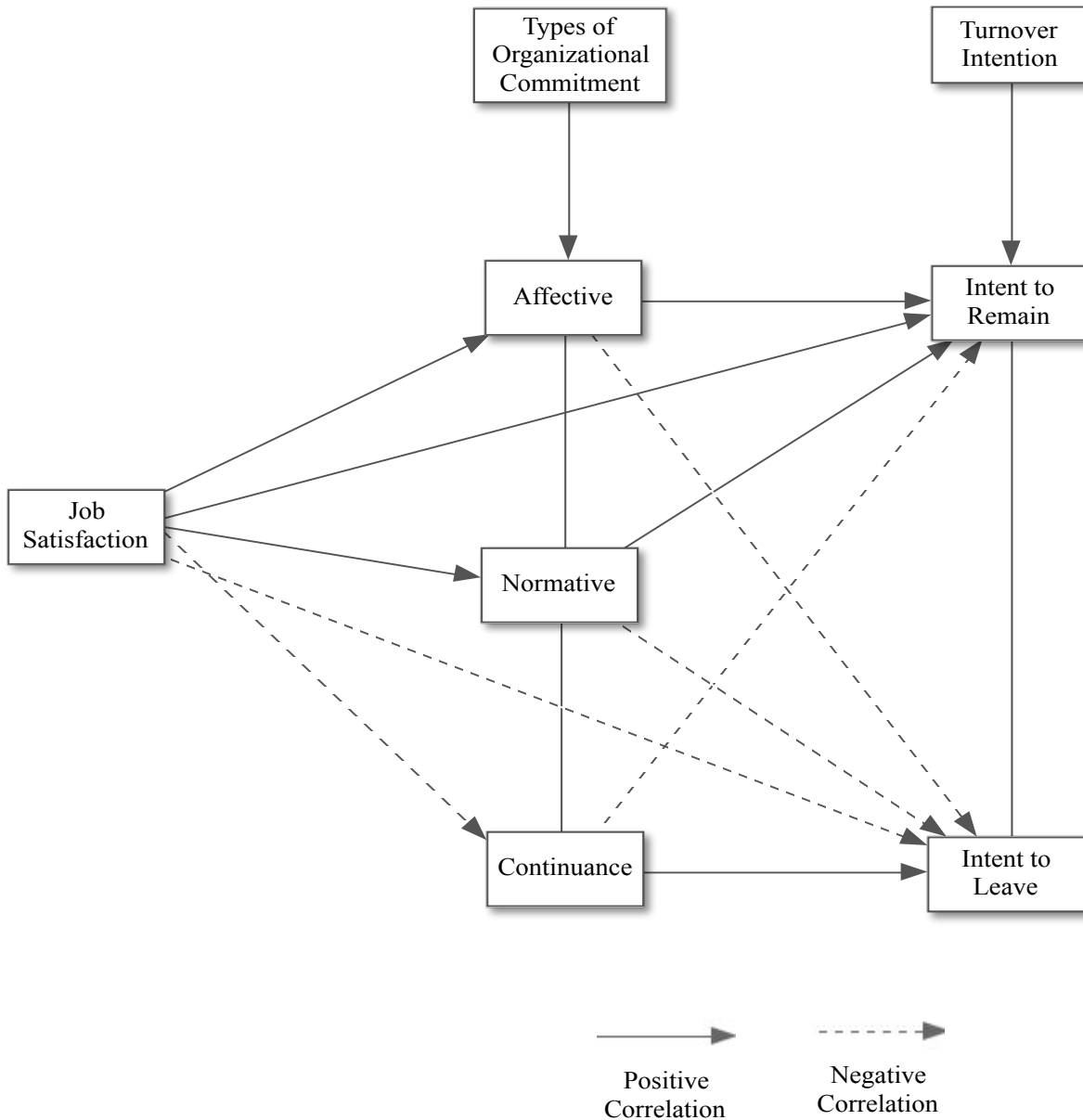
Figure 4. Correlation of Theoretical Constructs

Retention and Attrition

The quality of any organization largely depends on the presence of committed and satisfied employees (Chovwen et al., 2014). Employee turnover is a concern for all organizations, but one that historically plagues the field of education, with more than a third of all new teachers leaving the classroom within the first five years of employment

(AEE, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Dawson, 2001; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ingersoll 2002; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). High employee turnover is detrimental to both the organization and its employees with "costs relating to recruitment and selection, personnel process and induction, training of new personnel and above all, loss of knowledge gained by the employee while on the job" (Chovwen et al., 2014, p. 114).

Due to a lack of access to human resource data and an insufficiency in longitudinal research, this study did not endeavor to analyze the actual turnover of K-12 online teachers. However, included in the review of literature were the topics of teacher retention and attrition, as these themes parallel the topics of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover. By examining the existing research on the causes, effects, and interventions for traditional teacher retention and attrition, and through data analysis of this study, the researcher hopes to create a more encompassing understanding of the variables influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, particularly in the absence of K-12 online teacher satisfaction, commitment, and turnover data.

Teacher Attrition and Retention in Traditional Schools
Traditional teacher attrition. In the past decade much attention has been paid to the impending teacher shortage, with increasing student populations and the forthcoming retirement of the baby-boomer generation threatening to leave schools bereft of highly qualified teachers. However, national data and research studies reveal that the greatest threat to the profession's workforce is our inability to train and retain highly qualified teachers. Ingersoll (2002) explained that the ever-increasing demand for K-12 teachers is not a result of increased student enrollment, but the high turnover of teachers pre-retirement. Similarly, the Alliance of Excellent Education (AEE) estimated that each school day, nearly a thousand teachers will leave the field of education and another

thousand will change schools in pursuit of better working conditions; these estimates excluded retiring teachers (2005).

The National commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2003) reported that teacher attrition increased by 50% over the past fifteen years, reaching a national all-time high of 16.8 percent teacher turnover. This rate of attrition is felt more acutely among novice teachers, who are fleeing the classroom and profession at a startling rate between 40 and 50% within the first five years of employment (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; NCTAF, 2003). Worse yet, the attrition of teachers at high minority, high poverty schools, which are frequently staffed with a succession of inexperienced teachers, is roughly 50% higher than teacher attrition at wealthier schools, thereby leaving these schools in a constant cycle of rebuilding their staff and further increasing educational inequities (AEE, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1999; NCTAF, 2003; Singleton, 2005). In the poorest schools and districts, the teacher dropout rate often exceeds the student dropout rate (Kain, 2011).

Causes of traditional teacher attrition. There is a large body of research on factors influencing K-12 teacher attrition, with most studies pointing to four consistent themes: student behavior, leadership support, autonomy, and return on investment. Student misbehavior is a particular and overwhelming challenge for most beginning teachers and therefore increases the likelihood of teacher departure from particular schools or the field of education all together (AEE, 2005; Feng, 2005; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Gonzalez 2008; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). The lack of administrative support is another common complaint of beginning teachers and is often cited as one of the most

significant reasons for leaving a school or the profession. Some studies cited not only the lack of administrative support, response, and provision, but administrators' outright disrespect and disregard for their teachers as reasons for teachers leaving to pursue better working conditions (Ingersoll, 2003; Gonzalez, 2008; Thorton, 2008). Teachers have also reported a lack of autonomy, or influence over classroom, school, and district policy, as reasons for leaving the classroom. Teachers have the desire to design their own curriculum and instructional techniques, select textbooks, define their grading and student discipline policies, but these functions are often decided and prescribed at the district level (AEE, 2005; Kain, 2011; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Finally, the fourth major contributing factor to teacher attrition is return on investment. Teachers' workload in relation to compensation and satisfaction were found to be disproportionate in Ingersoll and Smith's (2003) study of teacher shortages. While salary and compensation did not rank as the highest factor influencing attrition, it was a consideration of 75% of respondents, who reported that as teachers were asked to do immeasurably more with less time and resources, the return on investment was woefully inadequate. (AEE, 2005; Kain, 2011).

  The cost of traditional teacher attrition. As teacher attrition is a growing epidemic, the cost of such phenomena cannot be overlooked. Based on the Department of Labor's estimate that attrition costs an employer 30% of the leaving employee's salary, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) estimated that replacing public school teachers costs the nation $2.2 billion a year, and close to $5 billion a year if the cost of teacher transfers is included. Kain (2011), a contributing writer for Forbes Magazine, explained that the monetary loss

due to attrition for many schools impacts their already stretched budgets and adds to the hiring challenges of schools that are already struggling to attract and retain quality teachers.

Aside from tangible, monetary costs, most analysts believe that the price tag is even higher for the students, as the loss in teacher quality is also a loss in student achievement, particularly in high-poverty and high-minority schools that are in desperate need of high-quality teachers, yet are "almost twice as likely as other students to have novice teachers" that will abandon education within a matter of years (AEE, 2005).

Retention efforts of traditional teachers. There is a general consensus among researchers and educators that the single most important and influential factor in a child's achievement is the quality of their teacher (AEE, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; Deubel, 2008; NBPTS; 2007; Wong, 2004). Therefore, if the federal mandates of an equitable education for all students are to be realized, the teaching profession must critically focus its efforts on training and retaining high-quality teachers. Because the attrition of beginning teachers is so astounding, many states and districts across the nation have developed induction or mentoring programs, though to varying degrees and success. Comprehensive induction programs have proven to be most effective at keeping good teachers in the classroom, with studies revealing that teacher turnover can be reduced by half through high quality mentoring, professional development, regular support, scheduled interactions with other teachers, and formative assessments of new teachers during their first two years of employment (AEE, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Teacher Retention and Attrition in Online Schools

  Online teacher attrition. Presently there is an inadequate body of research in the

field of K-12 online teacher retention and attrition. The limited studies focusing on K-12

online learning frequently concentrate on student learning outcomes, students'

satisfaction of their online learning experience, and student attrition. When searching for

online learning research at the middle school and elementary school levels, the research is

scarcer yet. While there is available research in online or distance learning at the higher

education level, these studies typically focus on students and rarely on faculty

preparation, retention, or attrition. Despite this, the attrition information gleaned from

these few reports reveals a striking parallel to the attrition of traditional K-12 teachers,

with the main differences occurring in areas germane to their respective fields, as

outlined in Figure 5.

Traditional K-12 Higher Ed. Online
Teachers   Instructors
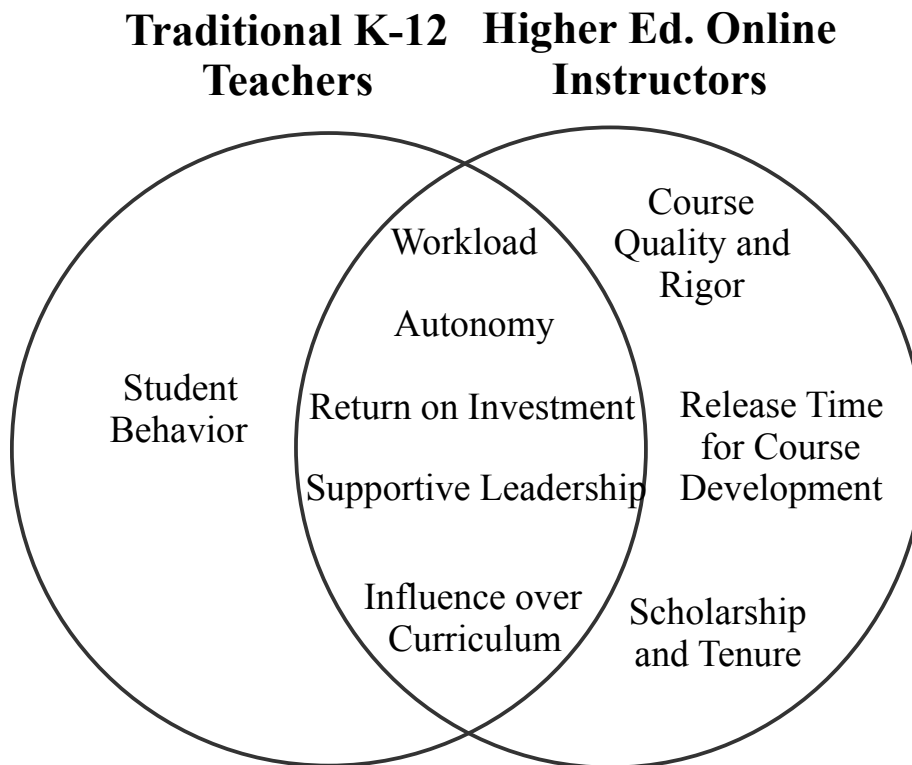
Figure 5. Factors Influencing Attrition Among K-12 Teachers Vs. Online
Instructors of Higher Education

Causes of online teacher attrition. Based on a review of literature, the reasons that online teachers leave or even resist teaching online classes revolve around four central themes: time, quality, institutional support and compensation. Less experienced online instructors are hesitant to engage in online teaching due to feelings of discomfort or unpreparedness, as many of these instructors are unfamiliar with online pedagogy or have had few opportunities to observe more experienced faculty model online teaching (Bolliger et al., 2014; Green, et al., 2009). When beginning to teach online, faculty reported they did not receive enough release time to develop, revise, and maintain online courses or enough access to quality support and assistance to help them through the confusing process of learning to move their instruction online (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Bolliger et al., 2014; Green et al., 2009; Keeton, 2002; Shea, 2007). In a survey of almost 11,000 college faculty, the time and effort required to develop an online course was an important issue among faculty, with 64% of faculty stating that it took "somewhat more" or "a lot more" effort to teach online compared to face-to-face courses, while a striking 85% of faculty with online course design and development experience stated it took "somewhat more or "a lot more" time and effort to teach online (Picciano, Seaman, & Allen, 2010).

General concern over the quality of online curriculum, as well as the teaching and learning process, also prevents teachers and professors from adopting online instruction. In the same large-scale survey of college faculty, Picciano et al. (2010) found that the issue of quality of online courses was a major consideration for instructors, with 70% viewing online learning as "inferior" or "somewhat inferior" to traditional learning and only a small percentage of faculty viewing online learning as "superior" or "somewhat

superior" to traditional learning. Bolliger, Inan, and Wasilik (2014) also noted that online instructors were concerned about the design, development, and teaching of online courses and reported feelings of dissatisfaction if they did not have some degree of control or influence over the online course.

The perception of additional time and effort can further impact instructors' willingness to teach online, depending on the vision and values of the institution for which they work (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Bolliger et al., 2014). If the instructors are employed by a university that values scholarship and grantsmanship over teaching and learning, then the faculty will place priority on research and will likely be hesitant to spend the additional time required for online teaching when that time could be spent on more scholarly pursuits (Picciano et al., 2010). Similarly, studies have found that one of the obstacles to retaining college faculty for online teaching is the lack of congruency with the university's mission and goals, particularly in relation to tenure and promotion (Passmore, 2000; Shea, 2007; Sumrall; 2002). In a small-scale (n = 110) survey of online faculty satisfaction, the lowest level of satisfaction (22%) and highest level of dissatisfaction (30%) were both in relation to institutional support for online teaching and teaching improvement, such as release time and professional development funds. (McLawhon & Cutright, 2011). McLawhon and Cutright concluded that "higher levels of academic involvement leads to higher levels of institutional commitment; institutional commitment in turn leads to persistence" and faculty retention (2011).

Researchers also suggest compensation and diminished return on investment may cause instructors to avoid delivering content in an online course. Most online instructors feel they are neither adequately financially compensated in comparison to the work

performed, nor recognized for their efforts in online teaching (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009;

Green et al., 2009; Passmore, 2000; Shea, 2007; Sumrall, 2002). Additional discouraging

factors reported by online teachers were depersonalization, feeling low levels of personal

accomplishment, burnout, and size of workload. Because faculty satisfaction is

considered one of the five pillars of quality online education, administrators, districts, and

universities should focus on continuously assessing and improving this pillar as the

success of any online program rests on the commitment and willingness of faculty to

continue to develop and deliver quality online courses (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Sloan

Consortium, 2002).

      Cost of online teacher attrition. Just as with the attrition of traditional K-12

teachers, the cost of online teacher attrition is damaging to both budget and reputation. At

the university level, online instructor turnover is particularly high amongst the least

senior faculty, including part-time and adjunct professors (Green et al., 2009). The

development, implementation, and maintenance of online courses is expensive, plus extra

costs accrue when courses need adaptation and redevelopment, or when new faculty

require training and increased staff support (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Green, et al.,

2009). Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) estimated that for each hour of online instruction, an

online instructor requires 10 hours to design and develop the curriculum; this does not

take into account the hours that instructors spend in professional development learning

how to deliver online course content. When instructors leave online teaching, it is costly

to school districts and universities who never see a return on their investment when they

are forced to continuously train new online teachers to replace the exiting experienced

online teachers.

Retention efforts of online teachers. Researchers recommend continuous professional learning and training as a strategy for retaining online instructors in higher education. Each time an instructor teaches a course online, they typically have a higher interest in continuing to do so because of the gained experience in online course management, online pedagogy, and design (Shea, 2007). This suggests that employers of online teachers should spend more time developing, strengthening, and supporting their novice online teachers. Based on instructor research, surveys, and reports, employing institutions must consider offering more release time and professional development, providing high quality and experienced faculty mentors to model online instruction and course development, and valuing the efforts and quality of online instructors. Green et al. (2009) recommended fair compensation plans, long-term teaching contracts, mentoring or induction programs, and opportunities to assist in program design as plausible retention strategies for adjunct, part-time, and other non-tenured faculty, who more frequently report feeling disenfranchised from the university when teaching online. Similarly, Keeton (2002) recommended that training be of no cost to faculty, that faculty should receive a stipend for completing training, institutions provide instructors with appropriate release time to develop online courses, departments establish a peer model of online teaching, and that the institution establish a clear vision of distance education.

Summary

While not an exhaustive review of literature, the research lays a foundation to ground the study. The research exposed intersecting relationships between the theoretical constructs of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. While some theorists (Marsh & Mannari, 1977; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Rusu, 2013b) proposed

that one is the antecedent or consequence of the other, most research (Akomolafe &

Olatomide, 2013; Bull, 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Sirin

& Sirin, 2013) revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between an employee's

job satisfaction and commitment to their organization. Likewise, as an employee's level

of job satisfaction and organizational commitment increases, so does the employee's

intention to remain with their organization.

A comparison of traditional and online teacher attrition and retention drew many

parallels between the two realms of education. While some of the requisite knowledge,

skills, and dispositions do vary between traditional K-12 teachers and online instructors

in higher education, the models of support and reasons for leaving education bear striking

resemblance. Both fields of research revealed that teacher candidates benefit from

extended field placements, the guidance and modeling from an experienced mentor,

administrative and institutional support, and preparation prior to employment, thereby

reducing teacher turnover. Both traditional K-12 teachers and online teachers in higher

education revealed that concerns with workload, return on investment, compensation,

feelings of incompetence or lack of preparedness, and a lack of value and support from

administration as reasons for leaving the classroom.

The availability of scholarly research focusing on K-12 online teachers is limited;

moreover, online education operates under the disadvantage of a lack of longevity in

theory, practice, and policy. However, utilization of longstanding research in job

satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and traditional education

models added credibility and theoretical anchoring. This study makes a significant

contribution to the field of K-12 online teaching and learning by generating new research

through the lens of online teachers' level of satisfaction, commitment, and intent to remain in the field of online teaching and learning. Subsequent chapters detail the researcher's methodology and the study results.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

Grounded in the theoretical lenses of Job Satisfaction Theory, Organization

Commitment Theory, and Turnover Intention, this mixed methods study explored the

level of teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment in public, state-run,

charter, and/or private K-12 online schools in a single Southeastern state. This research

study provided a snapshot of the variables online teachers identify as satisfying or

dissatisfying aspects of their job, and relates those motivators and hygienes to their intent

to remain employed in their present position (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959).

As previously discussed, when considering the long-term trajectory of online learning,

employing and retaining a critical body of K-12 online teachers becomes a pressing

concern and establishes a need to investigate the degree of satisfaction and commitment

teachers feel towards their jobs, and their intent to remain employed in the K-12 online

setting. Therefore with the purpose of studying the level of job satisfaction, identifying

the variables influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction, assessing organizational

commitment, and online teachers' intent to remain in the field of K-12 online education,

the following guiding questions and sub-questions were used in this investigation:

1. What is the level of job satisfaction among K-12 online teachers?

    a. What are the critical factors influencing job satisfaction among K-12

        online teachers?

69

      b.   What are the critical factors influencing job dissatisfaction among K-12

          online teachers?

2.   What is the level of organizational commitment among K-12 online teachers?

      a.   Does a correlation exist between organizational commitment and job

          satisfaction?

3.   What is the turnover intention of K-12 online teachers?

      a.   Does a correlation exist between job satisfaction and intent to remain?

      b.   Does a correlation exist between organizational commitment and intent to

          remain?

Within this chapter, the research method and design is presented, which includes the

hypothesis, research design, researcher background and role, data collection, participants,

data analysis overview, and ethical considerations.

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and the empirical literature on job

satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, three sets of hypotheses

were formulated to address the research questions and the relationships between

theoretical constructs. The first set of hypotheses address the level and elements affecting

the level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The number three was used as a critical

value for job satisfaction, as three is a midpoint on a 5-point Likert continuum and is

considered average satisfaction. Any number less than three is associated with

dissatisfaction, while a number greater than three is associated with higher levels of

satisfaction. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are descriptive in nature; therefore, the researcher

predicted factors the participants were likely to identify as most and least satisfying based

on the Likert-scale and open response items.

H1. K-12 online teachers will report moderately high levels of job satisfaction. H_0: $\mu \leq$ 3, H_A: $\mu > 3$

H2. Critical factors influencing job satisfaction will include flexibility, lack of student discipline issues, adequate technical training and support, and reaching a diverse population of students.

H3. Critical factors influencing job dissatisfaction will include workload, compensation, and lack of student communication and/or participation.

The second set of hypotheses addressed the type of organizational commitment and its potential correlation with job satisfaction. Again, the number three was used as a critical value for organizational commitment, as three is a midpoint on a 5-point Likert continuum and is considered average commitment. Any number less than three is associated with lower levels of organization commitment, while a number greater than three is associated with higher levels of organizational commitment. For the correlational hypotheses (H.5 – H.6), 0 served as the critical value. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) ranges from -1 (a perfect negative correlation) to 1 (a perfect positive correlation), with 0 indicating no correlation between variables (Rumsey, 2011). Further, to determine the strength of the correlation, the following anchors were used: -/+ 0.10 - 0.29 = weak correlation, -/+ 0.30 – 0.49 = small correlation, -/+ 0.50 – 0.69 = moderate correlation, -/+ 0.70 or > = strong correlation (Rumsey, 2011). The statistical significance of the correlation between satisfaction and commitment was determined using a *p*-value < .05.

H4. K-12 online teachers will report high levels of affective and normative commitment, and low levels of continuance commitment. H_0: $\mu \leq 3$, H_A: $\mu > 3$

H5. There will be a positive correlation between affective and normative commitment and job satisfaction. H_0: $r \leq 0$, H_A: $r > 0$

H6. There will be a negative correlation between continuance commitment and job satisfaction. H_0: $r \geq 0$, H_A: $r < 0$

The third set of hypotheses addressed turnover intentions and the potential

correlation of job satisfaction, types of organizational commitment, and turnover

intentions. The researcher selected 30% or .30 as the critical value for turnover intentions

because 30% is the historical rate of attrition for traditional K-12 teachers (AEE, 2014;

Darling-Hammond, 2001; Dawson, 2001; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ingersoll 2002;

Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). For the correlational hypotheses (H.8 – H.9), 0

served as the critical value. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) ranges from -1 (a perfect

negative correlation) to 1 (a perfect positive correlation), with 0 indicating no correlation

between variables (Rumsey, 2011). To determine the strength of the correlation, the

following anchors were used: -/+ 0.10 - 0.29 = weak correlation, -/+ 0.30 – 0.49 = small

correlation, -/+ 0.50 – 0.69 = moderate correlation, -/+ 0.70 or > = strong correlation

(Rumsey, 2011). The statistical significance of the correlation between turnover and

satisfaction, and turnover and commitment was determined using a *p*-value < .05.

H7. K-12 online teachers will report low levels of turnover intentions. $H_0: p \geq 0.3$ and $H_A: p < 0.3$

H8. There will be a positive correlation between job satisfaction and intent to remain. $H_0: r \leq 0$, $H_A: r > 0$

H9. There will be a positive correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intention. $H_0: r \leq 0$, $H_A: r > 0$

Research Design

Recognizing that all methods have benefits and limitations, this study employed a

mixed methods research paradigm, as both approaches in tandem increased the overall

strength of the study over qualitative or quantitative research alone (Creswell, 2009;

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). In so doing, the researcher controlled for the

bias and boundaries of any single method by seeking a convergence of data themes across

both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, the blending of

methods allowed for the results of one method to inform or reinforce the results of the

other method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

As Bryman (2006) explained, using both methods can uncover relationships between

variables and enhance the integrity and validity of the findings by providing a

comprehensive illustration and bridging quantitative findings with qualitative

explanations, thus triangulating the data.

In this study, the researcher used a sequential explanatory design by collecting

and analyzing *quantitative* (QUAN) data and then *qualitative* (qual) data in two

consecutive phases within one study (Figure 6). The researcher interpreted how the

qualitative results help to explain the initial quantitative results, thereby expounding upon

the findings of one method with another method (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner,

2007). This particular design best fits the study because it allows for the study of a

phenomenon within a purposive population, particularly when researchers desire to test

elements of an emergent theory or when the researcher needs to develop an instrument

because existing instruments are either inadequate or unavailable (Creswell, 2009). In the

instance of the untried field of research in K-12 online teacher job satisfaction,

organizational commitment, and turnover intention, a sequential explanatory design is the

ideal choice for the researcher's proposed study.

Figure 6. Sequential Explanatory Design (Creswell, 2009)

The primary method for the quantitative data collection phase is a descriptive research survey design. Creswell explained, "survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions for a population by studying a sample of that population" (2009, p. 145). The use of surveys is a popular method of research because they tend to be efficient in that they can yield a high volume of information at a reasonable cost in time, finance, and effort (Vogt, 2007). Another benefit of implementing a survey design is that it reduces the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data being studied, such as participant attitudes, beliefs, or values (Vogt, 2007).

The method for the qualitative data collection phase was the use of focus group interviews. The purpose of a focus group is to use semi- or unstructured open-ended questions to elicit the views and opinions of participants, who usually number from six to ten (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). The ideal participant is someone who is intimately connected to the research topic, and therefore a purposeful sample should be used to identify people who have knowledge on the topic. Because the focus group data was obtained socially within the interaction of the group, this method has constructivist underpinnings (Merriam, 2009).

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, the researcher will present the preliminary findings of a pilot study conducted in the Fall of 2014 and summarize the resulting modifications to the study. More details about each phase of data collection, including the methods, instrumentation, and data analysis for the quantitative phase one and qualitative phase two, will be presented. Moreover, the researcher will discuss the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study.

Pilot Study

In the Fall of 2014, the researcher conducted a small pilot study approved by

Kennesaw State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). The

purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain the internal validity of the instrumentation and

procedures in an effort to control for potential design flaws. A non-random snowball

sample was used to solicit participation in the pilot study, with the researcher making

initial contact with known members of the K-12 online community, and then asking those

members to refer others to the study by sharing a survey link. This is a common sampling

method when potential populations or subpopulations are hard to locate, or to whom the

researcher does not have access (Glesne, 2011; Handcock & Gile, 2011). This sampling

method limits the researcher's control over the participants and may create a sample-bias,

as participants are likely to refer people who share a similar set of values and

experiences, which further limits the representativeness of the sample (Katz, 2006). The

pilot study attempted to answer the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. Are K-12 online teachers satisfied with their jobs?

    a. How satisfied are K-12 online teachers with their jobs compared to their

       experience teaching in a traditional classroom?

2. What variables effect online teacher job satisfaction?

    a. What reasons do teachers cite for retention?

    b. What reasons do teachers cite for attrition?

3. Is there a correlation between factors influencing online teacher retention or

    attrition and their participation in online teacher preparation programs and/or

    professional mentoring?

Because there was not an existing or available K-12 online teacher job satisfaction survey instrument, it was necessary to refer to research existing in higher education for a model in which to modify to suit the situational context of this study. Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) developed and implemented the Online Faculty Satisfaction Survey (OFSS) to assess the factors influencing the job satisfaction of online teaching faculty in higher education. After analyzing the responses of 102 online faculty members at a research university, results confirmed three factors affect the satisfaction of faculty in the online environment: student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related factors. In an effort to explain variance and reliability issues and expand upon the three factors of satisfaction, Bolliger, Inan, and Wasilik (2014) revised the instrument and implemented it with 124 online instructors. The revised 27-item instrument, now termed the Online Instructor Satisfaction Measure (OISM) showed improved and high reliability ($α=.87$) and revealed that online instructors were moderately satisfied with online teaching. The instructors were most satisfied with course design, development and teaching, and least satisfied with student and teacher interaction (Bolliger, Inan, & Wasilik, 2014).

To modify the OISM to fit the K-12 context, any items involving tenure, promotion, or scholarship were omitted for their lack of alignment with the job expectations and outcomes for K-12 teachers. Additionally, questions in reference to the incorporation of instructional resources were omitted due to both ambiguity and resource variance among online schools. Items added to the survey instrument involve the type of online setting, integrity and alignment of the online course content to state content standards, the type (ability level) of students served at the school of employ, state of pedagogical practices when teaching online, and hours worked per week.

For the pilot study, ten participants were solicited with eight actually completing the survey. From the eight survey participants, five volunteered to participate in a focus group. Four focus group participants met online in BlackBoard Collaborate for an hour and half; however, for reasons unknown to the researcher, the fifth focus group volunteer did not attend the meeting. The recording from the focus group was transcribed and hand-coded to identify reoccurring patterns in the data. After hand-coding and analyzing the pilot focus group transcript, the frequency (f) of participant responses created five dominant data categories to include: workload (f=29), compensation (f=42), students (f=67), institution (f=51), and life circumstance (f=27). The student category is comprised of four collapsed codes: number of students (f=5), student preparedness (f=19), student communication (f=26), and type of students served (f=17). The institution theme is comprised of two collapsed categories: flexibility (f=26) and resources (f=25).

The use of a qualitative focus group after the quantitative survey data analysis helped to confirm or disconfirm preliminary findings. The pilot study revealed that most teacher participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs and intended to continue teaching online, while one quantitative survey participant indicated they were very dissatisfied and would not like to continue teaching online. In general terms, the survey and focus group data confirms that K-12 online teachers are satisfied with the flexibility of the job, the course content, technology reliability, and serving a diverse population of student needs. After questioning the focus group participants about job flexibility, an aspect most participants rated high for satisfaction, it was revealed that their jobs did not have flexible work hours, but were flexible with regard to work location. The focus group participants also addressed life circumstances as a variable

influencing their intent to remain teaching online; as a result, questions about life circumstances were incorporated into the final quantitative survey instrument. Areas of dissatisfaction confirmed by both the survey and focus group included workload, compensation, and a lack of student communication and/or interaction.

Based on the feedback from the piloted survey and focus group, modifications were made to the research questions, survey, and focus group interview questions. The original research questions were refined and narrowed to the scope to the researcher's resources, time, and ability. Due to a lack of access to attritional participants and/or human resources data, the researcher could not study the reasons for retention and attrition; therefore, the researcher limited the study to measuring teacher's reported satisfaction or dissatisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions in the K-12 online setting. The researcher submitted an IRB progress report to update the committee of the study's preliminary findings and to reflect the modifications resulting from the pilot study (Appendix B).

Research Setting and Context

The setting of this research study was online, both synchronously and asynchronously. The context for this research study included public, state-run, charter, and/or private K-12 online schools in a Southeastern state that were solicited to enroll in the study, with the intended participant being a full-time or part-time K-12 online teacher. Those who elected to participate in phase one of data collection participated asynchronously through the completion of an online survey instrument. Individuals who volunteered to participate in the focus group met synchronously through the web-based conferencing tool BlackBoard Collaborate. The researcher selected BlackBoard

Collaborate to host the focus group session due to personal and professional experience navigating the platform as a doctoral student, graduate instructor, and K-12 classroom teacher. Additionally, BlackBoard Collaborate included several features conducive to collecting data, including video and audio recording mechanisms, and the generation of a guest link for the convenience of participants without existing BlackBoard accounts.

Participants

Population Sample

The sample population for this study was a nonprobability convenience sample because it was not feasible to use a random sample. This is a less desirable sampling method than a random sample, in which every individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected, making the sample more representative and generalizable to a population (Creswell, 2009). To strengthen the study a purposive sample of participants was utilized, bounded by the criteria that all participants were currently employed at a K-12 online school, either full-time or part-time, in the Southeastern state in which the study took place. This purposive sample provided an information-rich and focused study of teachers' experiences, values, and beliefs as it relates to the factors that influence their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain or depart from the online classroom.

Participant Recruitment

The first phase of the study recruited a convenience sample. The researcher contacted 11 online schools in the hopes of recruiting a minimum number of participants needed for statistical significance (N=50). Using professional contacts and schools partnering with Kennesaw State University, online school administrators were solicited by email (Appendix C) and invited to enroll their schools in the research study. Each

school administrator received a cover letter (Appendix D) that included a study summary and IRB case number. The administrators were asked to invite their full-time and part-time online teaching faculty to participate in the study by forwarding them an email containing a GoogleDrive survey link for the phase one quantitative portion of the study. All participants were provided with a linked copy of the Informed Consent document (Appendix E) and were required to electronically agree to the Informed Consent statement prior to proceeding with the survey. Participants who did not electronically agree to the Informed Consent statement were immediately routed to the end-of-survey screen. As an incentive for encouraging participation, each school administrator was offered a summary report of the research findings, with the exclusion of any personally identifying information for the protection of teacher participants.

Teacher participants in the quantitative first phase had the option of volunteering to participate in the qualitative second phase of the study, the focus group. At the end of the survey, volunteers provided their name, email, phone number, and the name of their online school. Personal information was solely used for participant selection to ensure there was an equal representation of online teachers (i.e. not all from one school) during the focus group. Participants were not required to identify their school or name to others during the focus group discussion. Participant's personal information was neither analyzed nor reported in this study, nor will it be used in any subsequent publications or presentations resulting from this research study.

From the list of 43 volunteers, the researcher selected eight participants for the focus group (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). The researcher attempted to select a variety volunteers that would ensure a proper balance of perspectives and experiences,

and made participant selections considering the following factors: school site, teaching experience, gender, grade level and subject areas taught, and reported levels of satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Researcher Background and Role

The researcher was a Doctoral candidate in the Bagwell College of Education at Kennesaw State University, a public institution of higher education in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. Additionally, the researcher was a full-time Science teacher in a traditional K-12 school in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia.

The researcher was pursuing a doctorate in the field of Instructional Technology and in her study of emerging trends in education and technology, arrived at the dissertation topic of studying K-12 online teacher satisfaction in an effort to address a present gap in the available research. The researcher has no direct experience, involvement, or incentives in the field of K-12 online education. The researcher holds a K-12 Online Teaching Endorsement (OLE) in the state of Georgia, but has never taught K-12 online students. The researcher has, however, experience teaching online courses in a higher education setting and blended courses in a traditional K-12 setting.

Data Collection

The study began with Phase I, which included the distribution of a quantitative survey instrument of the researcher's own compilation and modification. Once the quantitative data was collected and analyzed, Phase II data collection began. In Phase II, qualitative focus group interviews were conducted for explanatory purposes, thus following the sequential explanatory research design.

Phase I Data Collection

The use of survey design provided a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009; Vogt, 2007). The purpose was to generalize and make inferences about some of the characteristics, attitudes, or behaviors of a broader population of K-12 online teachers. The Phase I survey was cross-sectional, as the data was collected only once within a designated timeframe. Advantages of a web-based survey choice include economy, distance, convenience, accessibility, and it is a familiar medium for online instructors (Creswell, 2009; Nesbary, 2000; Sue & Ritter, 2011). Online survey tools, such as GoogleForms, allow researchers to "create their own surveys quickly using custom templates and post them on websites or email them to participants to complete" (Creswell, 2009, p. 149). Most online survey tools can then generate reports with descriptive statistics, graphs, and other information that can be downloaded or shared in spreadsheets for further analysis (Creswell, 2009; Sue & Ritter, 2011). Sue and Ritter (2011) warn that the digital age has created an influx of digital or online surveys, which is causing respondent burnout or overload. Other disadvantages cited by Sue and Ritter (2011) included the reliance on software and participant access to that software, as well as coverage bias.

The first phase of data collection employed the researcher-constructed instrument called Job Satisfaction and Commitment of Online Teachers (JSCOT) (Appendix F) and is housed in GoogleForms. The JSCOT evolved from a combination of the literature on online teacher satisfaction, the theoretical framework, and data gleaned from the pilot study. The JSCOT was assembled from components of several existing instruments but borrowing most heavily from the Online Faculty Satisfaction Survey (OFSS) (Bolliger &

Wasilik, 2009), the Online Instructor Satisfaction Measure (OISM) (Bolliger, Inan, &

Wasilik, 2013) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by

Meyer and Allen (1997). Written permission to use and modify the OISM was granted by

Dr. Bolliger (Appendix G).

Though not used in the context of K-12 online teaching and learning, the Online

Faculty Satisfaction Survey (OFSS) and Online Instructor Satisfaction Measure (OISM)

assesses online faculty satisfaction in higher education and provides excellent questions

that show potential transference to the online K-12 setting. The constructed JSCOT

survey instrument consisted of 21 demographic questions, 28 closed-response research

items with a five-point Likert scale, 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree, to measure

job satisfaction, and two open-response questions. In an effort to control for researcher

bias, the open response fields for Items 29 and 30 invited participants to describe

variables and experiences they perceive as the most and least satisfying components of

online teaching.

In addition to the job satisfaction survey items, the unmodified 18-item

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Appendix H) was embedded into the JSCOT

survey instrument. Meyer and Allen (1984) initially proposed the OCQ instrument

distinguishing between two types of commitment: affective commitment and continuance

commitment. Affective commitment implies a sense of belonging, emotional attachment,

and goal alignment with the organization, whereas, continuance commitment emphasizes

the perceived costs of leaving the organization. In 1990, Allen and Meyer introduced a

third component of organizational commitment, normative commitment, which reflects

the employee's perceived obligation to the organization. The earlier versions of the OCQ

contained 24 items (8 items per scale), but later versions of the OCQ only contain 18 items (6 items per scale); this revision accommodates for more clarity and distinction between the newly added normative scale and the existing affective and continuance scales (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1997).

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) is a self-scoring questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. Over the years, countless studies have been implemented or analyzed the OCQ, making it the most highly tested organizational commitment measurement instrument with a well-documented reliability and validity (Cohen, 2007; Kanning & Hill, 2013; Rusu, 2013c). Allen and Meyer (1990) reported a reliability of .87 for the affective commitment scale, .75 for the continuance commitment scale, and .79 for normative commitment scale. Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda (1994) found reliability ranges from .74 to .87 for affective, .73 to .81 for continuance, and .67 to .78 for normative. In a meta-analysis of data collected between 1985 and 2000 from researchers seeking permission to use the OCQ, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found the average reliability from all the cumulative studies was .82 for affective commitment, .73 for continuance commitment, and .76 for normative commitment, making the inclusion of the unmodified 18-item OCQ a good fit for this study.

The final component of the JSCOT survey measured K-12 online teacher's turnover intention, specifically, their intent to remain in the field of online teaching. The measure of turnover intention is considered a predictive model believed to be a strong indicator of actual turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008; Sirin &

Sirin, 2013). This portion of the survey included five intention items that assess online teachers' intent to remain or depart from their organization in the immediate, intermediate, and long-term future (Appendix I). Turnover intention is traditionally measured using a dichotomous scale; for each intention item, participants chose Yes (1) or No (0) to indicate the agreement with questions in regards to their immediate and long-term intentions to remain in the field of K-12 online teaching and learning.

The model instruments in their original form have been used in previous studies and have established validity and reliability, allowing the researcher to draw meaningful and useful inferences from the scores. However, as the original instruments have been modified and combined to suit the purposes of this study, the researcher had to establish validity and reliability of the JSCOT during data analysis.

Phase II Data Collection

In the second phase of data collection, the researcher used a focus group to explore survey findings relating to K-12 online teacher satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention. A focus group is typically comprised of 6-10 people who provide information or knowledge of a topic following an interview protocol (Merriam, 2009). Due to time and distance constraints for online educators who work nontraditional hours and from great distances in relation to their place of employment, the researcher utilized the online conferencing tool Blackboard Collaborate to conduct a synchronous online focus group interviews. The use of online conferencing tools is a common job requirement for online teachers, thereby making BlackBoard Collaborate a comfortable medium for experienced online teachers. The researcher presented the focus group questions one at a time by displaying each question on a PowerPoint slide that was shared through BlackBoard Collaborate. The focus group interviews were audio recorded as an

internal function of the synchronous online conferencing too. The audio recording was later transcribed and analyzed for common themes.

The researcher engaged in communication or interpersonal contact with the participants during the focus group, in which participants were prompted by the researcher to discuss topics that influence K-12 online teacher satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or their intent to remain teaching in an online setting. In keeping with the sequential explanatory design, where the qualitative data is used to expound upon the quantitative findings, the researcher created semi-structured, open-response interview questions based on survey findings that warranted further probing. Additionally, by framing each interview question with group data from Phase I and allowing participants to discuss their own experiences or interpretation of the data, the researcher avoided leading questions that reveal researcher biases or assumptions (Merriam, 2009).

Patton (2002) suggests six types of interview questions, of which the researcher relied upon three: background and demographics questions, experience and behavior questions, and opinion and values questions. Participant background was discussed at the beginning of each focus group, so as to contextualize participant responses. Experience and behavior questions were incorporated to reveal what the participant does in relation to the research topic, their experiences, their actions, and activities (Merriam, 2009). Opinion questions were incorporated to discover the participants' beliefs or opinions about the phenomenon being studied and the data revealed from Phase I. Similarly, Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, and Sabshin (1981) promote interpretive questioning, where the researcher promotes a tentative understanding or explanation, while still offering an opportunity for more information, opinions and feelings to be revealed. Strauss et al.

(1981) also advocate for what they termed "devil's advocate" questions, where the participants are presented with information and challenged to consider an opposing view, or to provide an explanation for the Phase I data. Collectively, these guidelines informed the creation of focus group questions, which can be found in Appendix J.

The quantitative Phase I survey produced 42 focus group volunteers. The researcher evaluated the list of volunteers to try to select a representative sample based on gender, school type, employment status, grade and subject areas taught, turnover intentions, and overall satisfaction with teaching online. Selected volunteers were emailed a link to an online calendar (Doodle.com) and selected dates and times agreeable to their schedule. The researcher selected dates and participants based on the most mutually agreeable date and time.

The researcher held two synchronous focus group sessions, each with three participants. The participants were grouped based on mutual agreement of date and time. Additionally, two participants who originally agreed to participate in the focus group, but were unable to attend due to last minute schedule conflicts, participated asynchronously by submitting written responses to the focus group questions. In total, focus group responses were analyzed from 8 participants. Of the participants, one participant was male and seven were females, five were employed full-time, two were employed part-time, and one participant was employed both full- and part-time at two different schools. Each focus group session included a balance of different school governance types to provide a rich and representative sample.

Data Analysis Procedures

The use of multiple sources of data provided the researcher a rich and holistic view of the phenomenon, accounting for many influencing factors and multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2009). Multiple sources of data also enabled the researcher to establish themes that cut across all data, thus triangulating the data between the use of a survey design, open response questions, and the focus group.

Phase I Data Analysis

During the quantitative survey phase of the study, participants selected responses on a five-point Likert continuum, where three served as the midpoint of the continuum and signifies a neutral position. Any score above three shows a positive association with a particular question, idea, or concept related to job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Any score below three that indicates a weaker or negative association with a particular question, idea, or concept related to job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Survey items that focus on dissatisfaction or hygienes were worded negatively and consequently were reverse scored to ensure that all data was pointing in the same direction so that analysis regarding satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be accurately interpreted. For example, a Likert answer of 5 on a negatively-keyed item indicates a strong agreement with the dissatisfying item and is indicative of low job satisfaction; therefore, the response of 5 is recoded in data analysis to represent a 1 on the Likert scale.

To assess the level of job satisfaction and organization commitment, the JSCOT survey response options were assigned a weighted score with Strongly Disagree having a value of one and Strongly Agree having a value of five. The quantitative survey instrument yielded a total of 28 scores that were averaged to form an overall measure of

job satisfaction. Teachers who had a high score are very satisfied (maximum score of 5 x 28 questions = 140) while teachers with a low score were very dissatisfied (minimum score of 1 x 28 questions = 28) with their job. For the ease of interpretation, all scale scores were converted to a percentile ranging from 0 to 100% to represent K-12 online teachers' level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Following the scoring guidelines of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) for general job satisfaction, a percentile score of 50 or better indicates job satisfaction, with a range of 26-74 indicating average job satisfaction (Weiss et al., 1967). A percentile score of 75 or higher indicates a high degree of satisfaction (very satisfied or strongly agree), and a percentile score of 25 or lower represents a low level of satisfaction (very dissatisfied or strongly disagree).

The two open-response items generated 26-pages of participant response data. This document was loaded into ATLAS.ti and coded using line-by-line descriptive coding techniques. The researcher tallied the number of times a particular concept was communicated by participants and compiled a list of the five most frequently identified satisfying and dissatisfying aspects of teaching online. The researcher used a separate codebook in Phase I and II of the study due to differences in the types of questions asked of participants, though the codes generated in each phase were largely similar. The open-response questions in Phase I produced a broader array of responses, whereas the semi-structured interview questions in Phase II were more focused in nature because they were based off the open-response items and quantitative survey data in Phase I.

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) portion of the survey instrument employed a 5-point Likert scale with the following anchors: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. The

results of the 18 items were summed and divided by 18 to arrive at a mean Likert score that serves as an indicator of an employee's organizational commitment. Four items are negatively phrased and are reverse scored to reduce response bias (Vogt, 2007). The higher an individual's score, the higher their level of commitment to the organization (Sirin & Sirin, 2013).

The quantitative survey data was collected, entered, and analyzed using JMP Statistical Discovery software (v.11). Using a logistic regression model, the researcher determined the relationship between turnover intention and the independent variables. The logistic regression dependent variable was dichotomous, meaning that it had two discrete values; in this study, the two values of the dependent variables were participants' intent to remain (1) versus intent to leave (0). The analysis modeled the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables, including workload, compensation, students, institution, and life circumstances. This particular analysis design enabled the researcher to compare significance between satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention variables and to create a predictive model based on the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) (Vogt, 2007). Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to show the strength of the relationship between the independent variables, and a T-test was performed to determine the correlations' statistical significance using a p-value < .05. The relationship between the dichotomous dependent variable and each of the independent variables was measured by the bi-serial Correlation, where one variable is dichotomous and the other variable is continuous.

Phase II Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from the audio-recorded focus group was sent to a professional transcription service (Rev.com) for verbatim transcription. The transcript

was then imported into the software system ATLAS.ti for management and codification

of the data. The overall objective of the ATLAS.ti analysis is to identify patterns within

the data that may serve as a basis for explaining the examined phenomena (Merriam,

2009). The data was analyzed using a constant comparative method, which compares

one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences (Glesne, 2011;

Merriam, 2009).

Based on the results of the quantitative survey data and the subsequent

development of qualitative focus group questions, the researcher created some initial

codes that were used in the first phase of codification. Codification is the process

whereby the researcher identifies phrases or segments of data that are relevant to

researcher's purpose or that may address the research questions (Glesne, 2011; Merriam,

2009). In the first cycle of coding, also known as open coding, the researcher read

through the entire transcript line-by-line and coded text selections (Saldana, 2013). The

researcher used both Descriptive and In Vivo coding techniques during open

coding. Descriptive coding summarizes the primary topic of the text excerpt, while In

Vivo coding uses the direct language or quotes from the focus group participants to create

codes, rather than using preconceived researcher-generated codes (Saldana, 2013). Once

open coding was complete, the researcher analyzed the codes to determine whether

"some codes may be later subsumed by other codes, relabeled, or dropped all together"

(Saldana, 2013, p. 10). At the conclusion of the first cycle, a code map was generated

using ATLAS.ti. Code mapping is the process of condensing the initial codes into a

selected list of categories, and then into the central themes of the study (Saldana, 2013).

In the second cycle of coding, Axial Coding was be implemented to find the

dominant codes and remove redundant codes (Merriam, 2009; Saldana, 2013). During this process, the researcher looked for patterns or shared characteristics among the codes and grouped similarly coded data into categories or "families." Consequently, some of the initial categories were collapsed while "some categories may contain clusters of coded data that merit further refinement into subcategories" (Saldana, 2013, p. 11). Finally, these categories were further analyzed in order to discern the emergent themes. This entire codification process is best summarized and represented by Saldana (2013) in Figure 7.
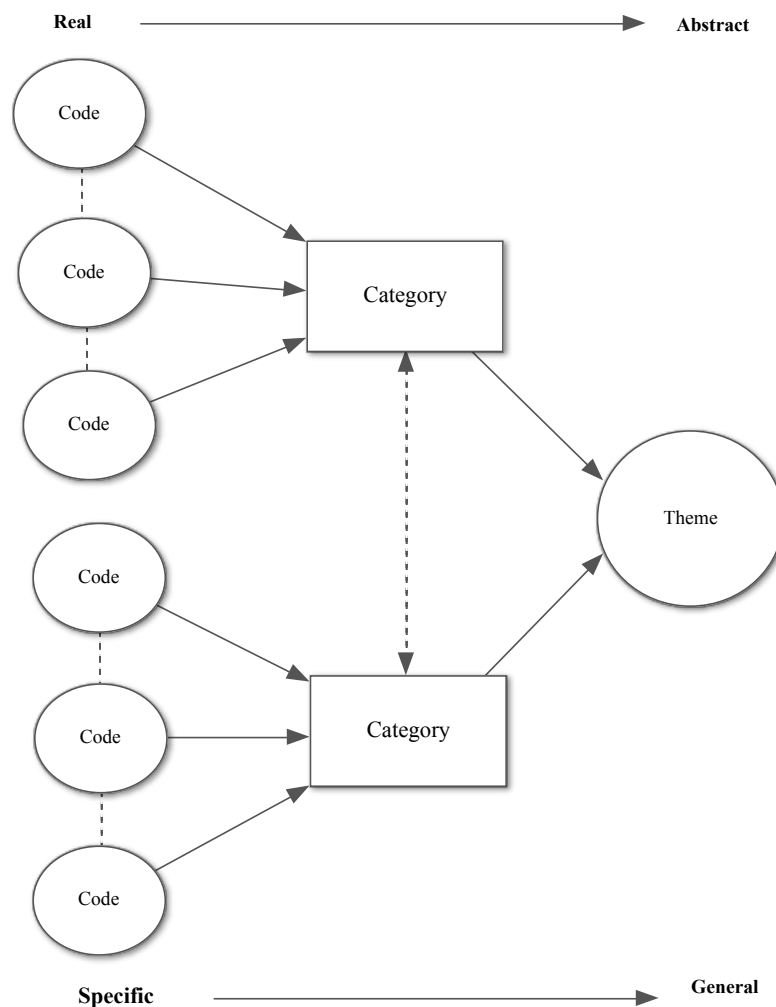
Figure 7. A Streamline Codes-to-Theory Model for Qualitative Inquiry

The initial open coding process generated 52 codes, which were then defined in a codebook; a sample of the transcript coding can be found in Appendix K. The researcher used the codebook to re-read the transcripts and further scrutinize the initial open coding, subsuming or re-labeling text codes where appropriate. In the second cycle of coding, axial coding was implemented to find the codes that were dominant and remove redundant codes (Merriam, 2009; Saldana, 2013), of which 8 codes were collapsed, leaving 44 codes. During this process, the researcher looked for patterns of shared characteristics among the codes and grouped similarly coded data into 6 categories, also known as "families." From the six categories, three themes surfaced. The coding process, including data sources, is detailed in Figure 8.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                3 Themes                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                     ↑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         6 Categories and 44 Codes        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                     ↑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Analysis:Constant Comparative       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                     ↑
        74 Data Segments from 3 Data Sources

┌────────────────────┐ ┌────────────────────┐ ┌────────────────────┐
│4 Focus Group        │ │4 Focus Group        │ │196 Open Responses  │
│Interviews           │ │Interviews           │ │                    │
│30 Transcribed Pages │ │18 Transcribed Pages │ │26 Transcribed pages│
└────────────────────┘ └────────────────────┘ └────────────────────┘
```
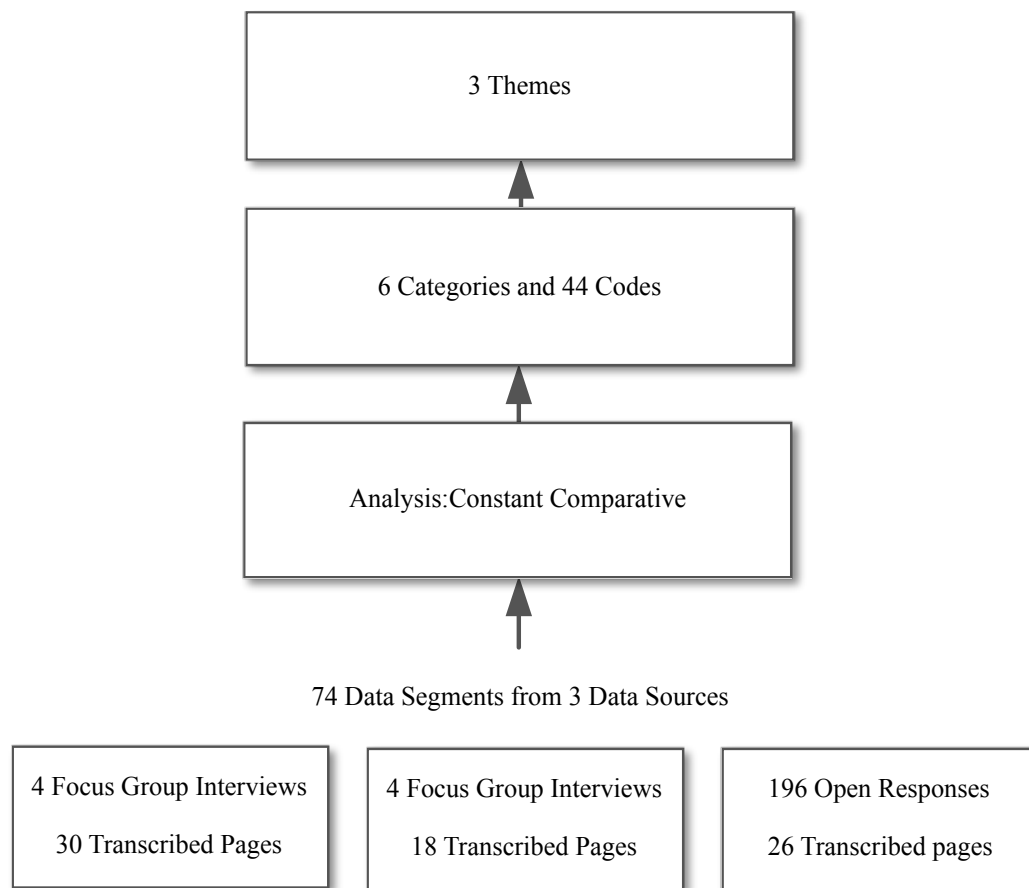
Figure 8. Codification Process

Mixing of Data

The term connected to mixed methods studies refers to the mixing of the qualitative and quantitative research, which is "connected between a data analysis of the first phase of research and the data collection of the second phase of research" (Creswell, 2009, p. 208). In the sequential explanatory strategy, the first phase of quantitative data collection and analysis is followed by the second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, which builds on the results of the first quantitative phase. Creswell (2009) explains that the purpose of this strategy is to use the initial quantitative data to inform the secondary qualitative data collection, thus mixing and triangulating the data.

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

All participants were required to agree to an Informed Consent (Appendix E) statement prior to enrolling in the study. The study was conducted anonymously and IP addresses were not collected. No personally identifying data was collected, including name, email, or place of employment, with the exception of those individuals who volunteered to participant in a focus group interview. Because the researcher sought to study the beliefs, values, and experiences of K-12 online school employees, who may work remotely from anywhere in the world, it was not practical to request face-to-face interviews. Additionally, the use of the online survey ensured complete anonymity for not only the individual participant, but also their place of employment.

Participant recruitment and permission was sought in February of 2015. The first phase of quantitative survey data collection took place between March and May of 2015, with the goal of concluding data collection prior to participating schools' spring break or state assessment schedules. The online survey remained open for twelve weeks, or approximately through mid-May. The second and qualitative phase of research was

conducted in mid- to late-May. Following the data collection, the researcher work with

Kennesaw State University's Center for Statistics and Analytical Services (CSAS) to

analyze the quantitative data in late May and June of 2015. Qualitative analysis of the

focus group transcripts occurred during July and August of 2015. The final report and

discussion of findings was submitted to the dissertation committee in October of 2015.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher omitted all personally identifying

information, such as names, email addresses or place of employment from data or any

resulting publications. Participants were not identified personally; the researcher assigned

a pseudonym rather than participant names on study records. Participant names and other

personally identifying facts will not appear when the study is presented or published. The

findings were summarized and reported in group form, not based on individual responses,

including any summary reports shared with participating online school administrators.

Due to the social constructivist nature of focus groups, the researcher could not guarantee

the anonymity of focus group commentary or data. Focus group participants were asked

not to reveal what was discussed in the focus group. Additionally, participants were

advised to sign-in to BlackBoard Collaborate using a pseudonym and were encouraged

not to reveal their institution of employment.

The researcher kept records private to the extent allowed by law. Information was

shared with those who ensured the study was performed correctly and ethically (KSU

Institutional Review Board). Digital data was stored in a cloud and/or on the researcher's

personal hard drive, both requiring either a secure login or access to a password and

firewall protected computer. Analysis of survey data through JMP and Atlas.ti and were

stored on the researcher's password and firewall protected personal computer. All data will be destroyed five years after the study's completion in September of 2020. Any paper files of raw data will be shredded at that time, while digital and audio-recorded files will be deleted or erased to ensure confidentiality.

Trustworthiness

This study attempted to provide a rich, thick description of information and findings that could potentially be transferred to similar contexts in the field of research and practice of K-12 online teaching and learning, thereby increasing external validity based on Merriam's (1998) notion of typicality. In this study, typicality refers to the researcher's ability to group or categorize the characteristics typical of teacher's job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The sources of data that were used for this study include a quantitative online survey instrument, open-response questions embedded within the quantitative survey instrument, a qualitative focus group, and the sequential explanatory design of the study, thus creating a triangulation of data. Denzin (1978) contends that by utilizing mixed-method triangulation, "the bias inherent in any particular data source, investigators, and particularly method will be canceled out when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods" (p. 14). The sequential design of the study allows the results of one phase or methodological approach to inform the planning of the next phase or method, thereby creating sequential triangulation (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Finally, the implementation of two or more research methods "enhances our beliefs that the results are valid and not a methodological artifact" (Bouchard, 1976, p. 268).

To ensure the validity of the study and survey instrument, a team of eight non-participants piloted the survey; based on the pilot team's experience and feedback, the survey instrument was modified until the questions were finalized. The instrument was reviewed by field experts on an ongoing basis, including professional colleagues in the field of K-12 online teaching and learning, professors and practitioners of educational research, a three-member dissertation committee, and a university department chair from the field of Instructional Technology. Additionally, the researcher collaborated with a statistician from the university's Center for Statistics and Analytical Services to ensure the validity and reliability of the survey instrumentation and analysis.

To further strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher created an audit trail of several documents. A regular trail of correspondences between the researcher and dissertation committee documents the development of research and survey questions, protocols for conducting the survey, procedures for coding and analyzing the data, weekly meeting schedules, and to-do lists. Shenton (2004) recommends researchers hold frequent debriefing sessions with project directors or steering committees, thereby allowing the experience and expertise of the committee to widen the researcher's vision and perceptions, while also drawing attention to flaws in the proposed course of action. Because the survey is anonymous, post-survey member checking will not be incorporated to increase trustworthiness.

Additionally, the researcher kept a journal of reflective commentary to evaluate and document the effectiveness of techniques, impressions of each data collection, and emerging patterns in the data (Shenton, 2004). This type of reflective commentary plays a

key role in progressive subjectivity, "or the monitoring of the researcher's own developing constructions" (Shenton, 2004, p. 68).

During the course of the study, peer reviewers were used to review the data that was collected and analyzed to strengthen inter-rater reliability. Peer-reviewers bring a fresh perspective and may challenge the assumptions of the researcher, "whose closeness to the project frequently inhibits his or her ability to view it with real detachment" (Shenton, 2004, p. 67). These peer-reviewers were current and former doctoral students who have a scholarly concentration in the field of Instructional Technology. Collectively, these documents and activities increased the trustworthiness, reliability, and content validity of this study by allowing the evolving research process to be transparent.

Summary

The research methodology is one of the most important aspects of any research study. The sound design of the survey instrument and focus group protocols guarantees the collection of valid and reliable data to address each research question. Implementing a mixed-method design provides the best variety of data to address the research questions. Within this chapter the methods for the research study have been presented and described. Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the job satisfaction and commitment of K-12 online teachers, as well as their intent to remain teaching online, the sample contained those teachers who are currently teaching in an online K-12 school. The proposed study solicited participants from public, private, and charter virtual schools throughout a single Southeastern state. Additionally, the data analysis methods, timeline, and trustworthiness were presented. In the future chapters, the data analysis, findings, recommendations, and conclusion are presented.

CHAPTER 4

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Introduction and Overview

This chapter reports the quantitative findings from the research study, as outlined

in Chapter 3. Quantitative data sources were synthesized, producing more than 5,000 data

points and roughly 200 open responses from the survey. Collectively, the data measures

and reveals variables affecting the job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and

turnover intention of K-12 online teachers in the Southeast. Subsequently, the findings

present a correlational model of the relationships between job satisfaction, organizational

commitment, and turnover intention. An analysis of these relationships was conducted to

create a predictive model of participant characteristics most associated with potential K-

12 online teacher retention.

Descriptive Analysis of Survey Demographics

The JSCOT online survey instrument received 110 participant responses. One

participant was eliminated from data analysis due to that individual's role as an online

school administrator, and two more survey participants were eliminated due to

incompleteness of the survey. Data was analyzed for 107 participants, with some survey

subsections of data reporting fewer than 107 participants due to incompleteness. The data

presented in this section creates a demographic profile of the K-12 online teacher

participants in this study. Of the 107 participants, 75% were females and 25% were

males. As evidenced in Table 2, the majority ranged from 25-54 years of age, and 81.9%

of participants reported having a Masters degree or higher.

Table 2

Participant Profile of Sex, Age, and Education

Demographic Characteristics	N	Percentage
Sex		
Female	80	74.7%
Male	27	25.2%
Age Range		
25-34 years old	40	37.3%
35-44 years old	25	23.3%
45-54 years old	31	28.9%
55-64 years old	9	8.4%
65-74 years old	2	1.8%
Education		
Bachelor's Degree (B.A./B.S)	20	18.7%
Master's Degree (M.A./M.S.)	61	57.0%
Specialist's Degree (Ed.S.)	18	16.8%
Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., M.D.)	8	7.5%

Years Experience

Participants' experience teaching in a traditional, face-to-face school ranged from

0-36 years of experience, with a mean traditional teaching experience of 11.27 years.

Participant experience teaching in a blended or hybrid school model ranged from 0-15

years of experience, with a mean of .62 years of experience. This mean is very low

because the vast majority (f=89) of participants reported 0 years of teaching experience in

a blended or hybrid school model. Participant experience at a fully online school ranged

from 0-14 years, with a mean of 3.08 years of experience teaching at an online school. In

total, the cumulative teaching experience of participants, regardless of school model,

ranged from 1-36 years, with a mean of 12.54 years of total teaching experience.

School Type

Due to the wide variety and compound nature of online school types, participants were allowed to select more than one type of online school model. For example, a school might be both a district and a charter school, a district school that is affiliated with the state, or a for-profit charter school. The multiple response option resulted in 23 unique school combinations and a total number of data points that exceeds the number of participants. For example, some participants who work for a private for-profit online school selected all school type responses because the participants' private organization contracts teachers to teach for a variety of school types. This makes school type a difficult variable to analyze with regard to satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention, but it is worth noting the variety of school types represented in the study in Figure 9. As evidenced by the figure, the majority of participants reported working at a state-affiliated online school, which could include public, charter, district-level online schools or the state-run online school.

School Type by Teacher (N)
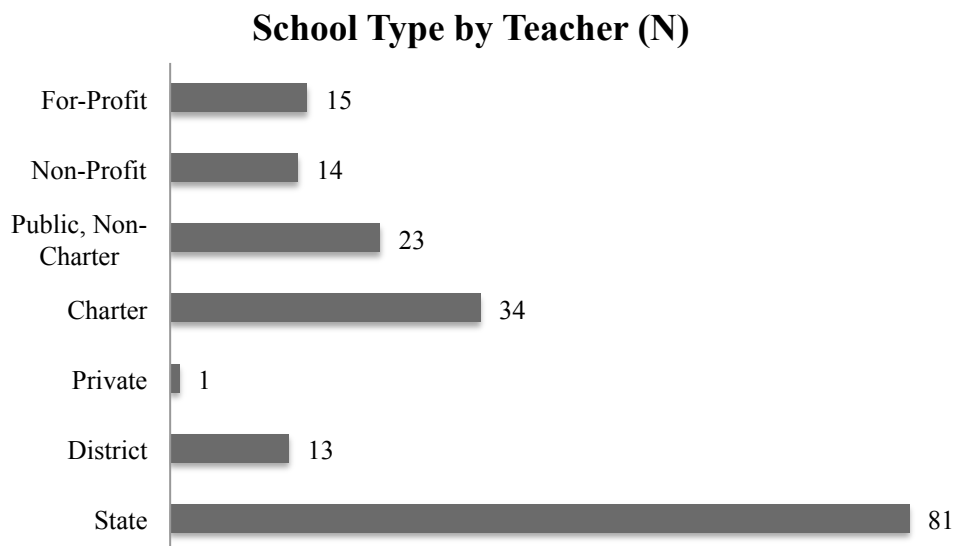
Figure 9. Participant Profile by School Governance Type

Employment Status

Part-time and full-time employees were equally represented in this study, with 51% being employed at an online school part-time and 49% being employed at an online school full-time. Additionally, 87% of survey respondents reported being employed by a fully online school where students never come to campus, 9% are employed by blended or hybrid schools where students come to campus part-time, and 4% of survey participants selected the "other" option to indicate employment at some other school model of online teaching and learning.

Mentoring

Participants were asked if they were assigned a mentor, an experienced online teacher who is not in a supervisory or evaluative position over the participant, when they were hired to teach online. Roughly 71% of respondents reported being assigned a mentor when hired, while approximately 29% of respondents were not assigned a mentor when hired to teach online, as indicated in Table 3 below. Participants were also asked how often they met or communicated with their mentor. Of the 78 teachers who reported being assigned a mentor, 72 completed the open response field; of the 72 responses, three were eliminated because they indicated the medium of communication, rather than frequency. Participant responses indicated a wide variety in the frequency of meeting with their mentor. Collectively, 42 of 69, or approximately 61%, of respondents indicated they met with their mentors at least once a week. Six teachers reported meeting with the mentors every other week, and 10 reported meeting with mentors monthly. The category Irregularly was created for five teachers who stated meeting with their mentor only occasionally, very little, or reported three or fewer meetings with their mentor.

Table 3

Assignment of Mentor and Frequency of Meetings with Mentors

Item	Response	N	Percentage
When hired to teach online, were you assigned a mentor (someone not in a supervisory or evaluative position over you)?	Yes	77	71.9%
	No	30	28.0%
How often did you meet with your mentor?	As Needed	6	8.7%
	Daily	3	4.3%
	Weekly	33	47.8%
	Multiple Times Weekly	6	8.7%
	Bi-Weekly	6	8.7%
	Monthly	10	14.5%
	Irregularly	5	7.24%

Grade Level and Subject Matter

Similar to school type, survey participants were allowed to select more than one response to grade level and subject matter taught. This was a necessary function of the survey due to the high variability in online teachers' roles at the online school. Again, the multiple response option creates a greater number of data points than number of participants. Participants reported teaching a mean of 2.43 different courses and a mean of 3.36 different grade levels per semester, as represented in Table 4.

Survey participants were predominately high school teachers, with the frequency descending steadily from high school, to middle school, to elementary school. The overwhelming majority of online courses taught by teachers center around the four core academic subject areas: Language Arts (20%), Math (26%), Science (25%), and

History/Social Studies (22%). Other academic areas, such as Foreign Language, Physical

Education, or elective courses, represent roughly 2-9% all other courses taught by K-12

online teacher participants.

Table 4

Participant Profile by Grade Level and Subjects Taught

Grade Level Taught	N	%	Subject Area Taught	N	%
Kindergarten	4	3.6%	Media Center	0	0%
1st Grade	2	1.8%	ESOL	1	.9%
2nd Grade	2	1.8%	Performing Arts	3	2.7%
3rd Grade	1	.9%	Art	5	4.5%
4th Grade	2	1.8%	Reading	6	5.5%
5th Grade	2	1.8%	Physical Education	7	6.4%
6th Grade	13	11.8%	Business/Technology	8	7.3%
7th Grade	14	12.7%	Special Education	8	7.3%
8th Grade	18	16.4%	Foreign Language	10	9.1%
9th Grade	64	58.2%	Language Arts	22	20%
10th Grade	72	65.5%	History/Social Studies	24	21.8%
11th Grade	85	77.3%	Science	27	24.5%
12th Grade	87	79.1%	Math	28	25.5%

Instrument Reliability

The researcher did not have a large enough sample size to perform a factor

analysis. Instead, "factors" were extracted by putting questions into logical groupings or

scales. Survey items addressing job satisfaction (Appendix F) were logically grouped into

five different scales: Student Interaction satisfaction (N=6), Affordances satisfaction

(N=6), Institutional Support satisfaction (N=7), Course Design and Instruction

satisfaction (N=6), and Overall Satisfaction (N=3). Of the five scales, four fit into

balanced categories while one scale, Overall Satisfaction, was made up of fewer

questions that sought to directly measure participants' job satisfaction. Survey items

addressing organizational commitment were grouped by the existing three commitment

scales (Meyer and Allen, 1997): Affective commitment (N=6), Normative commitment

(N=6) and Continuance commitment (N=6). A representative sample item is provided for each of the eight scales in Table 5.

Table 5

Survey Scales and Representative Items

Scale	Representative Item
Student Interaction	My interactions with online students is satisfying
Affordances	I am satisfied with the convenience of the online teaching environment.
Institutional Support	I have adequate technical support from my institution.
Design and Instruction	I am satisfied with the content quality of the online courses I teach.
Overall Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my position as an online teacher.
Affective	This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
Normative	This organization deserves my loyalty.
Continuance	I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.

A Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency was computed to check for the reliability of the factor scales or survey sections and can be found in Table 6. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 is an indication of a reliable instrument. The alpha values of the survey instrument's factor scales and items numbers are shown in Table 6. The Cronbach's alpha for the Student Interaction scale (.75) proved to be reliable, while Affordances (.65), Courseware and Instruction (.63), and Overall Satisfaction produced acceptable reliability scores. The Institutional Support scale produced the lowest reliability (.51), suggesting that the items included on that scale are not measuring the same thing and thus must be reevaluated for future studies. As

indicated by the table, the alpha values for the satisfaction section of the survey are not as

large as the alpha values of the organizational commitment scales (affective, continuance,

normative). This is to be expected because the Organizational Commitment

Questionnaire (OQC) has been tested, modified, and normed over the course of many

years and countless studies, while the satisfaction scales are in the process of being

developed by the researcher.

Table 6

Reliability of Scales

Factor Scales	Survey Item	Cronbach Alpha
Student Interaction	1, 3, 7, 10, 18, 23	0.75
Affordance	2, 8, 11, 19, 20, 24	0.65
Institutional Support	5, 13, 15, 16, 21, 22, 26	0.51
Design/Instruction	4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 25	0.63
Overall Satisfaction	17, 27, 28	0.66
Affective	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	0.87
Normative	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18	0.81
Continuance	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	0.74

Accordingly, the alpha values of the three organizational commitment scales

coincides with studies conducted over the past three decades. Allen and Meyer (1990),

the developers of the OQC, reported a reliability of .87 for the affective commitment

scale, .79 for normative commitment scale, and .75 for the continuance commitment

scale. In a meta-analysis of data collected between 1985 and 2000 from all researchers

who sought permission to use the OCQ, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found the average reliability from all the cumulative studies was .82 for affective commitment, .73 for continuance commitment, and .76 for normative commitment.

Phase I - Data Analysis

Quantitative Instrument

The JSCOT quantitative research instrument was designed in three sections (see Appendixes F, H, I), with each section corresponding to one of the three overarching research questions and theoretical constructs. The participants selected responses on a five-point Likert continuum where the number one was designated as *Strongly Disagree* and five was designated as *Strongly Agree*. Three was the midpoint of the continuum and signified a neutral position; therefore, any score above three shows a positive association with a particular question, idea, or concept related to job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Any score below three that indicates a weaker or negative association with a particular question, idea, or concept related to job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Survey items that focused on dissatisfaction were worded negatively and reverse scored to ensure that all data is pointing in the same direction so that analysis regarding satisfaction and commitment can be accurately interpreted.

The job satisfaction portion of the survey instrument (Appendix F) yielded a total of 28 scores that were averaged to form an overall measure of job satisfaction. Teachers who have a high score are very satisfied (maximum score of 5 x 28 questions = 140) while teachers with a low score are very dissatisfied (minimum score of 1 x 28 questions = 28) with their job. Following the scoring guidelines of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) for general job satisfaction, a percentile score of 50 or better indicates job satisfaction, with a range of 26-74 indicating average job satisfaction (Weiss

et al., 1967). A percentile score of 75 or higher indicates a high degree of satisfaction (very satisfied or strongly agree), and a percentile score of 25 or lower represents a low level of satisfaction (very dissatisfied or strongly disagree), as indicated in Figure 10.
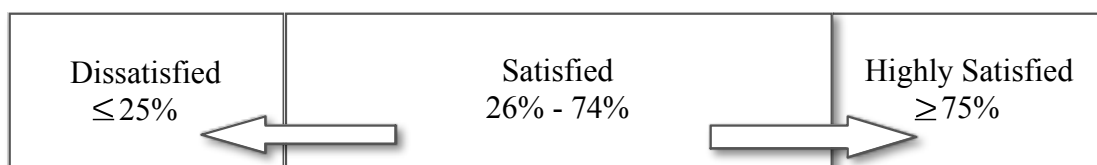
Figure 10. MSQ Satisfaction Scale

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) portion of the survey instrument (Appendix H) employs 18 questions with a 5-point Likert scale with the following anchors: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. The 18 questions are divided into three scales with six questions each, according to type of commitment: affective, normative, and continuance. The results of the 18 items were summed and divided by 18 to arrive at a summary indicator of an employee's organizational commitment. Four items are negatively phrased and were reverse scored to reduce response bias. The higher an individual's score, the higher their level of commitment to the organization.

The third and final section of the JSCOT assessed K-12 online teachers' turnover intentions (Appendix I) by asking a series of five questions to assess online teachers' short- and long-term plans to continue teaching in the field of K-12 online education. Participants selected responses from a dichotomous scale: intent to remain (1) versus intent to leave (0). Using a logistic regression model of analysis, the researcher is able to compare significance between satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention variables and to create a predictive model based on the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE).

Examination of Hypotheses

The analysis of K-12 online teacher's job satisfaction, organizational

commitment, and turnover intentions is detailed in the following sections. Data analysis

is presented according to each research question's hypothesis, followed by the results and

the accepting or rejecting of the null hypothesis.

H1. K-12 online teachers will report moderately high levels of job satisfaction. H_0: $\mu \leq 3$, H_A: $\mu > 3$

The first set of hypotheses (H.1 – H.3) address the level and elements affecting

the level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The number three was used as a critical

value for job satisfaction, as three is a midpoint on a 5-point Likert continuum and is

considered average satisfaction. Any number less than three is associated with

dissatisfaction, while a number greater than three is associated with higher levels of

satisfaction.

Overall, K-12 online teachers reported a mean satisfaction of 3.69 on a 5-point

Likert continuum. The corresponding average total satisfaction score is 103.6 out of 140

possible points, which corresponds to 74.0% satisfaction. According to the MSQ

satisfaction guidelines detailed in the previous section (see Figure 9), a percentile score of

50 or better is indicative of job satisfaction, while scores above 75% indicate a high level

of job satisfaction. A t-test compared data with what was expected under the null

hypothesis and revealed a t-statistic value of 14.28 and a *p*-value of <0.001, which is less

than the researcher's significance level of 0.05. In the case of this study, southeastern K-

12 online teachers exhibited moderate to high levels of overall job satisfaction, and the

null hypothesis is rejected.

Job satisfaction was also compared by scale and is displayed as such in Figure 7. The Student Interactions scale produced a mean value of 18.85 out of 30 possible points for six 5-point Likert items. When converted to a percentage, the online teacher's job satisfaction with regard to their interactions with students is 62.83%. Using the MSQ guidelines, a percentile score of 50 or better indicates job satisfaction, with a range of 26-74 indicating average job satisfaction. In this case, K-12 online teachers are considered moderately satisfied with their interactions with online students. Of the five mean scale scores and the converted satisfaction percentages, Student Interaction produced the lowest satisfaction score.

Using the same method, the Affordances mean scale score of 26.42 out of 30 was converted to 88.06% satisfaction with the affordances or convenience online teaching provides teachers. According to the MSQ guidelines, a percentile score of 75 or higher indicates a high degree of satisfaction. The mean value of the Institutional Support scale was 27.01 of 35 possible points for 7 items, which equates to a satisfaction score of 77.17%, indicating that K-12 online teachers are highly satisfied with the support provided to them by their institution of employment. The Courseware and Instruction scale produced a mean score of 19.57 out of 30 possible points, and was converted to 65.23% satisfaction, suggesting that online teachers are moderately satisfied with online courseware and facets of instruction. Finally, the mean score produced for K-12 online teacher's Overall Satisfaction was 11.5 of 15 possible points for 3 items, which translates to 76.6% satisfaction. This percentage suggests that K-12 online teachers are highly satisfied with their role as an online teacher.

Table 7

Average Job Satisfaction by Scale

Scale	Likert Mean Score	MSQ % Satisfaction
Student Interactions	3.14	62.83%
Affordance	4.40	88.06%
Institutional Support	3.85	77.17%
Courseware & Instruction	3.26	65.23%
Overall Satisfaction	3.83	76.6%

Satisfaction scale correlation. A multivariate analysis was conducted to determine if there was a pairwise correlation between the five satisfaction scales, which served as independent variables. A multivariate analysis is used to examine the relationship between multiple variables, particularly when there is more than one independent variable, as is the case in this study (Vogt, 2007). Each factor scale was compared to the others; every pair produced a moderate to strong positive correlation, all statistically significant, and is displayed in Table 8. The strongest correlation existed between online teacher's overall satisfaction and student interaction ($r = 0.65$, $p = <.0001$), suggesting that as an online teacher's overall satisfaction score correlates to their student interaction score. The relationship between the Courseware and Instruction and Student Interaction variables produced the second highest correlation, ($r = 0.63$, $p = <.0001$), suggesting that teachers who were more (or less) satisfied with course design and instruction were more (or less) satisfied with their level of student interaction.

Table 8

Correlation Between Satisfaction Scales

Variable	by Variable	Correlation	N	Signif Prob
Affordance	Interaction	0.4699	103	<.0001*
Support	Interaction	0.5872	99	<.0001*
Support	Affordance	0.4663	98	<.0001*
Courseware	Interaction	0.6322	105	<.0001*
Courseware	Affordance	0.3465	104	0.0003*
Courseware	Support	0.5297	100	<.0001*
Overall Satisfaction	Interaction	0.6558	103	<.0001*
Overall Satisfaction	Affordance	0.5398	102	<.0001*
Overall Satisfaction	Support	0.5897	98	<.0001*
Overall Satisfaction	Courseware	0.5468	106	<.0001*

H2. Critical factors influencing job satisfaction will include flexibility, lack of student discipline issues, adequate technical training and support, and reaching a diverse population of students.

The researcher examined the five highest mean scores to determine the most satisfying factors of online teaching, as detailed in Table 9. Four items (2, 11, 19, 24) came from the Affordances factor scale, one item (5) came from the Institutional Support scale, and one item (27) was present on the Overall Satisfaction scale. Items number 24 and 27 share the same mean value, and therefore there are six items present in the five highest mean scores. The two highest mean scores were Item 2 (M=4.66) and Item 11 (4.77), both of which address teacher's satisfaction with the convenience and flexible access to their online courses. Similarly, teachers are satisfied with Item 19 (M=4.40)

regarding student's ability to independently access online courses from almost anywhere.

Item 24 (M=4.29) speaks to teacher's satisfaction with being able to meet a variety of

student needs that may otherwise go unmet through traditional education. The final

highest mean item, Item 27 (M=4.29), indicates that overall, teachers are satisfied with

their position as an online teacher.

Table 9

Highest Reported Satisfaction by Scale and Item

Item #	Scale	Item	Mean
2	Affordances	I am satisfied with the convenience of the online teaching environment.	4.66
5	Institutional Support	I have adequate technical support from my institution.	4.54
11	Affordances	I appreciate that I can access my online course any time at my convenience.	4.77
19	Affordances	I am satisfied that my students can independently access their online courses from almost anywhere.	4.40
24	Affordances	Online teaching is satisfying because it allows me to reach students who otherwise may not be successful or have access to traditional classes.	4.29
27	Overall Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my position as an online teacher.	4.29

In addition to the five highest mean items detailed above, it is worth noting that

there were five other items that scored above a 4 on the 5-point Likert continuum,

indicating a moderately high degree of satisfaction. Survey items 8 and 20 are also

grouped in the Affordance factor scale, thus every item on this scale achieved a mean

score of 4.0 or greater. Item 8 (M=4.14) indicates that the lack of student disruptions and

behavior problems in the online environment is a strong satisfying factor of teaching online, while Item 20 (M=4.04) tells us that teaching online satisfies the personal needs and life circumstances (i.e. child care, elderly parent, geographic mobility, physical limitations) of K-12 online teachers.

The other three items scoring above a 4 on the 5-point Likert continuum are all grouped on the Institutional Support factor scale. Item 15 (M=4.12) suggests that teachers are satisfied their institution's provision of necessary technology tools (i.e. equipment and software features) for teaching online. Item 21 (M=4.12) indicates K-12 online teachers are satisfied with the training and professional development they have received to support their role as an online teacher. Finally, item number 26 (M=4.02), which is a negatively worded item and thus reverse scored, suggests that despite teaching online, K-12 online teachers do not feel isolated.

At the end of the satisfaction portion of the survey, items 29 and 30 allowed participants the option to write an open response about the factors they find most encourage or most discourage their retention in the K-12 online setting. Of the 105 participants, 96 completed the open response items. Table 10 displays the five most reported factors that encourage K-12 online teachers to remain teaching online. The open responses largely support the survey data, with the most encouraging factor being the flexibility teaching online offers.

Table 10

Open Response: Encouraging Factors Reported by Participants

Factors Most Encouraging Online Teacher Retention	Frequency
Flexibility	72
Meeting Student Needs	28
Limited Student Discipline	19
Positive Interaction with Students and Parents	17
Professional Community	10

Participants indicated they value the ability to teach without being bound by time or geographic location. Again, teachers designated the ability to meet the needs of a diverse student population as one of the most satisfying aspects of the job. Many teachers also indicated the lack of student behavior issues makes their job more enjoyable because they can focus their efforts on instruction, rather than the constant behavioral interruptions and resulting stress they experienced in a traditional classroom. Building positive student and parent relationships was also identified as an encouraging aspect of online teaching, with many teachers citing extra one-on-one time with students a contributing factor for building bonds between school and home. Teachers also credited a supportive professional community as a satisfying element of their job, further supporting previous data that reveals teachers do not feel isolated when teaching online, and that institutional support is important to satisfaction. In addition to the five most identified factors that encourage retention, participants also identified supportive leadership, professional growth, student independence, personal life circumstances, fewer school

duties and initiatives, and a desire to be part of the growing trend of K-12 online teaching and learning as factors that encourage them to remain in the online classroom.

Collectively, data from the quantitative survey and open response questions coincide with one another. The data analysis of Phase I supports the researcher's hypothesis. In addition to the satisfying factors reflected in the researcher's hypothesis, the study revealed that K-12 online teachers also value opportunities to influence the design of courseware and have a desire to maintain their professional identify through expressions of creativity and individuality in both their lessons and online classroom environment.

H3. Critical factors influencing job dissatisfaction will include workload, compensation, and lack of student communication and/or participation.

The researcher examined the five lowest mean scores to determine the least satisfying factors of online teaching, as detailed in Table 11. In addition to being the five lowest mean scores, the five items being examined were the only satisfaction items to score below the 3.0 neutral position on the 5-point Likert continuum. Two items (6 and 12) were present on the Courseware and Instruction factor scale, and three items (7, 18, 23) were included on the Student Interaction scale. The lowest mean score was Item 12 (M=2.47), indicating that teachers feel they have to be more creative in terms of the resources used than they would in a traditional classroom. Item 6 (M=2.77) suggests that K-12 online teachers are somewhat dissatisfied with their workload, as compared to teaching in a traditional setting. In regard to student interaction, Item 7 (M=2.83) indicates online teachers miss face-to-face contact with students. Similarly, Item 23 (M=2.56) implies online teachers are somewhat dissatisfied with the level of familiarity they have with their online students, as compared to students in a traditional school

setting. Item 18 (M=2.54), the second lowest mean score, reveals that online teachers are somewhat dissatisfied with their online student's passivity and participation in class. Interestingly, in the multivariate analysis, Overall Job Satisfaction, Courseware and Instruction, and Student Interaction produced the highest correlations and were statistically significant.

Table 11

Lowest Reported Satisfaction by Scale and Item

Item #	Scale	Item	Mean
6	Courseware & Instruction	I have a higher workload when teaching an online course as compared to a traditional, face-to-face course.	2.77
7	Student Interaction	I miss face-to-face contact with students when teaching online	2.83
12	Courseware & Instruction	In an online course, I have to be more creative in terms of the resources used than I do in a traditional, face-to-face school.	2.47
18	Student Interaction	My online students are somewhat passive in their participation in class discussions.	2.54
23	Student Interaction	I do not get to know my online students as well as I would traditional, face-to-face students.	2.56

Notwithstanding, there was no overlap between satisfying and dissatisfying items on the five factor scales. Scales with highly satisfying items did not contain any low-mean, dissatisfying items. Conversely, scales that contained dissatisfying items did not contain any high-mean, satisfying items.

At the end of the satisfaction portion of the survey, items 29 and 30 allowed participants the option to write an open response about the factors they find most encourage or most discourage their retention in the K-12 online setting. Of the 105 participants, 96 completed the open response items. Table 12 displays the five most reported factors that discourage K-12 online teachers to remain teaching online.

Table 12

Open Response: Discouraging Factors Reported by Participants

Factors Most Discouraging Online Teacher Retention	Frequency
Compensation	35
None	32
Miss Face-to-Face with Students	15
Workload	12
Time Consuming	9

Compensation was identified as the factor that most discourages teachers from remaining in the position. More than one-third of participants expressed concern with how little they were being paid relative to their experience in a traditional school, that there is limited income growth potential as most online schools lack salary steps, and the pay from semester to semester (based on student numbers) can be too unpredictable for planning a personal budget. Notably, when asked to identify or explain discouraging elements of their job, the second most frequent open response from participants was they had no concerns, complaints, or discouraging factors to identify. Several teachers did reveal they miss the face-to-face interactions and relationships with students, as

compared to those they developed in their traditional teaching experience. Teachers also noted that the workload was very heavy and time consuming, with much time being spent grading, managing hundreds of students, contacting students and parents, and collecting data points. In addition to the five most identified factors that discourage retention, participants also identified superfluous documentation and data collection, lack of student motivation, student inactivity or truancy, demanding grading turnaround expectations, and working summers (without additional compensation) as factors that discourage them from remaining in the online classroom.

The combined data from the survey satisfaction scales and open response questions present overlapping themes. The data analysis of Phase I supports the researcher's hypothesis. In addition to those dissatisfying elements identified in the researcher's hypothesis, the participants also named physical demands, online instructional resources, and working summers among the least satisfying components of their job.

H4. K-12 online teachers will report high levels of affective and normative commitment, and low levels of continuance commitment. H_0: $\mu \leq 3$, H_A: $\mu > 3$

The second set of hypotheses (H.4 – H.6) address the type of organizational commitment and its potential correlation with job satisfaction. Again, the number three was used as a critical value for organizational commitment, as three is a midpoint on a 5-point Likert continuum and is considered average commitment. Any number less than three is associated with lower levels of organization commitment, while a number greater than three is associated with higher levels of organizational commitment. For the correlational hypotheses (H.5 – H.6), 0 served as the critical value. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) ranges from -1 (a perfect negative correlation) to 1 (a perfect positive

correlation), with 0 indicating no correlation between variables (Rumsey, 2011). Further, to determine the strength of the correlation, the researcher used the following anchors: -/+ 0.10 - 0.29 = weak correlation, -/+ 0.30 – 0.49 = small correlation, -/+ 0.50 – 0.69 = moderate correlation, -/+ 0.70 or > = strong correlation (Rumsey, 2011). The correlation was additionally analyzed for the significance of the relationship between turnover and job satisfaction, and turnover and organizational commitment; statistical significance was determined using a p-value < .05.

Organizational commitment can also be compared by scale or type of commitment. The Affective commitment scale produced the highest mean score of 23.05 points out of 30 possible points for 6 items, or an average of 3.8 points on a 5-point Likert continuum. This score indicates that participants feel both emotionally and professional committed to their mission of their organization. The Normative commitment scale produced a mean score of 20.37 points out of 30 possible points, or an average of 3.39 points on a 5-point Likert continuum, suggesting that participants feel loyal to their organization and will likely not leave due to feelings of obligation or mutual investment. The Continuance commitment scale produced the lowest mean score of 16.75 points out of 30 possible points, or an average of 2.79 points on a 5-point Likert continuum. Online teachers scored high on the affective scale and low on the continuance scale, suggesting that K-12 online teachers are committed to continuing employment at their organization because they internalize the ideals and mission of their online school, rather than staying because they have a lack of alternatives at present.

A multivariate analysis was conducted (Table 13) to determine if there was a pairwise correlation between the three organizational commitment scales, which served

as independent variables. A moderately strong positive correlation ($r = .4666$) exists between normative and affective commitment and was statistically significant ($p = <.0001$). This correlation suggests that individual's with a high affective score were likely to have a high normative score, or vice versa. This mathematical analysis aligns with the operational definitions of affective and normative commitment, in which both affective and normative commitment suggest an individual is committed to their organization and therefore more likely to continue their employment with that organization.

The multivariate analysis produced a negative correlation (-0.0987) between affective and continuance commitment, though this finding is not significant ($p = 0.3164$). This correlation suggests that as an individual's affective commitment increases, their continuance commitment decreases; conversely, as an individual's affective commitment decreases, their continuance commitment increase. This mathematical analysis accurately reflects these two polar types of commitment, where affective commitment is associated with individuals highly emotionally and professionally invested in their organization, whereas continuance commitment is associated with individuals who do not feel aligned to their organization and stay at their organization out of necessity rather than loyalty.

Table 13

Correlation Between Organizational Commitment Scales

Variable	by Variable	Correlation	N	Signif Prob
Continuance	Affective	-0.0987	105	0.3164
Normative	Affective	0.4666	103	<.0001*
Normative	Continuance	0.1104	105	0.2623

Participants scored highly on the affective and normative scales and low on the

continuance scale, suggesting that K-12 online teachers are committed to continuing

employment at their organization because they internalize the ideals and mission of their

online school, rather than staying because they lack professional alternatives or

opportunities at present. A t-test was performed to test the hypothesis for each type of

commitment, including Affective (t-statistic = 12.25, p = <0.001), Normative, (t-statistic

= 5.86, p = <0.001) and Continuance (t-statistic = -2.88, p = 0.0024). Because the p-value

was less than the researcher's significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H5. There will be a positive correlation between affective and normative commitment and job satisfaction. H_0: r ≤ 0, H_A: r > 0

H6. There will be a negative correlation between continuance commitment and job satisfaction. H_0: r ≥ 0, H_A: r < 0

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a

pairwise correlation between the three organizational commitment scales and

participants' overall job satisfaction, as is displayed in Table 14. The analysis revealed a

medium-high correlation of statistical significance (r =. 61, p = <.0001) between mean

affective commitment scores and mean job satisfaction scores, indicating that the higher a

participant's emotional and professional attachment to their organization, it is highly

likely they also have a higher degree of job satisfaction. Conversely, it could be stated

that the lower a participant's emotional and professional attachment is to their

organization, it is highly likely they also have a lower degree of job satisfaction. The

analysis between mean normative commitment scores and mean job satisfaction scores

produced a medium-low correlation of statistical significance (r = .3959, p = <.0001).

This correlation suggests that a person who feels a sense of obligation or loyalty to their

organization is likely to also have a higher degree of job satisfaction.

The multivariate analysis also produced a negative correlation of statistical significance ($r = -0.3264$, $p = <.0012$) between mean continuance commitment scores and mean satisfaction scores. Because continuance commitment describes individuals who do not feel a sense of obligation or loyalty to their company, but typically stay with their organization out of necessity, it is logical that these individuals would also report a lower degree of job satisfaction. The negative correlation conveys that as an individual's continuance commitment increases, their level of job satisfaction decreases. Contrariwise, as an individual's job satisfaction decreases, their continuance commitment increases.

Table 14

Correlation Between Organizational Commitment Scales and Mean Satisfaction

Variable	by Variable	Correlation	N	Signif Prob
Mean Affective	Mean Satisfaction	0.6100	95	<.0001*
Mean Normative	Mean Satisfaction	0.3959	94	<.0001*
Mean Continuance	Mean Satisfaction	-0.3264	95	0.0012*

The data analysis supported the researcher's hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between participants' affective and normative commitment and participants' level of job satisfaction; therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The data analysis also supports the researcher's hypothesis of a negative correlation between participants' level of continuance commitment and participants' job satisfaction, and the null hypothesis is rejected. While a correlation of statistical significance does exist between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the strength of the relationship is not strong, with each relationship producing a low-to-moderate correlation rather than a strong correlation.

H7. K-12 online teachers will report low levels of turnover intentions. H₀: p ≥ 0.3, Hₐ: p < 0.3

The third set of hypotheses (H.7 – H.9) address turnover intentions and the potential correlation of job satisfaction, types of organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. The researcher selected 30% or .30 as the critical value for turnover intentions because 30% is the historical rate of attrition for traditional K-12 teachers (AEE, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Dawson, 2001; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ingersoll 2002; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). For the correlational hypotheses (H.8 – H.9), 0 served as the critical value. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) ranges from -1 (a perfect negative correlation) to 1 (a perfect positive correlation), with 0 indicating no correlation between variables (Rumsey, 2011). Further, to determine the strength of the correlation, the researcher used the following anchors: -/+ 0.10 - 0.29 = weak correlation, -/+ 0.30 – 0.49 = small correlation, -/+ 0.50 – 0.69 = moderate correlation, -/+ 0.70 or > = strong correlation (Rumsey, 2011). The correlation was additionally analyzed for the significance of the relationship between turnover and job satisfaction, and turnover and organizational commitment; statistical significance was determined using a *p*-value < .05

The turnover intention of K-12 online teachers was assessed using five items that measured teacher's turnover timeline incrementally, starting with the immediate future, 1-year, 5-years, when a better opportunity arises, and career, as detailed in Table 15. When asked if they intended to continue teaching online in the immediate future, 95% responded Yes, while 5% responded No; however, teacher's intent to remain teaching online drops by approximately 20% over the career timeline presented. Additionally, roughly one-third of online teachers agreed that they would leave their job should a better opportunity arise.

Table 15

Turnover Intention Items

Item	Yes	No
I intend to keep teaching online.	95%	5%
It is likely I will search for a new job in the next year.	18%	82%
In five years, I see myself still teaching online.	81%	19%
I will teach online only until a better opportunity arises.	33%	67%
I would like to remain teaching online for the remainder of my career.	77%	23%

For the 1-year (z-statistic = -2.65, p = 0.004) and the 5-year (z-statistic = -2.45, p = 0.007) turnover intentions, the population proportion intending to leave online teaching is less than the critical value of 0.3 (30%), so the null hypothesis is rejected. The projected attrition of online teacher participants (19%) is less than the actual attrition of traditional teachers, which historically ranges from 30% to 50% within the first five years of teaching AEE, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Dawson, 2001; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ingersoll 2002; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014.

In the case of the career-long turnover intentions (z-statistic = -1.61 p = 0.054), the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. While the sample proportion intending to leave is less than 0.3, it is not so much less as to convince us the population proportion intending to leave is less than 0.3. The p-value is close to 0.05 and while the result is not statistically significant, it is certainly indicative of a general intent to remain. It is worth noting, as the z-statistic values get closer to zero, the sample proportions intending to leave gets closer to 0.3. This may be an indication of participants' uncertainty about the long-term future and not necessarily about an increasing intention to leave as time passes.

H8. There will be a positive correlation between job satisfaction and intent to remain. H$_0$: r ≤ 0, H$_A$: r > 0

   To determine if a correlation exists between job satisfaction and turnover intention, the researcher employed a bi-serial correlation, in which one variable is dichotomous and one is continuous. The researcher also performed t-tests to determine the statistical significance of the bi-serial correlation value. Of the five turnover intention questions, items 2, 3, and 5 were used for analysis because they indicate online teacher's turnover intentions at 1-year, 5-years, and career. These three increments provide researchers and school leaders with immediate, intermediate, and long-term turnover intentions of K-12 online teachers. Each item produced a medium correlation and in each case the test is significant and are displayed in Tables 16, 17, and 18. Those who answered indicating they would stay had significantly higher satisfaction scores than those who indicated they would leave. The analysis revealed a medium size correlation between satisfaction and turnover; therefor, the null hypothesis is rejected due to the medium correlation of statistical significance on all three turnover items.

Table 16

Correlation Between Satisfaction and 1-year Turnover Intentions

Item 2 - It is likely I will search for a new job in the next year.

	Turnover Response	N	Mean Satisfaction	σ
Correlation				
r = 0.417*	Yes	18	3.28	0.46
Significance				
p = 0.0002*	No	78	3.80	.041

Table 17

Correlation Between Satisfaction and 5-year Turnover Intentions

Item 3 - In five years, I see myself still teaching online.

Correlation	Turnover Response	N	Mean Satisfaction	σ
$r = 0.348^*$	Yes	76	3.79	0.41
Significance $p = 0.0013^*$	No	20	3.35	0.51

Table 18

Correlation Between Satisfaction and Career Turnover Intentions

Item 5 - I would like to remain teaching online for the remainder of my career.

Correlation	Turnover Response	N	Mean Satisfaction	σ
r = 0.442*	Yes	73	3.83	0.38
Significance p = < .0001*	No	23	3.29	0.49

H9. There will be a positive correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intention. $H_0: r \leq 0$, $H_A: r > 0$

      To determine if a correlation exists between job satisfaction and organizational

commitment, the researcher employed bi-serial correlation and again performed t-tests to

determine the statistical significance of the bi-serial correlation value. Of the five

turnover intention questions, items 2, 3, and 5 were again used for analysis because they

indicate online teacher's turnover intentions at 1-year, 5-years, and career. Each

commitment scale, affective, normative, and continuance, was analyzed by item for easy

comparison and is displayed in Tables 19, 20, and 21.

      With regard to item 2 (It is likely I will search for a new job in the next year),

both affective and normative commitment correlated with participant's intention to look

for a new job within the next year and was statistically significant. Those individuals who

intend to look for a job in the near future have a lower mean affective commitment score

(3.44) compared to the mean affective score (3.94) of those individuals who do not intent

to look for a new job within the next year. Those who indicated that they intend to stay in

their position had significantly higher commitment score than those who indicated they

would leave. Continuance commitment did not prove to be correlated or statistically

significant to an individual's turnover intentions. The average continuance scores do not

differ by intention to stay or leave.

Table 19

Correlation Between Organizational Commitment Scales and 1-year Turnover Intentions
Item 2 - It is likely I will search for a new job in the next year.

Commitment:	Turnover Response	N	Mean Commitment	σ
Affective				
$r = 0.291*$	Yes	20	3.44	0.63
$p = 0.0040*$	No	86	3.94	0.70
Normative				
$r = 0.277*$	Yes	20	2.96	0.76
$p = 0.0069*$	No	86	3.50	0.64
Continuance				
$r = 0.006$	Yes	20	2.78	0.85
$p = 0.9532$	No	88	2.80	0.73

Item 3 sought to determine if participants envisioned themselves still teaching

online in five years. The five-year mark is of particular interest as this is the time period

when traditional K-12 schools experience the most teacher attrition. Affective

commitment is moderately correlated with online teacher's five-year continuance or

turnover intentions, and proved to be statistically significant (0.004*). Individuals who

responded Yes, they could still see themselves teaching online in five years had a higher

mean affective commitment score (3.92) compared to those who answered No, they could

not see themselves teaching online in five years (3.52). The Normative and Continuance

commitment scales did not reveal a correlation or significant affect on teachers' five-year

with turnover intentions.

Table 20

Correlation Between Organizational Commitment Scales and 5-year Turnover Intentions
Item 3 - In five years, I see myself still teaching online.

Commitment:	Turnover Response	N	Mean Commitment	σ
Affective				
$r = 0.223*$	Yes	85	3.92	0.69
$p = 0.0265*$	No	21	3.52	0.70
Normative				
$r = 0.081$	Yes	85	3.43	0.67
$p = 0.4110$	No	21	3.27	0.80
Continuance				
$r = 0.103$	Yes	87	2.76	0.75
$p = 0.2916$	No	21	2.94	0.71

Considering the long-term trajectory of online teaching and learning, participants

were asked if they would like to remain teaching online for the remainder of their career,

to which 81 replied they would and 25 indicated they would not like to teach online for

the remainder of their career. In this scenario, those who responded Yes had a mean

affective commitment score of 3.98, whereas those individuals who selected No had a

mean commitment school of 3.41. This question generated the largest correlation ($r =$

.326*) between all commitment types and turnover intentions and proved to be

statistically significant ($p = 0.0265*$). Neither the Normative or Continuance commitment

scales revealed a correlation or significant effect on K-12 online teachers' long-term or

career turnover intentions.

Table 21

Correlation Between Organizational Commitment Scales and Career Turnover Intentions
Item 5 - I would like to remain teaching online for the remainder of my career.

Commitment:	Turnover Response	N	Mean Commitment	σ
Affective				
$r = 0.326*$	Yes	81	3.98	0.65
$p = 0.0265*$	No	25	3.41	0.73
Normative				
$r = 0.145$	Yes	82	3.46	0.66
$p = 0.1447$	No	24	3.19	0.78
Continuance				
$r = 0.137$	Yes	83	2.74	0.75
$p = 0.1637$	No	25	2.97	0.72

The data analysis supports the researcher's hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between participants' affective commitment scores and participants' turnover intentions; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The data analysis also supports the researcher's hypothesis of a positive correlation between participants' normative commitment and participant's turnover intentions, but only for the 1-year turnover intention item. While a correlation of statistical significance does exist between affective commitment and 1-year, 5-year, and career turnover intentions, the strength of the relationship is not strong, with each relationship producing a low-to-moderate correlation rather than a strong correlation. Similarly, there is a correlation of statistical significance between normative commitment and 1-year turnover intentions, but the strength of the correlation is weak. Normative commitment did not produce a correlation with the 5-year and career turnover intention items; consequently, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis for the intermediate and long-term turnover intentions for normative commitment. There was no correlation between participants' continuance

commitment and any of the turnover intention items; therefore, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis for continuance commitment.

Development of a Predictive Model

The final section of the JSCOT assessed K-12 online teachers' turnover intentions. Using a logistic regression model of analysis, the researcher is able to compare significance between satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention variables and to create a predictive model based on the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). The logistic regression dependent variable is dichotomous, meaning that it has two discrete values; in this study, the two values of the dependent variables were measured as intent to remain (1) versus intent to leave (0). In logistic regression, the affect each predictor has on the odds of answering the question in a certain way (called the odds ratio) is reported. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to show the strength of the relationship between the independent variables, and a T-test was performed to determine the correlations' statistical significance using a p-value < .05. The relationship between the dichotomous dependent variable and each of the independent variables was measured by the bi-serial Correlation, where one variable is dichotomous and the other variable is continuous.

Turnover Intention Question 1: **I intend to keep teaching online.**

The statistically significant predictors are Survey Item 21 (How many total online students do you typically teach each semester?) and the Affordances scale, in which items represent the benefits or conveniences of teaching online. The odds ratio for the total number of online students taught is 1.022; this means that each additional student has the effect of increasing the odds of intending to keep teaching online by 2.2%. This seems

contrary to logical assumption that increasing student numbers would decrease satisfaction because it increases teacher's workload; however, one must keep in mind the role of pay-per-student that is common in the online schools.

The odds ratio of the Affordance scale is 1.484. This means each additional point on the Affordance scale increases the odds of intending to keep teaching online by 48.4%. Because the Affordance scale is made up of six different survey items, it is difficult to ascribe which item would produce a greatest probability or percent chance of teachers remaining in their online teaching position. However, this odds ratio indicates the affordances of online teaching have a positive influence on intending to remain teaching online.

Turnover Intention Question 2: **It is likely I will search for a new job in the next year.**

The statistically significant predictors are Demographic Question 7 (How many years have you taught in an online school, where classes are online and students are not required to come to campus for class?) and the Overall Satisfaction scale, in which items directly measure participants' satisfaction with online teaching. The odds ratio for Question 7 (How many years have you taught in an online school) is 1.462. Each additional year of online teaching experience increases the odds of **not** searching for a new job next year by 46.2%. For the Overall Satisfaction scale, the odds ratio is 1.448. Each additional point on the Overall Satisfaction scale decreases the odds of searching for a new job next year by 44.8%.

Turnover Intention Question 3: **In five years, I see myself still teaching online.**

The most statistically significant predictor of turnover was a Demographic Question 14, which asks, "When hired to teach online, were you assigned a mentor?" In this analysis, the odds measured the relative likelihood of one particular value (turnover

intention), relative to the likelihood of a reference value (mentoring). The results are displayed in a two-way contingency table (see Table 22). In this table, the columns hold the data addressing the following intent to stay, while the rows display the data responses addressing whether the participant was assigned a mentor. As indicated in the table, a total of 88 people replied that they did see themselves teaching online in five years while only 21 did not. A total of 78 had a mentor and a total of 31 did not.

Table 22

Two-Way Contingency Table: Mentored Teachers and Turnover Intentions

Item 3 - In five years, I see myself still teaching online.

Mentored	Yes	No	Total
Yes	68	10	78
No	20	11	31
Total	88	21	109

Based on this contingency table, the Pearson's chi-square value was calculated to be 7.325 with one degree of freedom. The chi-square analysis also revealed a *p*-value of 0.0068, meaning the value is statistically significant. To understand the nature of this relationship an odds ratio was employed. An odds ratio is calculated for a dichotomous variable by dividing the probability of something occurring (Yes) by the probability of it not occurring (No). In the case of intent to stay item 3, "In five years, I see myself still teaching online," the odds ratio 3.74. This means that teachers who intend to stay are 3.74 times more likely to have been assigned a mentor, than those who indicate they do not plan to stay. Furthermore, this can be restated more directly as K-12 online teachers who

are assigned a mentor indicate a 274% increase in the likelihood of intending to stay in the profession for five years.

Turnover Intention Question 4: **I will teach online only until a better opportunity arises.**

The statistically significant predictors are Demographic Question 8 (Total years having been a full-time teacher) and the Affective scale, which measures participants' organizational commitment as personal internalization of the goals and values or their place of employment. The odds ratio for Demographic Question 8 (Total years having been a full-time teacher) is 1.123. Each additional year having been a full-time teacher, regardless of school type, decreases the odds of teaching online only until a better opportunity arises by 12.3%. For the Affective scale, the odds ratio is 1.151. Each additional point on the Affective scale decreases the odds of teaching online only until a better opportunity arises by 15.1%.

Turnover Intention Question 5: **I would like to remain teaching online for the remainder of my career.**

The statistically significant predictors are the Student Interaction scale and the Affordance scale. The odds ratio for the Student Interaction scale is 1.306. Each additional point on the Interaction scale increases the odds of remaining teaching online for the remainder of ones career by 30.6%. For the Affordance scale, the odds ratio is 1.336. Each additional point on the Affordance scale increases the odds of remaining teaching online for the remainder of ones career by 33.6%.

Summary

The participants in this study were largely veteran teachers, even if new to online teaching. Part-time and full-time participants were equally represented. The two largest age populations represented were teachers in their first ten years of teaching, and teachers

in their last 10 years of teaching. The majority of participants teach high school students in the four core academic subjects, Language Arts, History, Science, and Math. Teachers from private, charter, and public online schools were included in this study.

Phase I of the data collection revealed moderate to high levels of K-12 online teacher job satisfaction. The most satisfying aspects of teaching online include the flexibility online schools afford both teacher and student schedules, and the ability to meet a wide variety of student needs. The least satisfying factors of online teaching were the reduced compensation relative to hours worked and in comparison to the compensation of traditional teaching, the heavy workload and documentation required in online teaching, and students' inactivity or truancy.

This phase of the study also measured online teacher's organizational commitment. Online teachers scored high on the affective commitment scale and low on the continuance commitment scale, suggesting that K-12 online teachers are committed to continuing employment at their organization because they internalize the ideals and mission of their online school, rather than staying because they have a lack of other professional alternatives. Participants' organizational commitment scores produced a strong, positive correlation with their job satisfaction scores. The more satisfied the participant was with their job as an online teacher, the stronger their affective commitment score, suggesting they enjoy their organization and have a personal desire to help the organization achieve its mission. Conversely, the less satisfied the participant was with their job, the higher their continuance commitment score, suggesting they will continue to teach online only until a better alternative arises.

The final portion of the quantitative data collection assessed participants' turnover intentions in the short- and long-term. The majority of participants indicated they would continue to teach online. Participants' turnover intentions produced a strong positive correlation to their reported job satisfaction and organizational commitment, indicating that the higher a participant's satisfaction or commitment to their organization's mission, the more likely it is they will remain in the field of online teaching. A predictive model was developed based on participant characteristics and their turnover intention responses. The data analysis revealed that the elements most likely to affect participants' turnover intentions include the number years teaching experience, the perceived flexibility of their job, their degree of student interaction, their affective commitment score, and if they received a mentor when hired to teach online. Perhaps most salient, being assigned a mentor increased online teachers' likelihood of remaining in the classroom beyond five years by 274%.

The data generated in Phase I of this study was utilized to design questions for the focus group interviews. In the next chapter, the results of the Phase II qualitative focus group will be examined for the purpose of expounding upon the quantitative results presented in this chapter. In the final chapter, the researcher will draw conclusions based on the combined data, identify the limitations of the study, and present recommendations for both researchers and practitioners of K-12 teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Introduction and Overview

This chapter reports the qualitative findings from the research study, as outlined in Chapter 3. In an effort to delve more deeply into online teacher's perceptions of job satisfaction and turnover intention, focus group interviews were applied during Phase II of the research study. The focus group interviews generated 48 pages of transcripts from the eight focus group participants. The focus group interviews help to confirm the quantitative findings from Phase I, while also enriching the researcher's understanding of the variables that the participants identified as satisfying or dissatisfying, and most responsible for the retention and attrition of K-12 online teachers.

Focus Group Participants

The researcher held two synchronous focus group sessions, each with three participants. Volunteer selection was designed to create a representative balance based on school models, subject areas, grade levels taught, and employment status. The participants were grouped based on mutual agreement of date and time. Additionally, two participants who originally agreed to participate in the focus group, but were unable to attend due to last minute schedule conflicts, participated asynchronously by submitting written responses to the focus group questions. In total, focus group responses were analyzed from eight participants, whose demographic characteristics are noted under a pseudonym in Table 23. Of the participants, one participant was male and seven were

females. Of the participants, five were employed full-time, two were employed part-time, and one participant was employed both full- and part-time at two different schools.

Table 23

Focus Group Participant Profile

N= 8	Sex	Employment	School	Students
Focus Group One				
Richard	Male	Full-time	Online, Private, For-Profit	550
Bridgette	Female	FT & PT	Online Public-Charter / State	800
Mary	Female	Full-time	Blended, For-Profit	300
Leah	Female	Part-time	Online, State	50
Focus Group Two				
Martha	Female	Full-time	Online, State	160
Rita	Female	Full-time	Blended, Public-Charter	2100
Jane	Female	Full-time	Online, Private, For-Profit	750
Veronica	Female	Part-time	Online, State	35

Phase II - Data Analysis

The initial coding process generated 52 codes, which were further scrutinized and omitted or relabeled based on dominant or redundant codes. Eight codes were collapsed, leaving 44 codes that were analyzed for patterns of shared characteristics, resulting in subdivision into six categories. The categories "teacher profile" and "job expectations" helped to paint a picture of who was teaching online and what their role looked like as a K-12 online teacher. The categories "encouraging factors" and "support network" emerged as participants described aspects of their job that contributed to their enjoyment or satisfaction and increased the likelihood that they would remain teaching online in the future. Institutional factors and student concerns surfaced as categories detailing elements negatively impacting the participants' job satisfaction, and that may subsequently

contribute to online teacher attrition. Finally, these six categories were further analyzed to discern emergent themes, of which three evolved: The Online Teacher, Pathways to Retention, and Barriers to Retention. The groupings of the codes, categories, and themes are displayed in Table 24 and will be further detailed in subsequent sections.

Table 24

Focus Group Data Divided by Themes, Categories, and Codes

The professional life of an online teacher is characterized by their individual profiles and job expectations.		Pathways to retention include the affordances of the online environment and its support structures.		Barriers to retention include institutional factors and teachers' concerns about students.	
Teacher Profile	Job Expectations	Encouraging Factors	Support Network	Institutional Factors	Student Concerns
Between Jobs	Document	Courseware	Collaboration	Compensation	Face Time
Life Events and Changes	Seat Time	Retention	Professional Community	Grading	Scamming
Course Load	Extra Duties	Design Opportunity	Leadership	Suggested Improvement	Inactivity/ Truancy
Student Numbers	Communicate	Satisfying	Professional Development	Frustration	Access
Future of Education	Turnaround	Diverse Students	Mentoring	Summers	At-Risk Students
	Hours	Student Discipline	Timely Support	Income Potential	Relationships
	Workload	Flexibility		Teacher Evaluation	Parents
		Teacher Creativity		Physical Demands	Motivation
		Less Stress		Turnover	

The Professional Life of an Online Teacher

The professional life of an online teacher was an important theme that emerged from the research, derived from the categories of the online teacher profile and job

expectations. Focus group interviews provided insight into who is teaching in the K-12 online classroom, events that lead them to enter and remain in the field of online teaching, and the various roles and job expectations placed upon them by their school. The findings reflect a positive view of working in an online environment, and an enthusiasm for harnessing technology to meet not only their own personal needs but also those of their students. Notwithstanding, the teachers communicated large student numbers, a heavy course load (or number of course preps) compared to a traditional teacher, and demanding expectations for grading, communication, and availability. Composite summaries of the typical online teacher profile and job expectations are provided in the following sections.

Profile

While the reasons for entering the field of K-12 online teaching are vast and varied, focus group participants admitted they entered online teaching largely by happenstance, mostly due to changing life circumstances. Some participants had spouses moving out of the state or country due to job transfers, and the teachers did not want to lose the time they had invested in the state's retirement system. Other online teachers found themselves between jobs or unable to find employment in a traditional, brick-and-mortar school. Still other participants were teaching online while caring for young children in their home, or were working part-time in addition to a full-time job as they padded their children's college funds. Richard explained, "I was between jobs and this position became available...There's just not a lot of openings for teachers. There's a lot more teachers looking for work than there are openings for them to move to." Leah, who lived in New York when she began teaching online for a school in the Southeast, was able to keep her job when her partner was offered a position in the Netherlands. Bridgette

detailed her motivation for entering and remaining in online teaching as her professional

and family's needs evolved, explaining, "I was teaching in a brick-and-mortar school

private school that ended up closing mid-year. Someone recommended, 'Hey, try this

out,' and I've enjoyed doing it ever since." Bridgette was later able to move out of the

state when her husband received a job transfer and explained she works both full-time

and part-time for two different online school because "when you've got two kids going

through college, that's your tuition money."

Though most participants did not originally endeavor to teach at an online school,

they did mention a curiosity and excitement for the growing trend of K-12 online

education. A few participants cited professional experience or graduate-level training in

instructional technology, such as Martha, who possessed a Masters in Instructional

Technology. Of her motivation and passion for teaching online, Martha explained:

> One of the aspects that I enjoy is, of course, the use of technology and how it's
> ever-changing and growing to improve student achievement, and I think that's
> really important…You're on the cutting edge of technology and education, and I
> really enjoy that, and it's one of my passions and interests.

Similarly, Rita, who worked predominately with at-risk students and who also completed

an instructional technology certificate program at a local university, expressed her

motivations for using technology and teaching in the field of online learning.

> I love using technology because it provides opportunities for differentiation on
> many levels, it also allows for flexibility. I like the flexibility online teaching
> provides for both student and teacher, especially asynchronous delivery where
> teachers and students are not bound by time. I see this field as increasing as we try
> to address the needs of all students.

Others also felt that teaching online was an important experience for their professional

growth because online learning was rapidly expanding into the K-12 arena. Mary, who

had only ever taught in an online setting, rationalized, "I knew that this was a new concept, but that it wasn't going to go away."

Our understanding of the online teacher is further enriched when considering their role at their online school, namely the scope of their student and course load. Because some of the focus group participants were part-time teachers, they described a lighter course load, as these teachers are often hired to teach one specific class, such is the case for Leah, who taught high school French for 10-50 students depending on the demand or enrollment in a given semester. Comparably, Veronica taught AP Economics to 30-35 high school students each semester. The full-time employees have a much more assorted and demanding course load, including student numbers that range from a couple hundred to a couple thousand. For example, Jane taught Science for 6th-12th grade students, or presumably seven different Science courses, and balanced a student load of 700-800 students per semester. Mary taught five different Science courses and is responsible for roughly 300 students, while Richard taught high school physics and chemistry, as well as some engineering electives, to roughly 500 students. Bridgette taught Physical Education part-time for middle school students and Personal Fitness full-time for high school students explains, "I've got about 800 students that I keep up with. In the summer, it's usually 70 to 100."

Martha had 160 high school students, by far the lowest student number for a full-time employee, is the department coordinator and taught American Government, AP Microeconomics, and other related courses such, as U.S. and World History. In contrast, Rita had over 2100 students on her roster, by far the highest student number, and taught 9th-12th grade Language Arts and Math in a hybrid school. Unlike Martha's Advanced

Placement (AP) students, Rita's student population was primarily at-risk students who have left or been removed from their previous schools due to issues such as discipline, failing grades, teen pregnancy, criminal records, or dropping out.

Job Expectations

During the focus group interviews participants described the specific and assorted expectations of their jobs, from required seat-time and office hours, to grading turnaround time, to student communication and documentation. Participant responses revealed a rigorous workload and pace, with part-time online teachers appearing to be spared some of the extra duties that are required of full-time teachers, such as keeping a homeroom or advisement period, monitoring registration and other school records.

When asked about the typical hours in their work-week, most participants stated they worked an average work week, ranging 40-50 hours for full-time participants. Jane stated she works a typical 40-hour week, while Bridgette, who had experience teaching in a traditional school, affirmed, "My hours are probably comparable to what it would be in a regular brick and mortar school." Martha described fairly traditional working hours, Monday through Friday, 8-5, unless there is a major project or due date. Richard, the only fully online teacher who reports to an office each day, also described similar full-time expectations, but explained that his school gives employees some latitude as to when they complete their hours.

> Our expectations are that we are in the office for our 40 hours…I typically work probably somewhere in the range of 45 hours a week… as far as the time of day, as long as you're doing the eight hours they don't really worry about the time. We have another person in my department that comes in at 9. He works 9 to 5. I work typically 6:30 in the mornings. I usually leave around 4 most days, except on Friday I tend to leave a little early.

Part-time participants, such as Veronica, explained, "I do this part-time, and I normally spend, I don't know, probably 3 hours a night answering emails, grading." In reference to the hours she spends working for her virtual school part-time, Leah joked, "I don't want to count. More than my part-time status implies."

Within the hourly expectations each week, online teachers are expected to keep regular office hours wherein students have the opportunity to call or virtually meet with their teachers to discuss grades or lesson concepts that are unclear. Leah reported she is required to keep one office hour each week, but that this hour is shared between the different courses and students she taught, as opposed to holding a separate office hour per course. Leah's required office hours are light in comparison Richard's, whose school required teachers to hold two office hours per day.

A perhaps little known expectation of K-12 online teachers is that many work summers. While some teachers, particularly part-time or adjunct employees, may volunteer to teach during the summer, most salaried full-time teachers are required. Richard explained, "Our school, our company, is a year-round operation. We do work twelve months out of the year." Teachers at Rita's school work during the summers, even though summer school is not offered to their students. Rita explained:

> Teachers work during the summer completing administrative tasks but students do have a summer vacation. Teachers are required to work during the summers because we are a charter district and don't follow the 190-day employment. We have vacation time that teachers earn and can take when students are not in session.

When asked to describe their schools' expectation for grading and returning student work, each participant indicated they had 24-hours to respond to any student or parent contact, and either 48- or 72-hours to return graded work, depending on their

particular school's policy. When taking into account the large volume of students an online teacher is responsible for, most participants considered a two- or three-day turnaround expectation demanding, yet fair. Leah acknowledged, "There are tight deadlines. During a semester, three days grading turnaround and answering calls/emails within 24 hours. The expectations at my school are reasonable." Mary admitted, "I can't not grade for a week because I'll never catch up." Bridgette also spoke of the constant influx of student work:

> If what you are grading will influence your [their] performance on future assignments, then the turn-around needs to be quick. The key is to stay on top of what needs to be graded. I try to end each day with nothing to be graded, knowing I will have more assignments submitted after I log off.

> While the online teachers were able to meet their turnaround deadlines, some complained that such quick turnaround did not provide enough opportunity for the teachers to provide quality feedback to the students. Rita confessed, "The turnaround time is a major concern because it forces the teachers to not have time to provide feedback, especially when students turn in assignments late." Richard described not only his school's 48-hour grading policy, but also the grade book system that monitors the timeliness of his grading.

> Our system gives us a clue as to where things are. If we look at our grade book and we see things showing up as yellow, that means they are more than 24 hours. We only have less than 24 hours to get them graded. If we have a day where if we let things go and then we're playing catch-up, we always say we're chasing yellows, trying to get all the yellows caught up first. We get in trouble if grades turn red, meaning they didn't get graded in 48 hours.

Veronica, who taught 30-35 students part-time conceded that her school's 72-hour turnaround was quite reasonable, but grading becomes challenging when students turn in all of their assignments at one time, explaining, "I expect to have more work to do on the

weekends where we have a benchmark…it is kind of a challenge, not so much because of our required turn-around, but because kids will procrastinate."

In addition to challenging turnaround expectations, online teachers were expected to communicate with students on a regular basis. Because students are seldom, if ever, report to campus, frequent student-teacher contact is paramount to student success. Martha stated that communication with stakeholders within her organization takes up a significant amount of her time. Mary relayed, "phone calls are coming in constantly or you're trying to make phone calls constantly." Despite her constantly busy phone, Mary lamented, "It takes you about 20 phone calls to get about two kids to answer and that can really take up almost every waking hour of your hours at work." Jane echoed Mary's struggle with making student contact, commenting, "It is more anonymous online. The students can distance themselves more from the teacher. They do not have to 'face' me."

Each participant stated some type of formal or informal expectation of being available to his or her students. For some participants, this created a feeling of always being on the job, even when they are away from their computer. Mary best summarized this pressure.

> Every time I'm out of my normal spot, I leave a return message on my webmail and stuff so the kids know. They know they can text me or call me if they need something, even if I'm out. I don't make myself completely unavailable.
> Part of communicating with students includes documenting that communication.

This includes having a record of each time a teacher contacts a student or parent, whether on the phone, through text, or email. Mary explained, "You log every phone call, any communication you have with a student that's not an email because emails are automatically logged… Document, document, document is very stressed, more so than the turnaround time for grading." One of the main reasons schools emphasize such

documentation is accountability to the students and parents, as well as evidence of a good faith effort to address issues as they arise. Mary continued, "It's almost a CYA thing because if you haven't attended to something with a student and then...sometimes parents will go immediately over your head. They'll go immediately to the administration or to the owner of the company…There has to be some documentation that you did try to alleviate the problem or fix something."

Keeping contact logs proved to be one of teachers' least favorite tasks. Veronica explained that keeping track of contacts could be "horrendous" and that her school has tried several systems to lessen the burden for teachers. She stated, "We're in a system now where we can actually make a lot of our contacts, especially email contacts, through our registration system, and it automatically logs it. That has been wonderful for us…The management system can make a big difference." Richard gladly relayed, "One of the things that I'm fortunate with in our environment at my company, the burden of that level of contact goes to our advisors."

All teachers have extra duties that befall them in addition to instruction, and online teachers are no exception. Naturally, they are able to avoid bus duty, open house, monitoring the cafeteria or chaperoning school dances, but online schools bring a unique set of needs that must be met. Online teacher participants identified extra responsibilities that offset the traditional responsibilities of a school secretary, pupil personal officer, or guidance counselor. Mary explained some of the requirements of teachers in her school.

> We do all of the administrative stuff for the kids. We do a welcome call when they join. Again, we go through the courses. We make sure they have the right courses. We help them choose the courses for the next semester. We keep their attendance. The parents put the attendance in, but we make sure it's where it should be and we check on that quite often…We do a lot of what a guidance counselor would do, we do a lot of what anyone in a brick and mortar office

would do. We keep their records. If they missed a day, they send us their doctor's excuse. We keep track of that. As a homeroom teacher you have all those duties… There is a lot of extra stuff. However, I will say that the trade-off is a lot of the things you don't have to deal with in a traditional school.

Additionally, teachers relayed that collecting and submitting data points was one of their most time consuming and frustrating tasks, which Mary best articulated for the group.

The bulk of my stress comes from data collection, which is very frustrating and I'll tell you because we are an online, highly technology based school. Every single thing you want to pull out of a report can be easily pulled out somewhere, but yet they make us generate reports from other reports. It's monotonous and crazy. By the end of year, we're also totally saturated with the amount of reports and data that is due. Most of it doesn't really get done because we're just totally swamped with it.

Richard's school does collect data points, but this task is removed from the teachers' shoulders and is largely handled by their courseware and a technology department, "that will design reports for us. Our system will produce a number of reports and we rely on those system-generated reports for our data collection. We don't have to worry too much about that."

In addition to these extra roles and responsibilities, some schools require their online teachers to proctor standardized testing. Participants explained the pressure to transport and secure testing materials, ensure students show up to the testing site on time and are able to locate the classroom (often on a nearby university campus), proctor the test itself, and securely collect, transport and return the materials. The general attitude towards standardized testing was that it is very stressful for the teachers, who fear any liability if things do not go according to plan.

Pathways to retention include the affordances of the online environment and its support structures.

Pathways to retention addressed retaining K-12 online teachers and emerged from the categories of encouraging factors and support network. Encouraging factors reflects aspects of the job that participants found particularly enjoyable or gratifying, and therefore, when present on the job, were more likely to encourage online teacher retention. Among the factors online teachers found most encouraging were the ability to meet diverse student needs, effective technology and courseware, design opportunities, room for teacher individuality and creativity, and the flexibility to teach on a schedule that is not bound by time or geographic location. Having a support network also proved to be key to the satisfaction and retention of the K-12 online teacher participants. The focus group participants identified many forms of support, including the school's leadership, timely assistance, collaboration with other teachers, recognition for their accomplishments, and professional development opportunities.

Encouraging Factors

Flexibility. The participants valued the flexibility the job afforded them and their students. They noted not only the convenience of being able to teach at any time and from any location, but also the variety of recourses they can incorporate into their instruction. Richard affirmed, "I enjoy the flexibility to be able to do my job wherever and whenever I need to. As long as I have a wireless connection I can go on." Rita particularly liked "the asynchronous delivery where teacher and students are not bound by time." Leah, who lived abroad, reported that she plans to remain teaching online because "I can travel and more or less make my own schedule... I liked the freedom that teaching in an online environment would afford me." Karen explained that she loves

working from home, and "I was able to move out of state and keep my job…they're allowing me to pretty much live where my husband is and still teach. That is wonderful." Richard added that teaching online supported his personal and family needs, stating if "we have something to come up…we make arrangements to be allowed to work from home." Richard made a cost-benefit analysis when considering his 15 years teaching in a traditional classroom verses an online classroom and rationalized, "We look at the flexibility as being the trade-off. Yes, we have to work every month, but then we also can take time off and go take our kids to the doctor."

Less stress. One of the reasons cited by participants for wanting to remain in the online teaching field is a reduced level of stress. Despite taking $15,000 pay cut from her salary as a traditional classroom teacher, Rita explained, "The trade-off for me is I like what I am doing and I am not stressed like I used to be." Mary stated that while there are demanding deadlines and pressure to be available to online students, "Overall, it really does not outweigh what you deal with in the traditional classroom anymore." Richard, who confessed to struggling with classroom management in the past, joked:

> It's a lot less stressful for me at this point in my life. The one thing that I always joke about is if I have a problem with kids talking in my class I can hit the mute button, and then I don't have to worry about them talking in my class. That was always the one part of teaching in the brick and mortar.

Almost all participants noted a lack of student discipline issues as a large incentive for remaining in the online classroom. Mary asserted, "It's definitely less stress to deal with classroom management issues…I get more actual teaching done in one live lesson day than I do in two weeks in the traditional classroom, basically because of behavior." Similarly, Veronica and Bridgette noted they no longer worry about students

disrupting the learning of others, which they both consider a strong encouraging factor

for remaining in the online classroom.

    Student needs. Being able to fulfill diverse student needs is another concept focus

group participants identified as a satisfying aspect of their job. The notion of meeting

student needs is not limited to students with special ability-based learning needs, but also

includes students' life circumstances, such as their physical and emotional health, a need

for advanced courses, or hobbies that take students on the road. Richard noted, "I find it

interesting to be able to work with kids from all over the country. My school has clients

in Ohio, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Colorado. We

have people all over the place." Rita revealed that her schools serves a large population of

non-traditional students who are older, have been kicked out of their district schools, are

a ward of the Department of Juvenile Justice, live in group homes, or are enrolled in

military-style boot camps. Rita, who is passionate about the need to serve this particular

population, avowed, "Those students are usually here as a last chance."

    Contrary to Rita's experience and setting, Veronica's students tended to be highly

ambitious students who were busy pursuing other goals and interests during the day, or

looking for a platform to accelerate their education with extra classes.

> A lot of my students are students who are involved in dance or theatre or
> something that takes them away from school. Sports, tennis, things like that, that
> takes them away from school a lot, and this helps them to do the things that they
> love. So yeah, I tend to get students who are more motivated.

    Online teaching and learning also enabled teachers to adapt to student needs and

interests through the ability to alter their courses or assignments. Mary, a middle and high

school science teacher, previewed virtual labs at the beginning of each semester and

supplemented these with additional options, depending on the students' interest or known

software glitches. She explained, "I give them options. If they want to do the one in the course that's fine, but they can go to our message board and choose an option. However they learn better…here's your other options." Veronica added, "I think that's probably the reason that online teaching is near and dear to me, is that I can differentiate. I can give my students options." Veronica further detailed her desire for differentiation, along with the expectation that she do so:

> In fact, they encourage us to do that, and in our rubrics where we are observed, they look for differentiation and how we are helping that student learn…I think that benefits the students and it also fits my needs to be creative as a teacher.

Opportunities for design and creativity. In general, the focus group participants were satisfied with the courseware they use to host the materials for their online classes. Particularly of the modules that are older or more dated, there was some complaint of broken links, errors in the material, and a lack of interactivity. However, participants conceded that many of the courses are being updated and improved, often with teacher input, and they were very pleased with this opportunity. Jane articulated, "We are working on fixing curriculum in some of our courses as we move through the year. I would like to set up a more engaging system for our lessons, as well as analyze classes for the depth of knowledge." Of her school, Mary stated, "We have pretty much open access to change anything in the course, in the curriculum. We can add activities or labs or projects. We can take the ones out that are in there, and often I do." Richard expounds upon one of his roles with his school, as he helps to create new modules:

> As we make new curriculum, it's getting better all the time. We're actually getting more freedom to use our own creativity in the new development we are doing now. The teachers are being relied on to actually do the writing, where originally that had been outsourced to a writing company…. Now, we're cutting out the middleman there and just letting the teachers do the writing themselves. We're professionals. We know. We've taken enough English classes throughout college

and we know our content. We know how to write and we found that it's actually a lot faster and we get better quality allowing us to do the writing ourselves. That's where our creativity is really getting to allow us to have some fun…I always find it fascinating that I'm developing curriculum that someone 1,000 miles away is reading. Those are some of the things that I enjoy in doing this."

Providing online teachers the opportunity to design the courses they teach coincided with and addressed their expressed need for creativity and individuality. Just as within the traditional classroom, teachers infused the curriculum with their unique style and interest, and tailored their instruction for the students they teach. Providing teachers the opportunity to modify existing or design new courses was an inroad to satisfying their need to have input on the curriculum they are delivering. Mary reported being very satisfied with her ability to modify existing courses. Mary is one of only two focus group participants whose students reported to campus for face-to-face classes, which she explained encourages her individuality as a teacher:

> I feel like I have a lot of options and I do have complete freedom to use whatever I want to in my live lessons. I think that has made class time a lot more fun. We do everything we would do in a regular classroom, but I pretty much have carte blanche as far as what I want to fit in that live lesson.

Bridget, who never has face-to-face contact with her students added, "We are still encouraged to make the course 'personal.' We still have to cover the same standards taught in brick and mortar schools. Creativity comes from the teacher, not the required standards." Leah admitted that while her courseware has potential, it is not optimized for heavy use and sometimes the content is substandard, but related, "However, it does not necessarily inhibit teacher creativity. We are always welcome to supplement and alter the course." Veronica, who in addition to teaching part-time, was also hired to develop online courses for her department, cited course development as one of the most gratifying aspects of her job, and an outlet for her creativity.

> The other place I have creativity is when I develop or have the opportunity to develop a course, which I'm going to do with this one that's falling apart soon, I will be able to put in the differentiation and I get to find resources, and that's really what I love doing is development.

Support Network

Effective leadership is a fundamental element in the operation of any organization, including member retention. Rita professed, "Just like brick and mortar schools, the type of leadership that mentors, encourages, and supports teachers, who communicate a clear vision, is key." Mary cited her school administrators as a pivotal reason she remains teaching online, stating, "The reason I stay is because my administration is very stable and they're really good people…the administration has your back." In reference to conflicts that arise with parents, Mary added, "Our administration will give you a minute to take care of yourself. If it doesn't work, they'll step right in and go, 'Okay, wait a minute. We don't treat our teachers that way.' That is a huge difference than what I find in the traditional classroom." After years of struggling to meet unrealistic timelines and demands, Richard relayed the positive changes his new leadership team is making within the school climate.

> The previous management was very unreasonable with a lot of the deadlines that they set for us, a lot of the curriculum [writing] deadlines. They didn't take time to actually figure out how long it should take to get the work done…That's making things much more reasonable for us and making people a lot less stressed when it comes time for these curriculum projects.

Part of good leadership is being able to offer teachers timely support. All participants indicated they were very satisfied with the amount and timeliness of support they received, whether from the administrators, counselors, or technical support staff. Participants detailed procedures for repairing broken links or editing courseware that was erroneous or not operating, all claiming that corrections were made within hours, and no

more than 24 hours, after submitting a request. Rita explained, "Tech support is actually very responsive when there is an issue that teachers cannot fix." Richard also communicated the timeliness of technical support, "I'll submit it in the morning and later in the day that question has been fixed." Veronica explained, "We have people who are designated just to do that, just to fix links, just to fix test questions."

Richard spoke of the support offered by school counselors and described one of the benefits of reporting to an office each day, "Our advisors are right down the hall from us. If we have an issue with one of the students, we can go right down and talk with them. It makes things much easier to work with." Bridgette articulated, "It's all on how you split up the duties so it's not all on the same person." Of the support he receives from both the technology department and school counselors, Richard summarized, "I think it's the division of labor that's the key. I think for making it more manageable, have other people that are responsible. It's one of the things that's making my company very pleasant to work for."

The support network extended from the administrative level and is distributed amongst the teachers in the form of collaboration, building a professional community, and mentoring those new to online teaching. When entering the field of education, most new teachers were assigned a mentor, or an experienced teacher to help guide them through the school year (AEE, 2005; Green et al., 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Veronica articulated the importance assigning mentors to those new to online teaching:

> I think one of the main reasons that we lose teachers in the online environment is lack of training. In my online school, we have a very active teacher quality group that helps train the teachers when they first come on, it provides mentors for the teachers, and it also provides all kinds of really good, professional development that helps make their job easier.

One of the most satisfying aspects of the job for Mary and Richard was the chance to collaborate with other teachers, something they both claim far exceeded what they experienced in other school settings. Richard shared the collaborative and energized dynamics in his office:

> There is far more collaboration going on in my office than I ever saw as a brick and mortar teacher. There are eight of us in our science department and we sit in a circle. All of our desks are in a circle. We're talking with each other. We pass back and forth ideas all day. When we're developing curriculum, we're immediately able to shoot information…it is a lot more collaboration.

Mary described opportunities she had to visit the online and live classrooms of other online teachers at her school, stating, "You get to see the elementary people and listen to them do their lessons on the computer with the kids and you really get to collaborate. There's so much more teacher collaboration now than I've ever had."

Along with the collaboration, participants described a very positive professional climate. Veronica, who is a retired traditional high school teacher but teaches part-time online exclaimed, "I am going to be doing online learning for as long as they'll let me do it because I enjoy the creativity of it, I enjoy the camaraderie I have with the online teachers, and I enjoy the online students." Mary enthused, "Going in the office is literally a happy thing. You feel like, 'Oh, my God. I haven't seen you forever!' It's just such a positive attitude, everybody there."

Veronica described a bi-annual professional learning symposium when all the online teachers met and worked face-to-face to build their professional community, but also articulated the value of recognizing teachers for their hard work and contribution.

> We develop that feeling of being a family. I think that connectedness just like it works with students, works with teachers. You've always got somebody there that you feel cares about what's going on with you, is ready to help you out if you have a issue…The other thing is that they do a lot of things for recognition. We

use badges, and it's very cool to have these badges that we can put on our either LinkedIn or put on our e-portfolio or use them in a multitude of ways. That's an incentive for us.

The final component of the support network category is professional development. In this area, some of the online teacher participants were divided. Bridgette, who teaches Physical Education and Personal Fitness, claimed, "In professional development, especially with what I teach, while the information is really good, it doesn't always apply to my content. Sometimes it would be nice to be able to do professional development someplace else." Leah expressed some frustration with the professional development, asserting:

> Professional Development needs to be made useful. Many times mandatory faculty meetings are people reading the issues already highlighted in the weekly email. This is frustrating. Schools should decide how they really want teachers spending their time and put in the resources to make that happen.

Richard commented, "I wouldn't say there's excessive PD or no more than what you get in a brick and mortar classroom…It's a necessity to maintain the certificates throughout whatever state you're in. They all require those professional development hours." Mary lightheartedly confessed, "I'm an education junkie anyway. I don't feel like there's too much professional development."

Both Rita and Veronica were strong advocates for professional developmental and felt like there should be more, particularly for those teachers entering the virtual classroom for the first time. Rita communicated there was a need for training in instructional technology and online teaching, claiming, "Some people are thrown into this arena and don't really know the research and application of online teaching. I have spent the entire year looking for PD for teachers on blended learning and online learning with very little result." Veronica chimed in, "If online schools, as they grow, start to grow so

fast that they can't give the teachers that sense of community and that training that they need…I think that will cause our attrition to go up more than anything."

Barriers to retention include institutional factors and teachers' concerns about students.

Barriers to retention addressed the attrition of K-12 online teachers and emerged from the categories institutional factors and student concerns. Institutional factors reflect aspects of the job that participants find particularly frustrating or dissatisfying, and therefore, present a risk to online teacher turnover. Among the institutional factors online teachers found most discouraging were compensation and income growth potential, physical demands, working summers, and the teacher evaluation system. In their own voices, participants also reflected on the issues they see as influencing turnover in their own schools. Student concerns also emerged as a category that leads to frustration among K-12 online teachers. The focus group participants identified concerns with inactive or truant students, student motivation and work ethic, at-risk or historically unsuccessful students, lack of parental support, student access to technology, and difficulty building relationships with students.

Institutional Factors

Compensation and income growth potential. Teaching has historically been a low paying profession and Bridget conceded, "No matter where you teach you're always going to say, 'Well, I don't get paid based on what I do.'" However, focus groups participants reported being paid significantly less than their traditional classroom counterparts, taking $10,000-$15,000 pay cuts to teach online. Mary revealed, "There's a lot of people that work part-time along with their full-time teaching job." While most

full-time online teachers were offered a regular salary, part-time teachers were often paid per student. This becomes problematic because part-time teachers are only paid once or twice a semester, depending on how many students enrolled, dropped, or completed the teacher's course throughout the semester. While Veronica taught full-time in a traditional school and therefore had a steady income, for other part-time online teachers she empathized, "But if you didn't have the regular income coming in, I can see where being paid once a quarter or being paid twice a semester would be a real issue." In addition to only being paid quarterly, the fluctuation in student enrollment from semester to semester made it very hard for online teachers who were paid per student to plan and follow a personal budget. Bridget articulated, "When they limit your number of students ... Before you could have so many students. Now, we're dropping it down to something else. That's makes it frustrating." Rita observed, "Pay is a major factor in teacher retention. A lot of the teachers are either starting their career and leave to get better pay, or older teachers who are already retired in a brick and mortar school."

When considering that most online teachers make less than traditional classroom teachers, plus work year-round, the disparity in their salaries becomes more apparent. Jane asserted, "I should be paid more considering that I am year-round. I would like for our salaries to reflect the 2 ½ to 3 months that we have also taken on, or summers should be optional and separate pay." Richard, whose new school leadership was in the process of developing more attractive benefits packages for teachers, explained:

> One of the things that we're pointing out in this is that local school district salary is based on working approximately 190 days a year, but working a 12 month job you take two weeks off for vacation and other holidays throughout the year. You would figure we're working about 240 days a year. When you factor that in, our salary is about $10,000 less than what it would be if we were compensated

equally for the amount of work that a teacher in a brick and mortar is working at. It is a real problem.

In addition to grievances of low compensation, teachers also discussed the limited income growth potential as a major reason teachers may not remain teaching online long-term. Leah stated, "There is no growth in salary, limited opportunity to move up." Of her school, Mary explained, "When they hire you they pretty much say, 'This is the max you will ever be paid.'" In addition to not offering salary steps, many online schools do not compensate for higher education as public schools would. While one participant revealed that her school did compensate teachers for a Masters degree, there are other teachers working with Specialist and Doctorate degrees that are not recognized or compensated by their school. Of his for-profit employer, Richard lamented:

> In the corporate mindset, yes, there are small raises that happen every so often within your job, but primarily the big raises happen when you receive a promotion. If you're a teacher there is no promotion. You are a teacher. You're going to continue being a teacher for a number of years.

Richard continued to explain the logistics of working for a school with no salary steps:

> Since I have not received a raise in two years I've taken a de facto pay cut. There is an inflation rate. The buying power of what I was receiving two years ago is not the same as what I'm receiving today. That is a real issue.

Physical demands. Teaching online, often from the comfort of home, does not suggest it will be a physically demanding job, yet participants revealed it is more physically taxing than they expected. Mary communicated people's false expectations of teaching from home, "People don't think that it's a lot. They think oh, I'm going to lay on the couch and do my work. It's really not like that." As with traditional teaching, online teacher participants reported not using the bathroom as often as they should or taking an adequate lunch break. But unlike traditional teaching, online teachers complained of

vision strain, carpel tunnel syndrome from working at their computers, and rather than

being on their feet all day, they are sitting all day. Mary relayed:

> Teaching online has its own physical issues, too. Number one, you are sitting all
> day long. Unless you get creative and you get a stand up desk, or you actually
> have that thing on your computer that reminds you every 20 minutes or so to take
> a break from the computer, it is a truly, physically demanding job to sit all the
> time and it does affect your health. The other thing is most people who work
> online, suddenly all of us going from traditional to completely online, I just about
> expect you'll be wearing glasses pretty soon because it is really hard on your eyes.

Mary communicated ways that her school is trying to combat the physical pressures of

the job, offering Workout Wednesdays, timers for required stretch break, and a 20-minute

exercise each day. Richard joked, "Lunch is that part of the day I type with one hand,"

and described preventative measures his company implemented, "We have several people

that have standing desks or we have a high top table we can go and work at…We'll push

our chair away and sit on the yoga ball for a period of time while we're working.

Teacher evaluation. While not mentioned as a dissatisfying aspect of the job,

there was some concern over how online teachers received their performance evaluation,

particularly as many states consider performance-based pay for teachers. Teachers

working for publically funded online schools were evaluated using the same criteria as

other traditional teachers in their state, yet there is a large disconnect between the roles

and responsibilities of online verses traditional classroom teachers, of which Mary

exclaimed, "That's almost like putting a square peg in a round hole. We do a lot of the

same things in theory, but we don't do them the same way. How do you compare that?"

Mary recently ventured to a meeting hosted by her state's Department of Education

concerning the teacher evaluation system and described what she learned:

I was the only one in the room that was an online teacher. I finally went up to them all and asked, "Okay, how does this work for us?" They said, "Oh, this absolutely was not meant for online teachers."

Richard's private, for-profit school is not required to evaluate their teachers, but he reported his company was developing their own system to measure teacher performance. Richard explained, "We took the state model and we're adapting it, but we also know that our state is working to create a new evaluation to adapt the Danielson model, their teacher evaluation system, for the online environment."

Turnover. Focus group participants were ask why they believe online teachers leave the virtual classroom, particularly before five years. Mary spoke to the demands placed on teachers and asserted, "I think it's because of that expectation of you have 500 kids. You need to call them all in six weeks. Really? How is that humanly possible? You start going, 'Oh, no. I can't do this job well enough.'" Mary, who has worked for two online schools, added that not all online schools are equal, that some treat their employees like factories and do not provide creative license. Still, she professed, **"**I enjoy it and I don't think that I'll go back to the brick and mortar. I just don't think so now."

Other teachers pointed to the inequality in pay as the reason online teachers will eventually head back to brick-and-mortar classrooms. Jane recommended, "To retain teachers past 5 years, I suggest paying according to the state salary schedule." Richard acknowledged, "The salary structure and the step system is very attractive for teachers and the benefits packages, particularly the retirement plan. It's very hard for any non-traditional school to match what the public schools can offer." Leah, who was paid per student quarterly demanded, "Stop being cheap. Reduce unpredictable pay. Pay teachers according to the state salary schedule." Leah also surmised that teachers might be wary of

staying out of a traditional classroom for more than five years, as it may hamper their chances of obtaining a position in a face-to-face school again.

Veronica considered a lack of new teacher support or training to be the number one culprit of online teacher attrition. Veronica maintained there must be more emphasis on professional development, particularly for new teachers, as well as veteran teachers, to help them over the hurdles they will encounter.

> It is absolutely overwhelming to somebody doing it for the first time. Just like with a new teacher walking into a face-to-face classroom. What they taught them in the School of Education is not the reality. You need somebody there to mentor you and help you through until you kind of get your feet wet and kind of know that you are steady on them and can kind of move forward. That's what's going to help retain them. Then making sure that the teacher is recognized for their contribution either because you're giving them raises or giving them new opportunities to do things. I think that's going to be the key to keeping the online teacher.

Student Concerns
    Student motivation and inactivity. As focus group participants described the motivation and work ethic of their students, there seemed to be two polar student profiles – students who were highly motivated and accelerating their education, and students who were unmotivated and trying to recover course credit. Of the more successful students, Richard suggested, "There are some students that this environment is perfect for them. They do very well in the online environment. They're highly motivated and can work. They like the ability to take more classes and get done more quickly." Mary explained, "Our curriculum is pretty rigorous and you have to spend six to eight hours a day on your classwork, plus mix in a few live lesson times."

Veronica cautioned, "I do not think that online education is for every single student. Some really struggle with it. Some, like I said, procrastinate, and some will procrastinate too much, to the point that you can't even get them going." Richard posited,

"It is a problem with motivation, but you have that same problem in a brick and mortar school." Some of the participants described what could be considered students' bare minimum approach to work, as Veronica explained, "They are merely along and do what they need to do." Richard revealed there are a number of students on his roster that have never logged in or attempted any work, and would most likely not pass his class that semester. Additionally, Richard had students on his roster from 2013 that were still attempting to complete their coursework. Richard described instances where students went straight to the module assessments and simply clicked through answers until they could achieve a passing score, with the primary goal of task completion rather than content acquisition or achievement.

> They weren't motivated to actually learn what's going on…They are just trying to get the lessons done as quickly as possible and doing as little learning as possible along the way, going through and answering the multiple choice questions, just guessing. They never actually read the lesson, and going and doing the assessment that goes with the lesson, and just guessing and doing that assessment often enough to get a passing score.

In an attempt to encourage students to get their work turned in, Veronica tried to maintain regular contact with students who were missing work, encouraging them, "'If you get it in by Monday, it's only 10 percent off!' It really helps that I have that little bit of pressure that I could apply to them. A lot of times, they'll go ahead and get it in." Bridgette offered:

> Students will feed off of the teacher's level of enthusiasm, motivation and participation. The atmosphere you create in a synchronous setting or even talking over the phone will impact a student's attitude towards your subject, the desire to learn and motivation to do well in the class.

Students at-risk. Like Rita who served a large at-risk population, Richard explained he teaches several students who did not perform well in traditional public

schools and subsequently did not perform well in the online environment for the same reasons they were unsuccessful in the traditional setting, claiming, "They aren't motivated. They're having difficulty. We do have a problem with truancy." Mary agreed that the same problems that plagued many students in a traditional classroom follow them into the online realm. Mary continued:

> I think there are students that ask to be moved to an online school, and then there are students who are forced to be moved to an online school. The ones who are forced usually are not that great at accomplishing anything. There's usually many other issues besides actually learning. Parents don't know anything, teachers don't know anything…I don't know how you fix that. You have to go way back in time.

Rita conveyed that she was very concerned with the course content, specifically for her predominantly at-risk population, because the reading level of the curriculum was too high while the cultural relevancy was too low. She explained that it is up to the teacher to fill in those gaps and make the curriculum more tangible and relevant to at-risk students. Specifically for the students who were older or who have had little academic success in the past, Rita emphasized, "I also think the connection to real life and career is another factor in increasing student engagement."

Students who fall into the category of Special Education are entitled to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and supportive services, even in the online environment. Students who qualify for an IEP have a documented history of academic needs and challenges, and therefore are provided additional accommodations to enable them to be successful. Providing this legally-binding support can be a challenge when online teachers do not have direct contact with the students. Richard described the trouble his co-workers had getting students with IEPs to attend scheduled live sessions, particularly when direct instruction was one of the requirements of the student's IEP.

"We have these sessions and then they don't show up. We have to have them because we're offering them to meet their IEP, but then they don't actually make it to them," Richard communicated.

Parent support. Parental support was a major concern for online teachers. Because online teachers are not physically present to monitor students, they must rely on the parents to oversee their child's progress throughout the day. Sometimes parents could be too involved, as Mary described, "Parents call. Some parents have a tendency to think teachers are there to wipe their feet on and everything is your fault." However, the more common complaint was a lack of parental involvement, contact, and support. Most schools emphasized to families enrolling in their school that they were making a triad agreement between the teacher, student, and parent. Mary stressed that online students need constant support at home and that while she can offer support from the school's end, "I can't go there and sit next to them and put their fingers on the keyboard." Of the less successful online students, Mary continued:

> Typically, those are the ones that you can't get their parent on the phone. They didn't understand that they needed to be the ones "okaying" the lessons before they come to you. They didn't know they had to actually pay attention to their student's work, and they didn't know they had to take attendance. Those kids, those parents are hands-off. Those kids don't do so well. Other than making it very blatantly known when they sign up and sign the agreement to participate, I don't know what else we can do to fix that.

Student access to technology. It is surprising to consider student access to technology among the frustrations online teachers experience, because it is assumed that families understand they are signing up for technology-based schooling, and are in fact required to sign a technology understanding and access agreement when enrolling in an online schools. Richard expounded, "We have a lot of problems with technical ignorance,

which is humorous, considering it's an online school and you've got students who don't

know how to deal with computers." A few teachers described situations where the

students did not have a computer, or perhaps did not have Internet connectivity at home,

as illustrated by Richard as he relayed conversations he's had with students in the past:

> They come to us and we say, "Why haven't you started your lessons?" "Well, I
> don't have a computer." Or, "I have a computer, but we don't have Internet
> access." Or, they come back and tell us, "Well, I'm trying to do the work on my
> phone." It's not going to work that way. You're not going to be able to do your
> work on your phone. You need to actually have a computer that's going to do this.

Some online schools provided students with a computer when they signed up for

online classes, but with any privilege, this can be abused. Richard communicated that

particularly when students enrolled, but never attended a class or submitted an

assignment, his school was "afraid that they registered with us simply because under their

government program they could get a free computer to work with. They have no

computer in the house and they're getting a computer for the year to work with." Richard

recounted instances when families provided the wrong address, or claimed their computer

never arrived and were sent second computer. Unfortunately, the missing computers were

hard to retrieve, with both Richard and Mary reporting their schools have traced

computers to pawn shops and eBay.

Student relationships. While not the most mentioned dissatisfying aspect of

online teaching, some participants stated they would like to get to know their students

better, or have more direct contact with them. The two largest barriers participants saw

were the large number of students they teach and the geographic distance that separates

them. Referencing her time spent teaching in a traditional school, Jane stated, "I also miss

the time with students... I think that there should be time set aside for this as a scheduled

meeting. We would need less students to gain this time." Leah expressed that other time-consuming duties, such as logging data points and contact logs, or grading, could be automated and leave time to interact with students in more meaningful ways.

Richard, whose school served several different states, explained there is a desire to connect with students and revealed upcoming changes in his school structure, "I think that's part of the reason why next year we're planning to move into more of a blended environment. We are going to get more face-to-face time with the students." Richard admitted, "I'd love to get paid to fly down to [state name omitted] and take my students on a field trip…but that's not feasible." Presently, Richard's face-to-face contact is limited to webcams when tutoring online.

Rita, one of only two participants to ever see her students in person for classes, stated that while her school does have field trips, they were all related to college campus tours and focused on school or career readiness for her at-risk students. Mary, who also met with students in person, revealed that she saw her students face-to-face quite often in live classes, study groups, and that there were over 300 field trips taking place each year in her K-12 school. She enthusiastically expounded:

> We have an end of year event where it's like a field day at a baseball field…we have an Olympic set of games. We have face painting and dancing and music and singing. We do everything. I feel like I have a lot of time. The kids know that I'm here. They can say, "Hey." Or, parents will say, "Hey, what about a field trip to the Indian mounds?" I'm like, "Okay. I can make that be science." We just do it.

Summary

In Phase II of data collection, eight online teachers participated in focus group interviews. Much of the focus group discussion confirmed and expounded upon the quantitative findings in Phase I. Three themes emerged from the focus group discussion:

the professional life of an online teacher, pathways to retention, and barriers to retention. The online teacher described who is teaching online and what is expected of them by their online teaching job. Most participants entered online education because of changing life circumstances, including being between jobs. The online teachers reported heavy course loads, teaching multiple subjects, and high student numbers. Teaching online required many seat hours, quick turnaround, and extraneous documentation in the form of email and phone contact logs, attendance logs, and frequent data-point collection.

Pathways to retention revealed the elements of the job K-12 online teacher participants found most satisfying, chief among them the flexibility to work at any time and from any location. Teachers also described the importance of meeting student needs, the opportunity to design course content, expressing creativity and individuality, receiving timely assistance, and the strong, supportive professional community as other variables that encouraged them to remain in the field of online teaching and learning.

Finally, barriers to retention uncovered the challenges online teachers face that may threaten their retention. Participants revealed poor compensation and no income growth potential as the least satisfying aspect of their job, particularly as they consider long-term employment in an online school. In addition to a low salary, online teachers were dissatisfied with their 12-month contracts that require them to work summers, but without additional compensation relative to the salaries of 10-month contracted traditional teachers. Other variables participants identified that discourage them from remaining in the online classroom were the heavy amounts of grading, physical ailments from a sedentary profession, lack of communication and motivation from both students and parents, and missing face-to-face time and interactions with students.

In keeping with the sequential explanatory design of this study, the Phase II qualitative focus group interviews were conducted for the purposes of exploring the quantitative results presented in Chapter 4, thereby adding greater context and clarity to the study findings. In the final chapter, the researcher will draw conclusions based on the combined data, identify the limitations of the study, and present recommendations for both researchers and practitioners of K-12 teaching and learning

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In previous chapters, the researcher addressed the need for investigating online

teacher satisfaction, offered literature that contributed to the development of a conceptual

framework and research methods, and presented the findings the study revealed. This

chapter presents the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations of this research study.

The findings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are threaded back to the literature and

connections are drawn between theory and practice. The researcher will also detail the

limitations of the study and its methods. Finally, suggestions for K-12 online school

leaders and practitioners will be discussed, as well as recommendations for future

research that will build upon this study.

Discussion of Research Questions

What is the Level of Job Satisfaction of K-12 Online Teachers?

Overall, K-12 online teachers who participated in the study appear to be

moderately to highly satisfied with their jobs. Participants reported a mean satisfaction of

3.69 on a 5-point Likert continuum, indicating a moderate to high level of job

satisfaction. The corresponding average total satisfaction score was 103.6 out of 140

possible points, or 74.0% satisfaction. According to the MSQ satisfaction guidelines, a

percentile score of 50 or better was indicative of job satisfaction, while scores above 75%

indicated a high level of job satisfaction. This data is encouraging when compared to

recent national study revealing traditional K-12 teacher job satisfaction dropped to 44%

while their turnover intentions have increased to 29% (Markow & Pieters, 2012).

What are the critical factors influencing job satisfaction among K-12 online

teachers? Factors influencing online teachers' level of job satisfaction included data

collected from the quantitative survey, the survey's open-response questions, and

qualitative focus group interviews. Participants reported the convenience and flexibility

to teach without regard to time or location as the most satisfying aspect of their job. The

second most frequently cited factor was the satisfaction derived from the ability to meet

diverse student needs and populations. Participants were also satisfied with the timeliness

and degree of technical support and training they received by their institution. Other

aspects of the job that were identified as highly satisfying included: less stress resulting

from reduced classroom management and student discipline, building positive student

and parent relationships, opportunities to design course content, and a support network

that included effective leadership and a professional learning community.

Collectively, data from the quantitative survey, open response questions, and

qualitative focus group interviews coincided with one another, thus triangulating the data.

The analysis of satisfaction in both Phase I and Phase II aligned with previous research

studies that revealed leadership and support, the formation of positive professional and

student relationships, input in the planning and implementation of curriculum, and

meeting student needs were chief among the most satisfying aspects of teaching (Bolliger

& Wasilik, 2009; Bolliger et al., 2014; Lortie, 1975; Thompson, 1979; U.S. DOE, 1997).

While this study investigated a very modern phenomenon, the aspects identified

by participants as most satisfying have undertones of Maslow's (1943, 1954, 1987)

higher level needs, including developing close associations with others, gaining prestige in their field, and feelings of accomplishment and personal growth. Further, the findings also support Herzberg et al.'s (1959) assertion that workers are more motivated by intrinsic factors, such as the need for achievement, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself, that will consequently satisfy the worker's need for self-actualization and lead to higher levels of job satisfaction.

What are the critical factors influencing job dissatisfaction among K-12 online teachers? Factors influencing online teachers' level of job dissatisfaction included data collected from the quantitative survey, the survey open-response questions, and qualitative focus group interviews. Compensation and the lack of income growth potential were the most frequently identified dissatisfying aspect of participant's job. The second most dissatisfying aspect participants identified was students' lack of class participation and motivation, as well as the limited interaction and knowledge the online teachers had of their online students. Participants also identified the general workload of an online teacher as heavy, with demanding turnaround deadlines, large student numbers, and high volumes of data collection and contact logs. Other factors the participants found discouraging or dissatisfying include: the physical demands of a sedentary job, working summers without additional compensation relative to teachers contracted for 10-months, and the quality of available instructional resources.

Collectively, data from the quantitative survey, open response questions, and qualitative focus group interviews agree with one another and the data is triangulated. The analysis of dissatisfying factors in both the Phase I and Phase II data were congruent with previous research studies that revealed a lack of teacher involvement in decision-

making processes, lack of administrative support, increased student numbers and workload, inadequate instructional resources, poor compensation, and few opportunities for career advancement among the least satisfying aspects of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001; Page & Page, 1982; U.S. DOE, 1997). Student misbehavior, specifically disruptions that impede the learning of students, is frequently identified by researchers (AEE. 2005; Feng, 2005; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009) as one of the top reasons teachers leave the classroom, but in the context of this study, challenges associated with student misbehavior are all but eliminated, with online teachers identifying the *lack* of student disruptions and misbehaviors as one of the *most* satisfying aspects of their job.

The factors found least satisfying also had theoretical underpinning of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Adams' Equity Theory. Herzberg et al. (1959) described hygiene items as extrinsic factors that may lead to job dissatisfaction, including pay, job security, growth potential, and interpersonal relationships, all of which were named in some form by study participants. Herzberg notes that the absence of satisfying motivators is not likely to lead to dissatisfaction, rather a state of neutrality, but the presence of dissatisfying hygiene factors will likely to create dissatisfaction,

When considering their input-outcome ratio, particularly in comparison to traditional teachers who work fewer months and are paid more, online teacher participants have noted what Adams (1963) termed a state of inequity. Equity Theory assumes that the teachers have an idea of what is a fair reward for efforts made on the job, and will compare what they receive with what others receive. In the case of this study, the average participant possessed 11.27 years teaching experience in the traditional classroom, thereby creating a source of comparison for the compensation they received as

an online teacher. If a teacher is receiving fewer benefits or less payment than other teachers for performing the same job, the teacher who is paid less is more likely to feel less satisfied by their job (Gruneberg, 1979).

What is the Level of Organizational Commitment of K-12 Online Teachers?

Of the three types of organizational commitment, the Affective Commitment scale produced the highest mean score of 23.05 points out of 30, or an average of 3.8 points on a 5-point Likert continuum. This score indicates that participants felt both emotionally and professionally committed to the mission of their organization. When employees possess affective commitment, they desire to see their organization succeed in its goals, and feel a sense of pride for being a member of the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cohen, 2003; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Nagar, 2012; Porter, Crampon & Smith, 1976; Meyer, Kam, Goldberg & Bremner, 2013, Rusu, 2013a, Rusu 2013c). The data is encouraging for the field K-12 online teaching and learning, as online teacher participants overwhelming exhibited affective commitment to their online school. Employees with a higher degree of emotional commitment are more likely to continue working for the school eagerly and exert considerable effort on behalf of their school, because they feel integrated within the organization and identify with and internalize the norms and values of their school (Nagar, 2012).

The Normative Commitment scale produced a mean score of 20.37 points out of 30 possible points, or an average of 3.39 points on a 5-point Likert continuum, suggesting that participants felt loyal to their organization and will likely not leave due to feelings of obligation or mutual investment. Teachers who displayed normative commitment have a more transactional relationship with their school, but will likely stay employed at their school and put effort into the job because they value the benefits they receive from

working at their school. The Continuance commitment scale produced the lowest mean score of 16.75 points out of 30 possible points, or an average of 2.79 points on a 5-point Likert continuum. This data is also encouraging because online teacher participants did not view leaving their school as a cost they cannot afford, indicating that they continued to work for their school because they want to, rather than due to a lack of other options.

Does a correlation exist between organizational commitment and job satisfaction? The analysis revealed a medium-strong correlation of statistical significance ($r =. 61$, $p = <.0001$) between mean affective commitment scores and mean job satisfaction scores, indicating that the higher a participant's emotional and professional attachment to their organization, it is very likely they also have a high degree of job satisfaction. The analysis between mean normative commitment scores and mean job satisfaction scores produced a low-medium correlation of statistical significance ($r = .3959$, $p = <.0001$). This correlation suggests that a person who feels a sense of obligation or loyalty to their organization is likely to also have a higher degree of job satisfaction.

The multivariate analysis produced a negative correlation of statistical significance ($r = -0.3264$, $p = <.0012$) between mean continuance commitment scores and mean satisfaction scores. Because continuance commitment describes individuals who do not feel any sense of obligation or loyalty to their company, but typically stay with their organization out of necessity, it is logical that these individuals would also report a lower degree of job satisfaction. The negative correlation conveys that as an individual's continuance commitment increased, their level of job satisfaction decreased. Inversely, as an individual's job satisfaction increased, they are less likely to experience withdraw cognition and their continuance commitment therefore decreased.

The findings for this research sub-question are consistent with similar correlational studies conducted throughout the past five decades (Akomolafe and Olatomide, 2013; Bull, 2005; Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993; Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008; Rusu, 2013b; Weiner & Gechman, 1977). While there is still argument as to causation and predictive value of one construct over the other, researchers have consistently found a positive correlation between affective and normative commitment and job satisfaction, and a negative correlation between continuance commitment and job satisfaction, which is further supported in the results of this study.

What is the Turnover Intention of K-12 Online Teachers?

When asked if they intended to continue teaching online in the immediate future, 95% responded Yes, while 5% responded No. The projected attrition of online teacher participants (19%) is less than the actual attrition of traditional teachers, which historically ranges from 30% to 50% within the first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). Additionally, a recent national study of traditional teachers of all experience levels revealed that 29% of the teachers indicated they plan to leave the classroom permanently (Markow & Pieters, 2012). The significance of this portion of the study is that the behavioral intentions of teachers are effective predictors of actual behavior; therefore online teacher's turnover intentions serve as a proxy to actual turnover (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hofaidhllaoui & Chhinzer, 2014). As online school enrollment continues to steadily increase, the participants' intent to remain in the online classroom is an optimistic projection.

Does a correlation exist between job satisfaction and intent to remain? There was a positive correlation between participants' level of job satisfaction and their intent to remain in the online classroom in 1-year, 5-years, and the remainder of their career. These three increments provide researchers and school leaders with immediate, intermediate, and long-term turnover intentions of K-12 online teachers and each item produced a medium-sized correlation. Those who answered indicating they would stay had significantly higher satisfaction scores than those who indicated they would leave. This implies that as online teachers' satisfaction increase, so does the likelihood that they will continue to teach online. Retaining satisfied online teachers is key for school leaders who want to see a return-on-investment, not only by sparing the organization the expense of replacing the teacher, but also for the academic benefits students receive from an experienced instructor.

In similar correlational studies, researchers found job satisfaction to have a significant predictive effect on turnover intention, with employees who were satisfied being less likely to consider leaving their jobs (Blacksburg, 2005; Chovwen et al., 2014). Stated conversely, Adeyemo and Afolabi (2007) found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and withdrawal cognition, or the physiological formation of the intent to quit. In a study of public elementary school teachers, Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser (2008) found evidence not only of a correlation between teacher satisfaction and turnover intentions, but also that those teachers who indicated they would remain teaching were influenced to stay by intrinsic factors, while those teachers who indicated they would leave their job were influenced to leave by extrinsic factors. These findings further illustrate Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966) in that intrinsic motivators are more

likely to lead to job satisfaction and retention while extrinsic hygienes are more likely to lead to dissatisfaction and attrition.

Does a correlation exist between organizational commitment and intent to remain? With all three turnover items, Affective Commitment produced a small to medium-size correlation of statistical significance. Those who indicated that they intend to stay in their position had significantly higher commitment scores than those who indicated they would leave. Neither the Normative nor Continuance Commitment scales revealed a correlation or significant effect on K-12 online teacher's long-term or career turnover intentions. The average Continuance scores do not differ by intention to stay or leave.

When considering the lack of correlation between Continuance Commitment and turnover intention, the data must be viewed critically and with consideration of the self-selecting sample. Very few participants indicated continuance commitment or turnover intentions, making the data difficult to correlate. Additionally, when using a self-report instrument, there is a greater likelihood of receiving responses from participants who have strong feelings about the phenomena being studied, such as those who are highly satisfied and committed, while other population samples are underrepresented. Finally, those participants who indicated they intend to leave may not identify with continuance commitment, where they feel stuck with their job due to a lack of other alternatives, but may simply not continue to teach online due to changes in their personal life circumstances (i.e. a baby becomes school-aged and mom returns to brick-and-mortar).

Meyer and Allen (1997) emphasize the importance of Affective commitment, explaining that employees with strong affective commitment are motivated to higher

levels of performance and are more likely to make meaningful contributions than employees who expressed Normative or Continuance commitment. Cohen (1996) similarly found that Affective commitment was more highly correlated with job performance and remaining on the job than any other type of commitment. As K-12 researchers and school leaders concern themselves with retaining a body of highly qualified and dedicated online teachers, the commitment and turnover results of this study are optimistic.

Limitations

Readers should be aware of several limitations as they consider the findings. This research study used a convenience sample wherein the results from the study were not generalizable beyond this group of online teachers and cannot speak for the entire population of online teachers in the Southeastern state in which they taught. Along the same lines, the study's research design is further limited by the use of a self-report instrument, in which participants may over or under report a phenomenon. Furthermore, as a predictive or non-experimental correlational study, claims of cause and effect cannot be made.

Another point to consider was the average teaching experience of study participants, 12.54 years, suggesting they have already determined that teaching is their long-term career path. Traditionally, teacher turnover occurs within the first five years of teaching; however, these teacher participants have already been retained past the critical 5-year point of teacher attrition. Therefore, participants' turnover intentions, particularly their reported intent to remain in the online classroom, may be higher and more promising than the intent of a new teacher just beginning their teaching career. However,

there is still value in noting that participants consider online teaching a viable career path and that they envision themselves teaching online past five years.

In the satisfaction portion of the online survey, the Institutional Support scale produced the lowest reliability (.51), suggesting that the items included on that scale were not measuring the same concept and thus must be reevaluated for future studies. This scale produced the most diverse satisfaction scores. While questions pertaining to leadership, technical support, training, and professional development produced average or high satisfaction scores, this scale also included questions addressing compensation and incentives, and permission or rights to modify courseware, which produced average to low satisfaction scores. The institutional support scale must be further refined or subdivided for future studies to improve the instrument's reliability.

Finally, the researcher's decision to allow teachers to select multiple school governance and funding types (i.e. public, private, charter, for profit, not for profit) created too many possible combinations to make meaningful use of the data. Consequently, satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions could not be analyzed and compared by school model.

Implications for School Leaders

Mentoring
Perhaps the most salient data in this study, the assignment of a mentor proved to have the largest effect size on teacher's intent to remain in the online classroom. The 78 participants assigned a mentor were 274% more likely to intend to stay at their job than the K-12 online teachers who were not assigned a mentor when hired to teach online. This measured effect has practical value for K-12 online school leaders, who seek to retain the faculty in which they invest. These results suggest that mentors play an

important role in preventing the attrition of K-12 online teachers, an important implication for administrators of K-12 online schools. Green, Alejandro, and Brown (2009) suggest that in order to support and retain new online teachers they require continuous training, mentoring, and opportunities for collaboration. As with supporting traditional classroom teachers, most online learning theorists emphasize the importance of leveraging social capital to develop a strong peer coaching and mentoring model to serve not only as a retention and quality control tool to support and develop new teacher's skills, but also a way to assimilate new faculty into the online culture, reduce stress, and offer encouragement (Deubel, 2008; Green et al., 2009; Storandt et al., 2012; Sugar & Wilson, 2005).

Previous research studies have also found that mentoring, when executed with fidelity, has many benefits for beginning teachers, including an increased commitment and likelihood to continue teaching, as compared to their peers who were not assigned a mentor (Haun & Martin, 2004; Sandoval-Lucero, Shanklin, Sobel, Townsend, Davis & Kalisher, 2012). In schools where new teachers are assigned a mentor and work with a collaborative group that shares the same grade, subject area, planning time and/or cohort group of students, teachers were more likely to remain in the profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In 2004, Smith and Ingersoll reported that the assignment of a mentor in the same subject area could reduce new teacher attrition by 30%. Additionally, Richter, et al. (2013), found that it was the *quality* of the mentoring, not the *frequency* that predicted beginning teachers' development. More specifically, beginning teachers whose mentors used constructivist principles such as collaborative inquiry and critical reflection rather than a transmission approach exhibited higher levels of enthusiasm and job satisfaction.

While Storandt (2012) suggests mentors should not be supervisory personnel, online school leaders can begin to design mentorship programs that are inclusive of all new online teachers, and serve the needs of their specific online school environment. As a possible solution to the non-evaluative mentor, online schools may also make use of a technology coach that is assigned to a group of new teachers to provide them with support and guidance to prepare them to integrate classroom technologies in meaningful ways (Sugar & Wilson, 2005). Through this type of electronic apprenticeship, new teachers not only interact and collaborate with experts in the field of online learning, but also with their peer group of teachers that are new to online teaching. In a survey of 875 educators in technology in-services and workshops, "more than ninety percent of the respondents preferred to discuss, talk, and collaborate with other teachers (92%), experts (92%) and mentors (90%) while they learn about new technologies" (Sugar & Wilson, 2005, p. 95), suggesting that teachers would rather learn from other teachers, rather than professional trainers.

Compensation

Compensation was by far the most frequent complaint of K-12 online teachers, though some admitted the reduced salary was worth the trade-off of having a flexible teaching schedule. When considering the long-term retention of online teachers, one must also consider a mutual long-term investment. The average online teacher in this study had taught online for just over three years; most were somewhat satisfied or at least tolerant of their salaries at this point in their online teaching career. However, because many online schools lack a salary schedule with incremental step increases, online teachers are being paid the same today as they were when hired three years ago, and with no pay raise on the horizon.

As school leaders and researchers project continued online student enrollment, retaining teachers long-term becomes a critical issue. Participants' major concern with their compensation was the lack of income growth potential over the course of their career, as slated, they will be earning the same when they retire, as they were when they were hired. Not only does this impact earning potential over the next two or three decades of their career, but it also affects teachers' retirement, which is based on a percentage of their annual salary. While teachers typically identify intrinsic motivation for entering and remaining in the field of education (Lortie, 1975; Thompson, 1979), compensation is a hygiene item that may create dissatisfaction and consequently teacher turnover (Herzberg et al., 1959). Additionally, school leaders must also consider the number of online teacher candidates they fail to attract because of stagnant compensation and limited opportunities for professional growth and advancement, which is also a tenant of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in relation to satisfaction.

Steady income. In addition to generally lower salaries, online teachers need predictable and steady pay. Most part-time teachers (half of all participants) reported being paid per student and being paid on a quarterly basis. As participants explained, school leaders determine pay-per-students by assessing how many students start verses complete the course in a given semester, and then pay the teachers accordingly. The challenge with this is the variation in student numbers from semester to semester makes it difficult for teachers to plan and follow a personal budget because while their expenses are fixed, their income is not. Additionally, teachers find it hard to meet their financial obligations when they are paid only once or twice a semester. Because of this, some full-time and many part-time online teachers work a second job, which leaves them more

susceptible to burnout and turnover. To reduce the financial hardship on teachers and reduce the risk of burnout, school leaders should consider creating a compensation system based on average student enrollment per course section, or even pay for a range of students per course section (i.e. – 1-15 students, 75-100 students), that can be apportioned on a monthly basis.

Summer compensation. Survey participants revealed that most online teachers worked 12-month contracts. When considering that their pay is already lower than what traditional 10-month teachers receive, the compensatory gap becomes even more exaggerated. Study participants recommended that school leaders compensate them for the additional two months they work each year, and make teaching summer school optional. In essence, school leaders are encouraged to move towards a summer school model that is similar to that of traditional schools where teachers may elect to work summers for additional pay, or may choose not to work in the summers. However, if required to fulfill a 12-month contract, online teachers are adamant that these two additional months should be reflected in their already reduced salaries.

Design Opportunities

The survey's open response questions and the focus group discussions revealed that K-12 online teachers value opportunities to influence the design of courseware. While most online teachers have the rights and permission to correct erroneous questions or broken links, whether directly or through a technical support request, in existing course modules, many study participants communicated they would like to have more input on the content and activities of the courseware. Some participants, who are involved in designing new courses or redesigning older courses, affirmed that course design was the most enjoyable aspect of their job. Additionally, K-12 online teachers

conveyed a desire to maintain their professional identify through expressions of creativity and individuality in both their lessons and online classroom environment. Providing teachers the opportunity to influence the curriculum they are delivering supports teachers' desire to infuse their individual creativity into the curriculum, thus creating a sense of ownership of the courseware.

Face-to-Face Opportunities

One of the factors ranked most satisfying among K-12 online teachers is the opportunity to collaborate and work in a professional community of educators, and to build positive relationships with students and parents; contrariwise, one of the factors ranked as most dissatisfying was missing meaningful interactions with students. Jointly, these factors illustrate the value educators place on the learning community and feelings of connectedness. Presently there are various school models, some allowing regular, few, or no face-to-face interaction with students and other online educators. Striking a balance of opportunities for teachers and students to meet face-to-face may prove valuable to online school leaders as they consider the needs and satisfaction of their online teachers.

Hiring Practices

The predictive model in this study revealed specific participant characteristics or experiences that increased the likelihood the participants will remain in the field of online teaching and learning, which could inform the interviewing and hiring practices of online school administrators. The data revealed that the flexibility and affordances of online teaching was highly predictive in the retention of online teachers. Additionally, as the number of years of teaching experience increased, whether in a traditional or online classroom, so did the likelihood of remaining employed at an online school. Identification with and commitment to the mission of online schools, interactions with students, and

engaging in an online mentorship program also proved to be highly predictive in nature. When considering new online teacher candidates, school administrators should devise application or interview questions that address these constructs in an effort to identify teacher candidates who are likely to remain in the online classroom. In this manner, online leaders may preemptively decrease attrition through their hiring practices.

Researcher Recommendations

Continued research in this area is needed. As a new and evolving field of practice and research, the review of literature found nothing specifically addressing the topic of K-12 online teacher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or turnover intentions. A modest body of knowledge exists that addresses the practice of K-12 online teaching and learning, as well as online teaching in a higher education setting (Bolliger & Wasilik 2009; Green, Alejandro, & Brown, 2009; McLawhon & Cutright, 2012).

This study encourages K-12 online school leaders to assign a mentor to each new hire; however, this study does not clarify which mentoring model will have the greatest effect on teacher retention. While study participants reported whether they received a mentor and gave some indication as to the frequency of their meeting, the researcher does not know what the mentoring entailed, or how this varied from school to school. Mentoring may include co-teaching an online course with an experienced online teacher, or scaffolding the new teachers' level of responsibility until they are ready to assume primary responsibility for the course. Further research is needed to study and analyze the mentoring models of various online schools in the hopes of identifying the most effective components and practices that can then be disseminated. Future research should investigate specific models, frequencies, durations, and mediums of mentorship in the K-

12 online environment to support K-12 online school leaders and mentors in designing mentorship programs that positively effect online teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

Like mentoring models, school governance type proved to be another ambiguous component of the survey. For future studies, it is recommended that concrete school governance and funding types should be set to a single-option response on surveys. This will enable the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the practices of specific school models, as well as compare the levels of teacher satisfaction by school model. The information assembled from this type of analysis could help school leaders and researchers identify best practices that lead to higher levels of K-12 online teacher satisfaction and retention.

It is recommended that the JSCOT survey instrument be further refined, with particular regard to the Institutional Support satisfaction scale. The questions on this scale must be aligned or subdivided into a separate scale to include compensation, benefits, and return on investment. After adjusting the Institutional Support scale, the instrument should be implemented with a larger sample of K-12 online teachers. This study evaluated the experiences and perceptions of 105 online teachers within a single Southeastern state, and while some clear themes emerged from the survey and focus group analysis, this is a small sample size relative to the number of K-12 online teachers throughout the United States.

Finally, an important component, which this study lacked, is follow-up in which the researchers could compare participants' turnover intentions (stay or leave) versus their turnover actions. As more longitudinal data concerning K-12 online teachers begins

to emerge, careful attention should be paid to the attrition of online teachers. At present, researchers can only measure turnover intentions but do not have trend data for actual K-12 online teacher attrition. It would be worth comparing the attrition of online teachers, particularly those brand new to teaching, in relation to traditional teacher attrition, which generally ranges from 30-50% within the first five years of employment. Presently, the turnover intentions of K-12 online teachers is promising and lower than that of traditional teachers, with only 19% projecting they will leave the online classroom within the next five years, but as previously stated, this must be considered critically because the average participant surveyed is already past their fifth year of teaching.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of job satisfaction of K-12 online teachers in a Southeastern state, and to identify variables contributing to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The researcher also assessed the online teachers' organizational commitment and intent to remain teaching in the K-12 online setting. In this final chapter, the researcher presented information gleaned from the participants to discuss findings and limitations, recommend opportunities for further investigation in the field of K-12 online teaching, with particular regard to improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment in an effort to retain high quality online teachers. This study was significant because it adds to the deficit body of both theoretical and practitioner research in K-12 online teaching and learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Original Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

To: Ingle Larkin, Ed.S.
KSU Department of Instructional Technology

RE: Your application dated 3/4/2014
Study #14-331: K12 Online Teacher Job Satisfaction in Relation to Teacher Retention and Attrition

Dear Ms. Larkin:

Your application for the new study listed above has been administratively reviewed. This study qualifies as exempt from continuing review under DHHS (OHRP) Title 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) - educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observations. The consent procedures described within your application are in effect. You are free to conduct your study.

Please note that all proposed revisions to an exempt study require IRB review prior to implementation to ensure that the study continues to fall within an exempted category of research. A copy of revised documents with a description of planned changes should be submitted to irb@kennesaw.edu for review and approval by the IRB.

Thank you for keeping the board informed of your activities. Contact the IRB at irb@kennesaw.edu or at (678) 797-2268 if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Paula Strange, Assistant Director for Research Compliance
KSU Institutional Review Board Administrator

cc: ldias@kennesaw.edu

APPENDIX B

Updated Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

January 26, 2015

Ingle Larkin, Ed.S.
KSU Department of Instructional Technology

RE: Request for Revision to Exempted Study, Study #14-331: K12 Online Teacher Job Satisfaction in Relation to Teacher Retention and Attrition

Dear Ms. Larkin:

I have reviewed your request for revisions to the exempted study listed above, which involves the following change to the protocol: Researcher will limit the proposed study to measuring teacher's reported satisfaction or dissatisfaction as it relates to their organizational commitment and intent to remain teaching in the K-12 online setting. The original research questions were refined and narrowed to the scope to of the researcher's resources, time, and ability. Participants will complete the quantitative survey during Phase One of data collection and participating in a qualitative focus group in Phase Two of data collection. Increase in the approved pilot study size. This study continues to qualify as exempt from review under DHHS (OHRP) Title 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) - educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observations. You are free to conduct your study as approved.

Please note that any further proposed changes to the study must be promptly reported and approved prior to implementation. Contact the IRB at (678) 797-2268 or irb@kenesaw.edu if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph.D.
KSU Institutional Review Board Chair and Director

cc: ldias@kennesaw.edu

APPENDIX C

Participant Solicitation

Dear Mr./Mrs./Dr. _____,

[SOMETHING PERSONAL]

I know finding great faculty can be challenging, but keeping the best is really important to you. I hope this project will help you in this effort. Ingle Larkin, a Cobb County teacher and doctoral candidate at Kennesaw Sate University, is investigating the variables influencing the job satisfaction, organizational commitment and the turnover intentions of online teachers in the K-12 setting. Additionally, at the end of the survey teachers may elect to participate in an online focus group discussion to help further the research of K-12 online teaching.

Please consider sharing this opportunity with your faculty, as their collective experiences adds insight to this growing field of practice and research. For maximum participation, it is beneficial to let your faculty know of the survey prior to sending the link. If you have regular on-campus meetings, consider allocating approximately 15-minutes of the day for teacher participation.

In appreciation for your school's participation, Ms. Larkin will provide you with a summary report of her study's findings, which will also address trends among common virtual school types. This information may prove valuable to you as you consider hiring and induction practices, professional development, workplace morale, and long-term planning for the sustainability of your online program.

For your comfort we have attached a preview of all survey questions that Ms. Larkin will ask your teachers. For more information about the study, please see the attached consent cover letter.

On Monday we will send you a comprehensive email for you to forward to your faculty. The link provided will grant your teachers access to the survey without the need for a username or password.

Researcher contact information:
Ingle M. Larkin, Ed.S.
ilarkin@kennesaw.edu
Cell - 678-XXX-XXXX

Kind regards,

[PROFEESIONAL CONTACT / REFERRAL]

APPENDIX D

Consent Cover Letter

Title of Research Study: K-12 Online Teacher Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment in Relation to Turnover Intention

IRB Case Study: #14-331

Researcher's Contact Information:

Primary Investigator:
Ingle Larkin, Ed. S.
678-XXX-XXXX
ilarkin@kennesaw.edu
ingle.larkin@cobbk12.org

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Laurie Brantley-Dias, Ph. D.
470-XXX-XXXX
ldias@kennesaw.edu

Introduction
You are being invited to take part in an online survey and focus group research study conducted by Ingle Larkin of Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Description of Project
The purpose of this study is to identify variables influencing job satisfaction among K-12 online teachers, while also investigating online teachers' organizational commitment and intent to remain teaching online. Upon conclusion of the study, the researcher will use the information gleaned from the participants to summarize the current state of satisfaction and commitment among Southeastern K-12 online teachers, further refine a survey instrument for K-12 online teachers, and recommend opportunities for further investigation of K-12 online teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Explanation of Procedures
Participants will complete an online survey, beginning with demographic questions to allow the researcher to establish context of the study, followed by study questions related to online teacher's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Upon completion of the survey, participants may elect to engage in a synchronous online or face-to-face focus group discussion about variables that influence job satisfaction in the realm of K-12 online teaching. Survey participants may volunteer to participate in the focus group, though not all survey participants will be included in the focus group. In

addition to variables influencing job satisfaction, participants may be prompted with topics to discuss, including factors that influence teacher attrition and retention, and their intent to remain teaching in an online setting.

If participants are geographically located within a 15-mile radius, the focus group may be conducted in a central location of mutual agreement. If the geographic location exceeds a 15-mile radius, the researcher may elect to host an online focus group, a medium through which online teachers will be familiar and comfortable. Focus group responses will be audio recorded, transcribed, and entered into the Atlas-ti data management software program for open coding and clustering to establish similar themes and ideas represented by the participants.

Time Required
The anticipated time requirement for participants to complete the online survey is 15-mintues. The anticipated time requirement for individuals electing to participate in the focus group is 90-minutes.

Risks or Discomforts
You will not experience risk or discomforts beyond what is experienced in a normal day of life. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may elect or decline to answer questions or stop participating at any time without penalty.

Benefits
While there will be no direct benefit for participation in this pilot study, participants will gain satisfaction through engaging in education research, communicating their professional experiences and concerns, and contributing to the limited, but much needed, field of K-12 online teaching research. This study will contribute to the knowledge of effective design of educational interventions, online teacher development and support, and the virtual workplace environment.

Participants Compensation
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality
The researcher will assign a study number or pseudonym rather than participant names on study records. Participant names and other facts that might point to individual participants will not appear when the study is presented or published. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form, not based on individual responses. Participants will not be identified personally. Focus group participants will be asked not to reveal what was discussed in the focus groups, however, due to the nature of focus groups, the researcher does not have complete control of the confidentiality of the data.

The researcher will keep records private to the extent allowed by law. Information may also be shared with those who ensure the study is performed correctly and ethically (KSU Institutional Review Board). Digital data will be stored in a cloud (DropBox) and/or on

the researcher's personal hard drive, both requiring either a secure login or access to a password and firewall protected computer. Analysis of survey data through JMP and Atlas.ti will be stored on the researcher's password and firewall protected personal computer and in a password protected cloud. All data will be destroyed 5 years after the study's completion in September of 2020. Any paper files of raw data will be shredded at that time, while digital and audio-recorded files will be deleted or erased to ensure confidentiality.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation
Participants selected for this pilot study must have the following characteristics: 21+ years of age, hold a valid teaching certificate, possess at least one year of online and/or face-to-face teaching experience and currently teaching part-time or full-time in a K-12 online environment.

Statement of Understanding
The purpose of this research has been explained and my participation is voluntary. I have the right to stop participation at any time without penalty. I understand that the research has no known risks, and I will not be identified. By completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in this research project.

THIS PAGE MAY BE REMOVED AND KEPT BY EACH PARTICIPANT

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #0112, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (678) 797-2268.

APPENDIX E

Online Survey Consent Form

Title of Research Study: K-12 Online Teacher Job Satisfaction and Organizational
Commitment in Relation to Turnover Intention
Researcher's Contact Information:
Primary Investigator:
Ingle Larkin, Ed. S.
678-XXX-XXXX
ingle.larkin@cobbk12.org

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Laurie Brantley-Dias, Ph. D.
470-XXX-XXXX
ldias@kennesaw.edu

Introduction
You are being invited to take part in an online survey and focus group research study
conducted by Ingle Larkin of Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to
participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that
you do not understand.

Description of Project
The purpose of this study is to identify variables influencing job satisfaction among K-12
online teachers, while also investigating online teachers' organizational commitment and
intent to remain teaching online. Upon conclusion of the study, the researcher will use
the information gleaned from the participants to summarize the current state of
satisfaction and commitment among Southeastern K-12 online teachers, further refine a
survey instrument for K-12 online teachers, and recommend opportunities for further
investigation of K-12 online teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Explanation of Procedures
Participants will complete an online survey, beginning with demographic questions to
allow the researcher to establish context of the study, followed by study questions related
to online teacher's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.
Upon completion of the survey, participants may elect to engage in a synchronous online
or face-to-face focus group discussion about variables that influence job satisfaction in
the realm of K-12 online teaching. Survey participants may volunteer to participate in
the focus group, though not all survey participants will be included in the focus group. In
addition to variables influencing job satisfaction, participants may be prompted with
topics to discuss, including factors that influence teacher attrition and retention, and their
intent to remain teaching in an online setting.

If participants are geographically located within a 15-mile radius, the focus group may be
conducted in a central location of mutual agreement. If the geographic location exceeds a

15-mile radius, the researcher may elect to host an online focus group, a medium through which online teachers will be familiar and comfortable. Focus group responses will be audio recorded, transcribed, and entered into the Atlas-ti data management software program for open coding and clustering to establish similar themes and ideas represented by the participants.

Time Required
The anticipated time requirement for participants to complete the online survey is 15-mintues. The anticipated time requirement for individuals electing to participate in the focus group is 90-minutes.

Risks or Discomforts
You will not experience risk or discomforts beyond what is experienced in a normal day of life. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may elect or decline to answer questions or stop participating at any time without penalty.

Benefits
While there will be no direct benefit for participation in this pilot study, participants will gain satisfaction through engaging in education research, communicating their professional experiences and concerns, and contributing to the limited, but much needed, field of K-12 online teaching research. This study will contribute to the knowledge of effective design of educational interventions, online teacher development and support, and the virtual workplace environment.

Participants Compensation
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality
The researcher will assign a study number or pseudonym rather than participant names on study records. Participant names and other facts that might point to individual participants will not appear when the study is presented or published. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form, not based on individual responses. Participants will not be identified personally. Focus group participants will be asked not to reveal what was discussed in the focus groups, however, due to the nature of focus groups, the researcher does not have complete control of the confidentiality of the data.

The researcher will keep records private to the extent allowed by law. Information may also be shared with those who ensure the study is performed correctly and ethically (KSU Institutional Review Board). Digital data will be stored in a cloud (DropBox) and/or on the researcher's personal hard drive, both requiring either a secure login or access to a password and firewall protected computer. Analysis of survey data through JMP and Atlas.ti will be stored on the researcher's password and firewall protected personal computer and KSU's password and firewall protected computers. All data will be destroyed 5 years after the study's completion in September of 2020. Any paper files of raw data will be shredded at that time, while digital and audio-recorded files will be

deleted or erased to ensure confidentiality.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation
Participants selected for this pilot study must have the following characteristics: 21+ years of age, hold a valid teaching certificate, possess at least one year of online and/or face-to-face teaching experience and currently teaching part-time or full-time in a K-12 online environment.

Use of Online Survey
You will complete an online questionnaire, beginning with demographic questions to allow the researcher to establish context of the study. The participants will answer questions regarding their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, experience, and intent to remain in the field of K-12 online teaching. Data will be collected and handled in a confidential manner. Internet Protocol (IP) addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program. Survey responses will not require the use of a login in order to participate.

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #0112, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (678) 797-2268.

PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THIS CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS, OR IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PRINT CAPABILITIES, YOU MAY CONTACT THE RESEARCHER TO OBTAIN A COPY

☐ I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

☐ I do not agree to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions.

APPENDIX F

Job Satisfaction and Commitment of Online Teachers (JSCOT)
*Modified with permission from Bollinger, Inan, & Wasilik (2014)

The purpose of this study is to identify variables influencing job satisfaction among K-12 online teachers, investigate the level of K-12 online teacher's organizational commitment and intent to remain, and to develop a survey instrument (JSCOT) to assess K-12 online teacher's job satisfaction and commitment. Upon conclusion of the study, the researcher glean participants' experiences and perceptions of online teaching in relation to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain in the field of K-12 online teaching to further develop the JSCOT and to make recommendations for research in the field of K-12 online teacher satisfaction and commitment.

Participants must meet the following criteria for inclusion in the study:
- 21+ years of age
- hold a valid teaching certificate
- possess one year of teaching experience
- currently teaching part-time or full-time in a K-12 online environment

Completion of this survey will require approximately 15 minutes.
- I **agree** and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

- I **do not agree** to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions.

Demographic Questions
1. Please indicate your sex:
     - Male
     - Female

2. Please indicate your age range:
     - 18-24 years old
     - 25-34 years old
     - 35-44 years old
     - 45-54 years old
     - 55-64 years old
     - 65-74 years old
     - 75 years or older

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
     - 4-year Bachelor's Degree (B.A./B.S.)
     - Master's Degree (M.A./M.S.)

- Specialist's Degree (Ed.S.)
- Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., M.D.)

4. How would you describe your current employment status at your online school?
   - Employed full-time
   - Employed part-time

5. How many years have you taught in a traditional school in which students come to campus for class (not including student teaching experience)?
   - [Open Ended]

6. How many years have you taught in a hybrid school in which students come to campus for class part-time (not including student teaching experience)?
   - [Open Ended]

7. How many years have you taught in an online school, where classes are online and students are not required to come to campus for class (not including student teaching experience)?
   - [Open Ended]

8. Please indicate how many total years you have been a full-time teacher.
   - [Open Ended]

9. Check all that apply to describe the context of your current online school:
   - State
   - District
   - Private
   - Charter
   - Public, non-charter
   - For-Profit
   - Non-Profit

10. Check all that apply to describe your current online teaching position:
    - Kindergarten
    - 1st Grade
    - 2nd Grade
    - 3rd Grade
    - 4th Grade
    - 5th Grade
    - 6th Grade
    - 7th Grade
    - 8th Grade
    - 9th Grade
    - 10th Grade
    - 11th Grade

- 12th Grade

11. Check all that apply to describe your current online teaching position
    - Language Arts
    - Math
    - Science
    - History/Social Studies
    - Business/Technology
    - Reading ESOL
    - Special Education
    - Physical Education
    - Media Center
    - Art
    - Performing Arts
    - Foreign Language

12. Which of the following best describes your current online teaching setting?
    - Online School
    - Hybrid/Blended School (some face-to-face activity)
    - Other:

13. Where did you receive your online teacher preparation? Select all that apply.
    - College or University
    - Place of employment (ex: New Teacher Orientation or Professional Development)
    - Informal personal research and practice
    - Did not receive online teacher preparation

14. When hired to teach online, were you assigned a mentor (someone not in a supervisory or evaluative position over you)?
    - Yes
    - No

15. If you were assigned a mentor, how often did you meet with your mentor?
    - [Open Ended]

16. When teaching online, which type of course do you teach most often?
    - Courses I've designed
    - Courses designed by others

17. At your institution, are you given permission and access to modify online course content?
    - Yes
    - No

18. How many different online course preps do you typically teach in a semester? (Ex: 2 sections of Math and 3 sections of Science = 2 different course preps)
    - [Open Ended]

19. How many online students do you typically advise or provide non-instructional support to each semester?
    - [Open Ended]

20. How many total online students do you typically teach each semester?
    - [Open Ended]

21. How many online students do you typically teach in a single course section (or class roster)?
    - 0-9 students
    - 11-20 students
    - 21-30 students
    - 31-40 students
    - 41-50 students
    - 51-60 students
    - 61-70 students
    - 71-80 students
    - 81-90 students
    - 91-100 students
    - 101 + students

Online Job Satisfaction Questions

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your identity will be kept private and your answers will be made anonymous if used in an analysis.

Select: (5) strongly agree
       (4) agree,
       (3) neither agree nor disagree,
       (2) disagree,
       (1) strongly disagree

1. My interactions with online students are satisfying.

2. I am satisfied with the convenience of the online teaching environment.

3. My online students are enthusiastically involved in their learning.

4. I feel my pedagogy and methodology are constrained when teaching online compared to a traditional, face-to-face course. [R]

5. I have adequate technical support from my institution.

6. I have a higher workload when teaching an online course as compared to a traditional, face-to-face course. [R]

7. I miss face-to-face contact with students when teaching online. [R]

8. I am satisfied with the lack of student behavior challenges in the online environment.

9. I am satisfied with the way students are assessed in online courses.

10. My students are very active in communicating with me regarding online course matters.

11. I appreciate that I can access my online course any time at my convenience.

12. In an online course, I have to be more creative in terms of the resources used than I do in a traditional, face-to-face school. [R]

13. At my institution, online teachers are given sufficient time to design and/or modify online courses.

14. I am satisfied with the content quality of the online courses I teach.

15. My institution provides the necessary technology tools (i.e. equipment and software features) for teaching online.

16. There is reduced sense of collegiality, community, and collaboration amongst online teachers as compared to traditional, face-to-face teachers. [R]

17. I am equally satisfied with teaching online as I am teaching in a traditional, face-to-face setting.

18. My online students are somewhat passive in their participation in class discussions. [R]

19. I am satisfied that my students can independently access their online courses from almost anywhere.

20. I teach online because it satisfies my personal needs and life circumstances.

21. I am satisfied with the training and professional development I've received to support my role as an online teacher.

22. I receive fair compensation and incentives for my role at the online school.

23. I do not get to know my online students as well as I would traditional, face-to-face students. [R]

24. Online teaching is satisfying because it allows me to reach students who otherwise may not be successful or have access to traditional classes.

25. I am satisfied with the quality of student work in online courses.

26. I feel isolated when teaching online. [R]

27. I am satisfied with my position as an online teacher.

28. I am more satisfied teaching online than I am teaching in a traditional, face-to-face setting.

Open-Ended Questions:
29. What are some dissatisfying factors that would make you consider leaving online teaching?

30. What are some satisfying factors that encourage you to remain teaching online?

[R] = Reverse Likert scoring for negatively worded items.

Focus Group Participation

The researcher is seeking 6-10 participants who are willing to meet and address questions related to K12 online teaching, with particular regard to job satisfaction and teacher retention.

If you are willing to participate in a 60-90 minute focus group, please provide your contact information. Your personal information will be used solely for contact purposes and will not be included in the research study or any publications resulting from the research study. Focus group participants may participate under a pseudonym and are not required to disclose their real name or school of employ when participating in the focus group session.

The focus group discussion will be audio recorded, transcribed, and the findings will be summarized and reported in group form, not based on individual responses. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will omit all personally identifying information, such as names, email addresses, or place of employment from study records or any resulting publications.

Name:
Email:

Phone:
At which online school do you teach?

The researcher WILL NOT REPORT the name of participating schools. This information is ONLY used for participant selection to ensure there is an equal representation of online teachers (i.e. not all from one school). You do not have to identify your school or name during the focus group discussion.

Which focus group setting do you prefer?
- Online (synchronous)
- Kennesaw State University (face-to-face)
- Either

APPENDIX G

Permission to Modify OISM from Dr. Doris Bolliger

Dear Ingle,

Thank you for your e-mail and interest in our work. You have our permission to modify and utilize the OSIM in your dissertation research.

There is a lot of debate among statisticians whether instruments should consist of 4 or 5-point Likert-type items. I can argue either case. It mainly was a joint decision of the research team. Other reasons could be cultural. I am currently working on a project with Japanese students; in general, the Japanese are not comfortable expressing strong opinions. In that setting, we decided to cut out the "neutral" response.

Best wishes,

Doris U. Bolliger

--
Doris U. Bolliger, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Instructional Technology
College of Education
Department of Professional Studies
University of Wyoming
1000 E. University Avenue, ED 322
Laramie, WY 82071
Ph. 307-766-2167   dorisbolliger@gmail.com

On Mon, Oct 20, 2014 at 3:06 PM, Ingle Larkin <ilarkin@kennesaw.edu> wrote:

Dear Dr. Bolliger,

My name is Ingle M. Larkin and I am a doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, located north of Atlanta, GA. My advisor and dissertation chair is Dr. Laurie Dias, formally of Georgia State University and currently of Kennesaw State University.

I am working towards a doctoral dissertation prospectus in which I will study and report on the development and the validation of an online instructor job satisfaction survey, based on your work. I've read several of your articles, particularly those based on the development and validation of the OSIM, and would like to adapt your instrument to suit the context of job satisfaction amongst K12 online teachers.

May I have your permission to adapt your survey to use in my study, with citations and credit to your original work? I would be glad to share with you the results of my

study. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or my advisor - ldias@kennesaw.edu.

On a side note, I have a question for you about your revised instrument. I noticed that you converted the Likert scale from a 4-point (2009) to a 5-point (2014) scale, what prompted this change?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Ingle M. Larkin, Ed.S.
678-XXX-XXXX (cell)
ilarkin@kennesaw.edu

APPENDIX H

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)
Meyer and Allen, 1997

Affective Commitment Scale Items

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.

2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.

3. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. [R]

4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. [R]

5. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. [R]

Continuance Commitment Scale Items

1. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization now, even if I wanted to.

2. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization right now.

3. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.

4. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.

5. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.

6. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.

Normative Commitment Scale Items

1. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.[R]

2. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.

3. I would feel guilty if I left my organization right now.

4. This organization deserves my loyalty.

5. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.

6. I owe a great deal to my organization.

[R] = Reverse Likert scoring for negatively worded items.

APPENDIX I

Intent to Remain

Intent to Remain Questions

Answer: **Yes** or **No**

1. I intend to keep teaching online.

2. It is likely I will search for a new job in the next year. [R]

3. In five years, I see myself still teaching online.

4. I will teach online only until a better opportunity arises. [R]

5. I would like to remain teaching online for the remainder of my career.

[R] = Reverse Likert scoring for negatively worded items.

APPENDIX J

Focus Group Questions

The researcher used the JSCOT results to guide or inform the types of questions asked of the focus group participants. In so doing, the researcher will glean participants' experiences and perceptions of online teaching in attempt to expound upon the quantitative data from Phase I.

Participants received an email link to the BlackBoard Collaborate room. Participants were encouraged to sign-in under a pseudonym; the opening screen of the BlackBoard classroom reminded participants of this precaution.

1. What aspects of your online teaching experience encourage you to remain in the online teaching profession?

2. Online teachers reported a high workload. Is this true for you?
   - Approximately how many hours do you work per week?
   - What tasks take up the bulk of your time?
   - What are the expectations at your institution (ex: seat time or office hours)?

3. Some survey participants teach online year-round, with no summer vacation.
   - Is this a common practice of online schools?
   - Do all teachers work summers, or only those that volunteer?
   - Is this considered a separate semester, or a rolling semester?

4. Online teachers mentioned duties not directly related to instruction as dissatisfying (ex: excessive PD, frequent data points, contact logs for truant students). Is this true for you?
   - How are these duties handled at your school?
   - Do you have suggestions for how the tasks could be made more manageable for teachers?

5. Compensation is a concern for many teachers. Common complaints were quarterly pay, pay-per-student, no step or growth opportunity, hours vs. compensation, and unpredictable pay. Is this your experience, also?
   - In your context, how are you compensated?
   - What suggestions would you give leaders to increase satisfaction in this area?

6. Several teachers mentioned demanding deadlines, such as a short grading turn-around (ex: student submits Friday, grades due Monday).
   - Is this a common challenge?
   - What is the expectation in your school?

- What do you consider reasonable turn-around for grading? Contact with students?

7. Many online teachers mentioned a lack student enthusiasm, motivation, and participation as dissatisfying. Is this your experience, too?
   - Why do you suppose this is a common issue in online schools?
   - Can you think of anything to improve student enthusiasm, motivation, and participation?

8. Most teachers reported being satisfied with online courseware, though some described frustrations with the accuracy and depth of course content, as well as limits to teacher creativity. Do you find this to be true?

   - How are/could these concerns addressed at your school?

9. Several online teachers stated they desire more interaction or face-to-face time with students.

   - How do you suggest this need be satisfied?
   - Are there certain school models, online courses, or activities that encourage more student face-time?

10. Of the online teachers surveyed, 95% reported their intent to remain teaching online in the immediate future, but almost a ¼ intend to leave online teaching in the next 5 years.
    - Can you think of some reasons attrition might increase after 5 years?
    - Do you have suggestions for incentives to retain online teachers?

11. Are there any other comments you think I need to know about the job satisfaction and retention of K-12 online teachers?

APPENDIX K

Sample Transcript Coding

Yeah. I just actually finished my master's and did some research on synchronous versus asynchronous learning in the online setting. I know what you're going through. Most of my time ... I have five different subjects I teach, which is fine. It really works well if I teach the same thing every year, but when they throw in something new and I have to learn something new, that's when things get a little crazy.

Course Load · Course Load · Workload

The bulk of my stress comes from data collection, which is very frustrating and I'll tell you because we are an online, highly technology based school. Every single thing you want to pull out of a report can be easily pulled out somewhere, but yet they make us generate reports from other reports. It's monotonous and crazy. By the end of year, we're also totally saturated with the amount of reports and data that is due.

Frustration · Workload · Workload

Most of it doesn't really get done because we're just totally swamped with it. One of those things which can be pulled out of the system very easily is phone calls to the kids. They want us to call every student that we have and ask them five questions on the topic of their class that they have with us. We can gauge whether they really know the material or not.

Extra Duties · Workload · Student Communication · Workload

It takes you about 20 phone calls to get about two kids to answer and that can really take up almost every waking hour of your hours at work. You end up balancing which is the most important? What fire do I need to put out now? I can't not grade for a week because I'll never catch up. Most of us work some weekends and some nights. I know some people that usually the first year of teaching online you're that person that stays up all night, you're going to get everything done.

Workload · Hours · Student Communication · Hours · Grading · Workload

You're addicted to accomplishment. You want to get it done, put it away, and start something else. There is not that luxury online. You don't really get all your grading done because the next day a bunch of other stuff has come in. Unlike the traditional classroom, you say, "Okay. All your papers are due on Friday, turn it in here in this box," you have a constant influx of stuff that needs to be graded and emails to answer.

Workload · Grading · Brick–n–Mortar · Workload · Workload · Grading

That is a major way that you contact your parents and keep in touch with their kids and their parents, plus the phone calls that are coming in constantly or you're trying to make phone calls constantly. I think that if we lose people when people don't stay teaching online, I think it's because of that expectation of you have 500 kids. You need to call them all in six weeks. Really? How is that humanly possible? You start going, "Oh, no. I can't do this job well enough," and then we lose people like that.

Parent Interaction/Supervision · Student Communication · Workload · Turnover · Student Communication · Student Numbers · Turnover · Extra Duties