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Investigating Attrition Among Special Educators in Relation to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Investigating Attrition Among Special Educators in Relation to Bronfenbrenner's

Ecological Theory

by

Meta Jane Turner

MAT, Walden University, 2011

BGS, University of Connecticut, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2019

Abstract

Special education teacher attrition has been an ongoing problem for at least 3 decades. This study specifically focused on the attrition of special education teachers in South Carolina. Attrition can have a negative impact on student learning, making it important to identify the causes of attrition among special education teachers to lower attrition in the state and lessen the negative impact on student learning outcomes. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine attrition whether career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, and attitudes toward students are related to attrition in special education teachers in South Carolina. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory served as the theoretical framework. In accordance with the study purpose, the research questions for this study assessed the relationship between career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, attitudes toward students, and special education teachers' intent to remain in the field of special education. Data were collected via self-report survey responses from special education teachers from South Carolina and were analyzed thorough use of multinomial logistic regressions. The findings of the multinomial logistic regressions showed that career satisfaction and coping with job-related stress were significant predictors of intent to remain in special education. Perceived administrative support and attitude toward students were not significant predictors of intent to remain in special education. Implications include finding ways to reduce job-related stress for special education teachers. This study contributed to positive social change through the discovery of the reasons why special educators are leaving the field, which could lead to possible ways to alleviate attrition.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the following people: Troy Turner, Sr, Samuel Gagnon, Courtney Gagnon, TJ Turner, Patricia Huesch, the members of Faith, Praise and Worship Ministries and Prayer, Praise, and Deliverance Cathedral, and posthumously to Norman and Susan Huesch. Without the encouragement and love of these individuals, this goal may not have come to pass.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31 King James Version

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for without the strength He has given me completion of this project would not have been possible.

To Bishop Troy E. McDowell, Sr. and his wife, Lady Melanie McDowell, thank you for believing in me and providing spiritual guidance.

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To the rest of the family at Faith, Praise, and Worship Ministries, and Prayer, Praise, and Deliverance Cathedral (too numerous to list individually), I love and thank you all for your encouragement.

To my family in Connecticut, especially Patricia Huesch, Samuel Gagnon, and Courtney Gagnon, thank you for believing in me.

To Denise Melly, Suzanne Rybak, Tanya Kosabutski, Thomas Bucks, Miranda Atkinson, Dominique Martin, and Elicia Ray, thank you for keeping me sane during these past three years. You all have been a rock in the insanity.

To Maryanne Marvil (posthumously) and Jeni Arndt, thank you for pushing me to finish this endeavor.

Finally, to my husband, Troy Turner, Sr. and my son, Troy Turner, Jr. (TJ), thank you for putting up with my mood swings, and constant absence. The journey could not have been accomplished without your love and support.

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Chapter 1: The Problem

Introduction

The exodus of special education teachers is a phenomenon that has occurred for more than three decades. Nationally, one half million teachers left the profession since the 1980s (Petty, Good, & Handler, 2016). The special education teacher (SET) shortage is a severe, enduring problem that has occurred for more than three decades and has no eminent end in sight (Kindzierski, O'Dell, Marable, & Raimondi, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013). One of many disciplines in high demand and with numerous vacancies, special education, leading to the hiring of inexperienced individuals, leading to increased levels of stress and ultimately increasing levels of attrition (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). SETs are leaving the field at alarming rates indicating that retaining novice SETs is critical. Forty-four states reported shortages of SETs, primarily in low-income districts (Kiel, Heimlich, Markowetz, Braun, & Weiss, 2016; Zhang, Wang, Losinski, & Katsyannis, 2014). According to Clandinin et al. (2015); Day and Hong, (2016); Dunn and Downey, (2017); and Struyve et al. (2016) reasons for the attrition of special education teachers in the initial stages of a teaching career have been theorized as either individual causes, for example, burnout, or circumstantial ones, such as lack of support. According to the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA), in its January 2017 Supply and Demand Survey, approximately 20% of the educator vacancies in the state were in special education, predominately in the following regions of the state: The Low Country, the Pee Dee, and the Savannah River/Midlands. Continuous recruitment and training of

new teachers due to high attrition rates is costing districts in these areas not only

monetarily but also in the educational continuity of its exceptional children.

Attrition of SETs has been problematic almost as long as there have been special

education students. High-poverty and rural districts have a more severe issue with attrition

as it is more difficult to recruit quality teachers initially. Coupling a high-poverty district

with one that is rural, and the attrition factor appears to increase exponentially. No specific

data on the attrition of South Carolina SETs currently exists. The lack of state and region-

specific data on attrition necessitates this study. Chapter 1 will provide a background of the

problem to be studied as well as a comprehensive problem statement. The purpose and

nature of the study will be discussed referencing the framework within which the study

falls. Sections 6 and 7 will provide the questions to be answered during the research

process and definitions of key terms that will be used in this research. The next four

sections will encompass the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations and study

significance. Finally, all information contained within the chapter will be synthesized and

summarized leading into a review of pertinent literature concerning special education

teacher attrition.

Background

Special education teacher attrition has been a global problem since students have

been identified with disabilities. Prior researchers have identified the main causes to be

lack of adequate training, lack of administrative support and poor salaries (Fox & Wilson,

2015; Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). Prior research has been conducted on both

the national and international levels but to date there is very little state specific data

regarding the cause for special education teacher attrition. Lindqvist et al. (2014) indicated that SET attrition rates in the United Kingdom and the United States are between 30-50% of all educators who have five or less years in the classroom compared to 5% in France and Germany. Johnson et al. (2014) and Jokikokko, Uitto, Deketelaere, and Estola (2017), indicated that 40-50% of SETs left the field of education before reaching five years of service. CERRA (2017) specified not only a serious problem with SET attrition, but also a SET shortage and numbers in both categories have been increasing since the 1980s. Although extensive prior research has been conducted on teacher attrition, there is little research encompassing specific states and locations. Absence of state and region-specific research creates the gap in literature that necessitates this research. The gap in the literature pertains to state specific research as this type of research is almost non-existent. This study is needed to address the problem of attrition in South Carolina, specifically the Low Country, Pee Dee, and the Savannah River/Midlands regions which are experiencing the highest SET attrition and shortages according to CERRA data.

Problem Statement

Special education teacher attrition in the State of South Carolina, particularly in the high-poverty, rural regions of the Low Country, Pee Dee and Savannah River/Midlands is an ongoing, recurring issue. The problem is specific reasons for this alarming and consistent attrition are unknown. Recent literature and studies conducted in the past five years indicate that the problem has national, as well as global implications (Johnson, et al., 2014; Jokikokko, et al., 2017) An assessment of the data at the state level indicated a trend that showed special education teachers in rural, high-poverty areas were leaving and that

special education represented the most difficult licensure area to staff (CERRA, 2016). The attrition conundrum among special education teachers in South Carolina matched the attrition conundrum among special education teachers nationally where approximately 46% left the field since 1992 (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014). Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns (2013) revealed that the absence of administrative encouragement played an important part in SET attrition. Other factors also need to be addressed. Career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students encompass the four constructs of this study. Although career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students have been identified as central predictors of attrition among special educators nationally, it is unknown if and in what manner these areas contribute to attrition of SETS specifically for educators of special needs students in South Carolina. These constructs have been considered but not in relation to the specific regions being studied here. The gap occurs here as no recent research is specific to either the State of South Carolina or the three regions if and in what manner career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students, are related to attrition in this population. A study investigating the link between perceived career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students, and attrition in special education teachers could provide information to help administrators enhance teacher contentment and improve preservation of special education teachers in South Carolina, potentially leading to enhanced student outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional study is to investigate the reasons contributing to SETs and related service providers intentions to continue educating students in the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands regions of South Carolina. The dependent variable corresponds to the intent to remain in special education. The independent variables are career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress, and attitudes towards students. Findings are examined in relative to the possible connotations for special education classrooms in the context of 21st century learning. Obtaining data as to reasons why special education teachers and related service providers in South Carolina intend to leave the field of special education will provide insight and thus help alleviate the negative effects on student outcomes. Information obtained from this study will be shared with the human resources directors of the districts surveyed to assist in determining possible solutions to their attrition issues.

Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

The following questions will be investigated in this study:

Research Question 1: What is the predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and service providers (i.e. speech therapists, occupational therapists (OT), physical therapist (PT)) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1): There is no predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis (H_02): There is no predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a2): There is a predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Research Question 3: What is the predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis (H_03): There is no predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a3): There is a predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Research Question 4: What is the predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$4): There is no predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a4): There is a predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this investigation is drawn from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) separated the environment into five dissimilar echelons: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The microsystem represents the direct environment in which the individual (the teacher) lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner noted that the mesosystem represented the associations amongst microsystems in the individual's lifetime. The exosystem is the situation in which there is a linkage concerning the framework connecting

the places of an individuals active and passive functions. The macrosystem represents the

teacher's culture while the chronosystem represents the progressions occurring in the

teacher's career.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a microsystem is an arrangement of events,

functions, and interactive associations undergone by a person in a confrontational situation

with specific corporeal and physical characteristics, and encompassing other individuals

with distinguishing appearances of makeup, disposition, and beliefs. A mesosystem

encompasses the connections between systems of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The next layer in Bronfenbrenner's theory is the exosystem which provides the linkage

between two or more of the other settings. It does not necessarily contain the individual but

the influential events within that immediate setting. The macrosystem encompasses an

overarching pattern of the other three layers which includes lifestyles, resources and other

systems which are embedded into each of the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Finally, the chronosystem encompasses changes over the progression of one's lifetime

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The literature review in Chapter 2 will provide a detailed

background as to the nature of attrition and possible causes that have been previously

studied.

Nature of the Study

I used a quantitative cross-sectional study of factors that contribute to SETs

intentions to continue or exit the teaching profession using a Likert-style survey developed

by Seidman and Zager (1986) to examine teachers' and related service providers' intent to

leave special education. The dependent variable corresponds to intent to remain teaching

special education. The independent variables are career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress, and attitudes towards students.

The general population included all special education teachers and related service providers employed in South Carolina, specifically the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands during the 2017 to 2018 school year, and those who have left in the past five years. The independent variables were measured by a Likert-scale survey, created by Seidman and Zager (1986). The Likert-scale anchors range from 1 = Strongly agree to 4 = disagree. The 21-question survey includes the following subscales: (1) Career Satisfaction; (2) Perceived Administrative Support; (3) Coping with Job-Related Stress; and (4) Attitudes towards Students. The internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha for the scales ranged from $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .89$. Permission has been granted to use the survey questionnaire for the purposes of the present research (see Appendix A). I contacted the head of human resources of each of the districts in the regions being targeted for consent to conduct the survey. When permission was granted in a district, letters that included the survey link were emailed to participants by the representative in the district who granted permission. I had no contact with the individuals who participated. Consent was included in the electronic survey.

The breakdown of the population groups follows:

1. Special education teachers and related service providers who intend to leave teaching special education in South Carolina/

2. Special education teachers and related service providers who intend to remain teaching special education in South Carolina.

3. Special education teachers and related service providers who are undecided about teaching special education in South Carolina.

4. Special education teachers and related service providers who have already left teaching special education in South Carolina.

The survey data was compiled and entered into SPSS version 24.0 for data analyses. The data was coded, and composite scores generated to conduct descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. The data was examined for partial responses and potential outliers. To address the research questions, multinomial logistic regressions was conducted.

Definitions

The following key terms are defined for use in this study.

Burnout: Burnout refers to a condition of physical and mental fatigue, which can lead to diminished work relations with colleagues and perceptions of negative sense of self-worth (Henderson, 2014; Lindquist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). Burnout also represents a long-standing stress response resulting in a psychological condition of emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and a weakened sense of individual achievement (Henderson, 2014; Lindquist et al., 2014).

Depersonalization: Depersonalization is a harmful, insensitive, or disproportionately disconnected reaction to other people, typically the beneficiaries of the administrator's attention (Breeman et al., 2015).

Emotional exhaustion: Emotional fatigue is the worn-out and depleted sensation that developed as vitalities were depleted stemming from recurrent episodes where educators' passionate labors went unrewarded (Breeman et al., 2015).

Lack of administrative support: Lack of administrative support is the inattentiveness and unavailability of the school leader to the needs of the teachers' due to competing priorities and trusting the knowledge of the educators as a substitute for delivering evocative advice (Cancio et al., 2014; Kraft & Papay, 2014).

Reduced personal accomplishment: Reduced individual achievement states that the deterioration of one's sensations of aptitude and efficacious accomplishment in one's work (Henderson, 2014).

General education teacher (GET): A general education teacher is an educator who teaches all students (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Principal support: Principal support refers to the degree to which teachers perceive their principals and assistant principals understand and support their work (Mason-Williams, 2015).

Special education teacher (SET): A special education teacher is an educator who teaching disabled learners (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Teacher attrition: Teacher attrition refers to the exodus of teachers from their teaching jobs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Assumptions

This study is based on the following factors: (a) attrition exists and has been a real problem for more than 30 years and (b) the need to discover the reason special educators and related service providers leave the field is crucial to help alleviate the issue. Additionally, it is assumed that after being informed of anonymity and the confidentiality of responses, research participants will answer honestly and forthrightly. Lastly, it is also

assumed that at least 40 special educators who are currently employed as special educators or related service providers, left special education would participate in the study. Given the assumption that attrition exists, subsequently, the question arises concerning what factors might explain or contribute to attrition. Thus, the impetus for this study rests upon this assumption.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study includes perceptions of special educators and related service providers in the State of South Carolina about career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students and the effect of these perceptions on their determinations to remain or leave special education. South Carolina was chosen because data from CERRA indicated a serious attrition issue among SETs. This study's investigation is limited to special educators and related service providers currently employed in the South Carolina public schools. All special education teachers and related service providers who gave their intent to remain teaching during the 2017-2018 school year in the State of South Carolina and those who have left within the last five years will be contacted. Responses will be sorted by geographical area of the state (Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands) to determine which area of the state has the highest rate of attrition of special educators and related service providers. Generalization of results from this study, to other school districts, may not occur; however, the national average for special education attrition is 25.0% is significant (NCES, 2016). However, the focus of this investigation is to explore connections between career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students, and

attrition in special education teachers. The main delimitation of this study addresses the

constant problem of attrition of special education teachers and related service providers in

the state of South Carolina. Another delimitation is that all the reasons SET teachers leave

the field may not be addressed.

Limitations

This study is limited to one state and does not represent special educators and

related service providers in other states throughout the United States. An important

limitation to note is that the current study is a survey study; therefore, caution needs to be

exercised in interpreting study findings in terms of causal relationships among variables.

To address limitation concerns, through an agreement with the individual human

resource directors; the cover letter; the ability to complete the survey online; and the fact

that no individual identification is probable through the surveys, it is hoped that subjects

trusted the anonymity of their responses to the attrition questionnaire. There is no way to

know what bias or influence that a path of contact through the head of human resources

may have on any of the subjects. The ability to complete the surveys in an online format

ensures the subjects' confidence of assurance of anonymity.

Significance

Information collected from the present research may have theoretical significance

as to why special education teachers and related service providers choose to remain or

leave the field entirely. The data will add to the present educational bases on the causes of

attrition in SETs in the state of South Carolina; thereby, painting a more complete picture

of the reasons SETs leave their positions in the field of special education (Breeman et al.,

2015). The study is also designed to test Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in relation to (a) career satisfaction, (b) perceived administrative support, (c) coping with job-related stress, and (d) attitudes towards students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Seidman & Zager, 1986). Information collected from this study might benefit administrators and educators locally by providing information on whether career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students are related to attrition of special education teachers. This is important because the attrition of special educators and related service providers can negatively influence the learning outcomes of special education pupils by interrupting services provided to them and cost school systems tax payer dollars by replacing and training special education teachers (Conley & You, 2016; Sumbera, Pazey, & Lashley, 2014). Data collected from this study may provide information to help administrators increase teacher satisfaction and student outcomes, facilitate a change to improve working conditions, address characteristics such as stress, and increase the pay of special educators and related service providers in South Carolina. The potential findings may lead to positive social change for students with disabilities by ensuring an environment conducive to their instructional needs is provided over the timeframe they are enrolled in a school because their special education teachers will remain constant.

Therefore, outcomes from this study may assist in bringing into perspective special education teachers' and related service providers' perceptions of their occupation and the reasons they choose to leave it. This study may also contribute to valuable information regarding attrition research, which can lead to the development of procedures to assist

teachers in reconsidering their decisions to leave the special education field. In addition, results from this study may lead to re-evaluating educational policies for special education teachers' working conditions, and compensation changes. These are all suggestive of a positive social change and the need for this study to be conducted.

Summary

Chapter 1 incorporates an introduction to the problem of why special education teachers choose to switch schools or disciplines or depart teaching special education or teaching altogether. The reasons special education teachers and related service providers choose to depart the education field in general, which has been studied to some extent but not considerably, needs to be investigated. Chapter 2 includes the theoretical framework and a comprehensive literature review pertaining to probable origins of SET attrition. A comprehensive review of research literature exposed gaps and introduced quantitative survey approach methods. The study aims to fill deficiencies in the research that do not give specific information on attrition in the state of South Carolina. Data collected by CERRA indicates an ongoing issue with attrition in the state of South Carolina but does not indicate specific reasons for the continued exodus of special education teachers. The chapter also includes an introduction to the background of the survey instrument used in the study, as well as a topic area for possible future research. Chapter 3 contains a summary of the research methodology, sample and setting, procedures, consent/confidentiality, data collection procedures, and analysis. In addition, Chapter 4 includes research results, while Chapter 5 includes implications regarding research findings and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Special educator attrition has been problematic in the United States more than 30 years. The intention of this quantitative analysis is to investigate the issue of attrition, to establish if career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress and attitudes towards students in special education teachers in South Carolina are related to attrition and possible implications on special education classrooms in the context of 21st century learning. Procurement of data as to explanations why special education teachers in South Carolina have stayed in the same position, switched schools but continued in their employment as special educators, transferred into general education, or departed from education completely will offer understanding and thus help lessen the undesirable consequences on student outcomes. This study is designed to obtain data on teachers' perceptions of the relationships between career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students and the reasons they remained, or left teaching entirely. Literature reviewed for issues pertaining to why special educators have been leaving the profession follows. Burnout, support, and salary are all listed as reasons for teacher attrition (Schaefer, 2013). Mason-Williams and Gagnon (2016) indicated that high attrition rates have beleaguered special education in excess of 30 years. They noted that a shortage of qualified, prepared special education teachers available to work with students of various disabilities had been reported in various regions such as high-poverty schools (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2016). Their work concluded that high attrition rates were directly related to high-poverty concentration of poor and minority pupils (Ingersoll & May, 2016; Kraft et al., 2015; Mason-Williams &

Gagnon, 2016; Simon & Johnson, 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016). This chapter includes a literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation for the study, and a comprehensive evaluation of the literature on SET attrition. The chapter ends with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

In searching for literature relevant to this study, this researcher conducted a search of empirical journals indexed in ERIC and ProQuest Dissertation databases, articles associated to the attrition of special educators. Additionally, this researcher conducted searches using the terms *special education teachers, teacher attrition*, *factors attributed to attrition of special education teachers*, *effects of teacher attrition on student outcomes*, *and job satisfaction*, and searching articles published from 2011 to 2017. Articles were obtained and after eliminating unrelated and overlapping articles, relevant ones were selected. This researcher also used Google Scholar, the services of a reference librarians and interlibrary loan to locate pertinent articles that have been cited in the work of other authors but was unable to locate in ERIC and ProQuest.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this investigation is drawn from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) separated the environment into five dissimilar echelons: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The microsystem represents the direct environment in which the individual (the teacher) lives (Bronfenbrenner,1979). Bronfenbrenner noted that the mesosystem represented the associations amongst microsystems in the individual's lifetime. The

exosystem is the situation in which there is a linkage concerning the framework connecting the places of an individual's active and passive functions. The macrosystem represents the teacher's culture while the chronosystem represents the progressions occurring in the teacher's career.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a microsystem is an arrangement of events, functions, and interactive associations undergone by a person in a confrontational situation with specific corporeal characteristics, and encompassing other individuals with distinguishing appearances of makeup, disposition, and beliefs. A mesosystem encompasses the connections between systems of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner,1979). The next layer in Bronfenbrenner's theory is the exosystem which provides the linkage between two or more of the other settings. It does not necessarily contain the individual but the influential events within that immediate setting. The macrosystem encompasses an overarching pattern of the other three layers which includes lifestyles, resources and other systems which are embedded into each of the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Finally, the chronosystem encompasses changes over the progression of one's lifetime (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The demanding responsibilities were part of special education teachers' working conditions, and administrative support was revealed to be a chief factor in the retention of special education teachers (Farrell, 2016). In addition to teachers' personal characteristics and their working conditions, teachers' compensation also influenced attrition, especially for special education teachers whose students required more attention than general education students. Special education teachers wanted to sense they were justly rewarded

for their work, and the absence of competitive pay rates can lead to attrition (Gius, 2016).

Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory is appropriate for investigating and

rationalizing the associations between career satisfaction, perceived administrative support,

coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students and attrition among special

education teachers and related service provided and the reasons they remained in or left the

field of special education entirely

Literature Review

Factors Attributed to Special Educator and Related Service Provider Attrition

Special educator attrition appeared to be an ongoing problem. Mason-Williams and

Gagnon (2016) noted that unavailability of trained, equipped special education teachers

available to work with students of various disabilities had been reported in various settings

such as high-poverty schools. SET attrition was widespread, according to Farrell (2016),

supported by data signifying that 40% of SETs exited the occupation within the first three

years as compared to 25.5% of all public-school teachers. Special education teachers

departed more frequently and in increased numbers from education than their general

education colleagues (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Approximately 30% of all teachers were

likely to leave the teaching field within the first three years (Brunsting et al., 2014; Zhang

& Zeller, 2016) and one-half of those remaining quit before reaching five years of service

(Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013). Other special education teacher attrition studies

found teacher attrition rates ranged from 20% to 50% of all teachers with less than five

years of service (Clara, 2017; Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016;

Mansfield & Beltman, 2014). The most cited reasons were absence of administration

support and lack of resources (Brunsting et al., 2014). According to Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, and Levesque-Côté (2016), factors associated with low retention rates of beginning teachers were categorized as environmental and individual. Environmental factors contributed to attrition such as administrative support, workload, and autonomy. Individual factors included job satisfaction, stress and eventual burnout (Fernet et al., 2016).

Attrition/Turnover

Special education teacher attrition is a critical issue in education, consequently, more knowledge must be developed to aid in identifying teachers at the greatest risk of leaving, conditions that caused teachers to leave, and changing conditions that affected their decision to aid in creating or improving initiatives to alleviate these trends (Lindqvist et al., 2016). Vekeman et al. (2016) indicated that teacher attrition was an international concern and a very real problem. Attrition, an international issue, is not only costly from a financial standpoint but also an academic one (Mason & Matas, 2015). Attrition rates vary in industrialized nations. Less than 5% of special education teachers leave teaching in Germany and France, increasing significantly to 30-50% in the United States and the United Kingdom, and increasing incrementally to 50% between 1987 and 2008 in those countries (Lindqvist et al., 2016; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015). Researchers have shown that teacher attrition is a global concern that can be attributed to teachers' working conditions, excessive workloads leading to emotional exhaustion and nonsupportive working environments (Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Teacher age is negatively related to burnout as is teaching experience; younger, less

experienced teachers endured burnout at more often than veteran teachers (Brunsting et al.,

2014). Alternatively-certified (AC) teachers experienced more stress producing more

attrition than a traditionally certified teacher (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). Retention rates

for AC teachers increased after five years of service (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). The first

year in the classroom was a turning point for many SETs. Retention of teachers, rather than

continual training of new teachers, was vital to end the deficiency (Kindzierski et al., 2013;

Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015). Attrition was higher for young teachers despite the

differences in percentages, which ranged from 5% to 50% of educators departing in the

initial five years (Schaefer, 2013). SETs working with EBD students had a 6% higher rate

of attrition than other SETs (Dickerson, 2017).

Increased autonomy in the classroom correlated positively with decreased attrition

(Kraft & Papay, 2014). Decreased attrition was related to increased autonomy and faculty

influence of the SET (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2016). Where there was a strong sense

of collective responsibility, the intent to remain was also strong (Kraft & Papay, 2014).

Increased attrition was attributed to decreased classroom autonomy and inability to

complete tasks (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2016). Teachers describing advanced degrees

of self-efficacy also described lessened degrees of burnout (Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2016).

SET's reported that support provided by administrators was dependent upon the level of

self-efficacy the teacher exhibited (Bettini et al., 2016). Delivering online resources, such

as professional development, progress monitoring tracking tools, and educational websites,

to the beginning SETs increased support, reduced stress, and ultimately helped lower

attrition rates (Williams, 2016). Guerra, Hernandez, Hector, and Crosby (2015)

implemented a rational interactive crisis resolving method to inspect three unconventional accreditation and special educator professional development programs over a two-year period. Guerra et al. (2015) found that novice special education teachers' self-awareness and vigorous and person-centered crisis resolving became more deliberate and increased educators' perception of expertise and crisis resolving effectiveness. Guerra et al. (2015) conveyed the problem of special educator attrition had been realized for decades without a viable solution.

Effects of Teacher Attrition

According to Bastian, McCord, Marks, and Carpenter (2017), who considered the association amongst character qualities and teacher retention in North Carolina Public Schools (NCPS), teacher attrition had negative influences on student attainment, was fiscally expensive for districts, and dictated the contracting of beginner teachers, because experienced educators could not be found to replace those who had left. Banerjee, Stearns, Moller, and Mickelson (2017) and Kraft and Papay (2016) specified that excessive teacher turnover was expensive, disadvantageous to instructional consistency, and was increasing among all teachers. Teacher turnover, especially turnover that occurred during the school year, was a threat to learning outcomes because students had to adjust to the revolving door of outgoing and incoming teachers (Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013). Vekeman, Devos, Valcke, and Rosseel (2016) indicated that teacher burnout and attrition were troubling phenomena that resulted in negative effects on student learning because funds that should have been spent on students were wasted on training teachers.

Novice Teachers

Beginning special education teachers were particularly at risk for leaving the field (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). In 2015, more than one-third of beginning educators left the field inside the initial three years of teaching (Fox & Wilson, 2015). Researchers have also found that inadequate planning and collaboration time, and the excessive amounts of paperwork associated with overwhelming caseloads, increased stress, and the likelihood that new educators would exit the special education field either through attrition or recertification in the first three to five years of teaching (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Vittek, 2015). Among the most mentioned issues for novice teacher attrition comprised inappropriate certification, lack of administrative and emotional support, stress, and a lack of resources necessary for the delivery of an adequate education for their students (Marshall et al., 2013). According to Marshall et al. (2013), the constant feelings of inadequacy felt by novice teachers resulted from the perceptions of inadequate training concerning paperwork and caseload management. Research by Vittek, (2015) revealed novice teachers felt their training prepared them for real world situations but quickly discovered that their training failed to reveal the shortcomings of the occupation.

Vekeman et al. (2016) stated administrative stressors were unnecessary and must be diminished. Continued loss of novice teachers ultimately led to a deficiency of knowledgeable teachers. This revolving door of novice teachers affected the stress and work levels of veteran teachers, according to Vekeman et al. (2016), insomuch as their commitment to mentoring these teachers. Among the most mentioned issues for novice

teacher attrition comprised inappropriate certification, lack of administrative and emotional support, stress, and a lack of resources (Marshall et al., 2013). Foremost causes have been cited as isolation leading to stress and general job dissatisfaction. Increased teacher autonomy, administrator support, and clearly defined expectations should result in a decrease of attrition among SETs (Clara, 2017; Mansfield et al., 2016; Mansfield & Beltman, 2014). Reasons most cited for attrition included: role ambiguity, stress, absence of organizational encouragement, and nonexistence of supplies (Kindzierski et al., 2013). Beginning SETs were particularly at risk for leaving the field (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Brunsting et al. (2014) indicated approximately 22% of all teachers departed the field inside the initial three years of instruction. The most cited reasons were lack of administration support and lack of resources (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Stress/Burnout

Researchers have identified stress as a key factor of attrition among special educators (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Vittek, 2015). For example, Conley and You, (2016) found that situational stress, burnout, excessive caseloads and paperwork led to a decrease in job satisfaction that significantly increased attrition rates among special educators. Biddle & Azano, (2016) indicated that special educators' experienced increased stress levels due to lack of administrative support and excessive paperwork. Investigations examining why educators departed indicated stress and burnout as well as insufficient pre-service training for the actuality of teachers' work (Johnson et al., 2014). According to Ansley, Houchins, and Varjas (2016), attrition among new graduates unaware of the demands of the special

educator were caused by an inability to balance job responsibilities, and new graduates were susceptible to high levels of stress. Gius (2016) found that stress and job displeasure were related to undesirable school climate and poor school leadership.

Bettini, Cheyney, Wang, and Leko (2015) found that stress caused by inadequate planning, excessive paperwork, class size, and the demands associated with compliance to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) were leading reasons teachers departed the special education field. Researchers have also found that inadequate planning and collaboration time, and the excessive amounts of paperwork associated with overwhelming caseloads, increased stress, and the likelihood that new educators would exit the special education field either through attrition or transfer (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Vittek, 2015). In addition, Vittek (2015) concluded that job satisfaction depended upon the following factors: administrative support, workload, and level of stress. It has been noted that positive school climates lessened both burnout and attrition (Hydon, Wong, Langley, Stein and Kataoka, 2015).

Education is described as one of the most demanding professions in the United States with nearly one-third of all novice teachers departing within the first three years (Gius, 2016). Large amounts of paperwork, students' learning challenges, and overwhelming caseloads were the major causes of stress that led to special educators choosing to leave teaching before reaching five years of service (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Conley & You, 2016; Sagone & DeCaroli, 2014). Attrition may be the slightest troublesome concern of burnout as the consequences of burnout were far-reaching

(Brunsting et al., 2014). The onset of burnout was related to lack of administrative support, lack of resources (financial and material), and other significant factors (role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict) (Brunsting et al., 2014).

Burnout was a major result of job-related stress (Sagone & DeCaroli, 2014; Yin, Huang, & Wang, 2016.). SETs leave education far more often than GETs due to stress (Dickerson, 2017). According to Bettini, Park, Benedict, Kimerling and Leile, (2016), the educators with the highest levels of stress were the ones who believed they had the capability to impact student outcomes. SETs were at higher danger for burnout as their working circumstances paralleled influences linked with burnout (Brunsting et al., 2014). Student behavior was also a major stressor leading to teacher depression and burnout (Dickerson, 2017). EBD teachers suffered burnout at greater frequencies than their counterparts in self-contained or resource classrooms (Brunsting et al., 2014). Additionally, the responsibility for teaching students with autism may increase teachers' susceptibility to stress and burnout (Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2016). Teacher burnout rates were a serious concern among SETs, which contributed to the SET shortage (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). A shortage of SETs continues to exist, especially in the EBD category, where retention was difficult due to stress caused by the design of the job (Conley & You, 2016).

Stress had been shown to be caused by a lack of skills, alternate certification, and lack of support from administration (Conley & You, 2016). Teachers who experienced burnout from sustained periods of stress, suffered physiologically, becoming disconnected from their everyday jobs (Gius, 2016). According to Bastas (2016), burnout was characterized by a state of general exhaustion brought on by excessive workloads and

demands, which may be considered a substantial vulnerability for teachers. Burnout affected all educators, regardless of age or gender (Bastas, 2016). As all such conditions lingered, teachers felt powerless over time to endure demonstrative stresses, which led teachers to experience an overall burnout (Bastas, 2016). Burnout was a critical factor in perceiving job-related stress progressions and had been acknowledged by the SETs as a significant forecaster of employee turnover. Furthermore, burnout influenced employees' plans to leave their employment in many professions, not just teaching (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Burnout occurred when exhaustion supplanted feeling invigorated, when disparagement (or depersonalization) superseded optimism, and when uselessness replaced the feeling of effectiveness (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

Burnout as a culmination of prolonged stress was a serious cyclical detriment to student achievement because teachers' disengagement caused the same behavior in students (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Kerr and Brown (2016) stated that the attrition of special education teachers could be lessened if more attention was given to increased stress levels and how to alleviate them. According to Van Maele and Van Houtte, (2015), a major factor leading to stress and ultimately burnout was role ambiguity or the lack of clarity of expectations. Excessive non-classroom activities and IDEA (2004) compliance issues increased the incidence of burnout in these educators. Educators indicated that a lack of trust in their administration only accelerated stress and the inevitability of burnout; facilitated by a sense of isolation, emotional exhaustion also was exacerbated ultimately resulting in attrition (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015). Teaching is an occupation overwhelmed by exhaustion and breakdown that can be triggered by poor administrator

support (Hydon et al., 2015). Administrators played a significant role in teacher burnout (Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2016) and teacher accounts of emotional exhaustion have been linked negatively with administrative support (Morris et al., 2016; Yin, Huang, & Wang, 2016).

Administrators who were conscious of the many stressors of beginning SETs were better prepared to deliver support to them (Schaefer, 2013). Kerr and Brown (2016) collaboratively studied the emotional practice of 19 special education teachers using an emotional labor framework. Specifically, Kerr and Brown sought to deconstruct stressors, understand emotional labor, and discern how the emotional framework may inform special educators' practice. Isolation and not feeling supported were typical problems felt by special educators, and researchers indicated that isolation was a factor that led to burnout as well (Biddle & Azano, 2016). Lack of administrative support was also linked to stress for special education teachers.

According to Riordan (2014), principals reduced turnover by decreasing classroom demands and increasing the availability of resources that led to an overall decrease in teacher stress. To decrease stress, according to Duo, Devos and Valcke (2016), administrators needed to supply strong support to teachers while lightening caseloads, which ultimately decreased the amount of paperwork. Administrators who acknowledged their special educators and provided constructive feedback were less likely to have stressed out educators (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2016). Administrators must provide high levels of both emotional and instructional support to keep burnout levels low among their SETs (Brunsting et al., 2014). Administrators' inability to balance the instructional and non-

instructional role of special educators contributed to the overall stress that SETs experienced, compounding the failure of their students to achieve adequate improvement (Billingsley, McLeskey, & Crockett, 2014).

Job Satisfaction

In reviewing the literature on SET attrition, Vittek (2015) found that job satisfaction depended upon the following factors: administrative support, workload, and level of stress. In a quantitative study of job satisfaction among special education teachers, Conley and You (2016) found that situational stress, burnout, excessive caseloads and paperwork led to a decrease in job satisfaction that significantly increased attrition rates among special educators. Fernet et al. (2016) defined work overload as the lack of sufficient time to satisfy all the demands placed upon a teacher, leading to stress, exhaustion, helplessness, and an overwhelming feeling of entrapment. Biddle & Azano, (2016) observed that stress was one of the key reasons influencing to attrition among SETs and found that special educators experienced increased stress levels due to the lack of administrative support and excessive paperwork. Investigations examining why educators departed indicated stress and burnout as well as insufficient pre-service training for the actuality of teachers' work (Johnson et al., 2014). According to Ansley, Houchins, and Varjas (2016), attrition among new graduates unaware of the demands of the special educator reported an inability to balance job responsibilities and were susceptible to high levels of stress. Gius (2016) found that stress and job displeasure were related to undesirable school climate and poor school leadership.

Administration Support

According to research conducted by Rickman, Wang, and Winters (2016), work environments had a direct effect on teacher attrition rates. In reviewing the literature, Gallant and Riley (2014) determined morale played a significant role in teacher attrition. According to Bettini, Crockett, Brownell, and Merrill (2016) and Grissom, Viano and Selin (2015), working environments played a significant part in teachers' determinations to depart. School administration played a vital role in teacher retention decisions (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Hughes et al. (2015) expressed that working circumstances, specifically administrative support, was a significant indicator of teachers' choices to leave. Administration demonstrating support can help prevent attrition (Pacquette & Rieg, 2016). Bettini et al. (2016) discovered that working environments for example administrative encouragement and school values influenced teacher value and student attainment. Support from administration was vital to the success of novice educators and central to their decisions to remain in teaching (Eslinger, 2014; Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013). Principals needed to be responsible for direct and intentional support for beginning teachers (Fox & Wilson, 2015). Cancio et al. (2013) found that lack of administrator encouragement significantly influenced special educators' decisions to leave teaching. Specific feedback from administrators to teachers of EBD students was crucial to curb attrition problems (Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns, 2014). Cancio et al. (2014) claimed both special and general education teachers who felt intimidated by or unappreciated by administration considered leaving, and the perception of not being appreciated and valued by administration was an essential reason for teacher attrition in general.

Emotional support is critical to success in any occupation, and the overwhelming responsibilities (e.g., caseload and paperwork) of special educators make emotional support by administration even more crucial (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Cancio et al. (2013) found that emotionally supportive principals led to an increase in teacher satisfaction, which, in turn, led to an increase in the retaining of SETs. SET shortages in the field of EBD were increasing, and the greatest cited reason for this shortage was attrition caused by lack of administrative support (Cancio et al., 2013).

Kraft and Papay (2014) specified that novice teachers needed a hands-on approach, administrative support, and a sense of community with colleagues to increase the likelihood of remaining in their positions. The administrator who was a leader and not just a bureaucrat, created a positive atmosphere in which teachers wanted to come to work and came to their leader for assistance when needed (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Factors given influencing teachers' decisions to remain included: administrative support for teacher ownership of the classroom; administrators making themselves available; and care and understanding (Brunsting et al., 2014). The most cited factors in attrition research included perceived lack of support from administration, administrator attitude that did not support EBD inclusion, inappropriate disciplinary decisions, and a lack of resources to work with pupils with emotional and behavioral disorders (Cancio et al., 2013).

According to an analysis of the research conducted between 2001 and 2011, Cobb (2015) concluded that 18% of administrators consumed 62% of their schedule on special education issues to try to prevent litigation, which took time away from administrators providing support and training to their SETs. Administration played a significant role in

thwarting SET attrition, which could be alleviated by taking coursework in special education during administrator preparation classes (Bettini et al., 2015). According to Billingsley et al. (2014), 53% of administrators specified that they no formal training in special education. Moreover, the challenge spread further than primary educational curricula; opportunities including both pre and in-service professional development and the availability of mentoring were also lacking to improve an administrator's ability to work with his or her special educators (Billingsley et al., 2014).

South Carolina school climate surveys specified educators' intent to continue in the classroom was directly related to the level of support given by the administrator (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Administrative support must include emotional (trust), informational (opportunities for growth), appraisal (guidance and feedback), and appreciation components (Cancio et al., 2014). A resilient teacher-administrator relationship resulted in reduced attrition, according to Duos et al. (2016). Teachers who viewed their schools as supportive places to work, according to Mason-Williams and Gagnon (2016), continued as SETs more often than those who viewed their schools as non-supportive.

According to Debnam, Pas, and Bradshaw (2013), administrators who provided insufficient assistance had a staff that was less enthused to put interventions into practice, and administrators who offered inspiration, guidance, and support to their beginning teachers, experienced reduced attrition. According to Hughes, Matt and O'Reilly (2015), the perceptions of support of both the teacher and administrator must be equal to prevent attrition. Teachers who experienced personal growth and received emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical support from their administrators, according to

Hughes et al. (2015), were less likely to make the decision to leave than those how did not experience emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical support. In a quantitative survey-based study of the factors of special education teacher retention, Kraft and Papay (2014) found that novice teachers needed a hands-on approach, administrative support, and a sense of community with colleagues to increase the likelihood of remaining in their positions. According to Bettini et al. (2016), administrators who communicated positive support to SETs had a lower incidence of attrition than those administrators who gave no support or encouragement.

Administrators needed to facilitate conversations with GETs to establish roles for the inclusion settings to alleviate role confusion issues for SETs (Biddle & Azano, 2016). SETs reported their main reasons for attrition were insufficient support from administration and insufficient resources including salary (Alhassan & Abossi, 2014). Lack of administration support and salary were among the most quoted reasons for SETs leaving before reaching three years of service (Farrell, 2016). School principal support was cited as one of the most significant influences in educator preservation (Cancio et al., 2013).

Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2015) observed relationships between administrator assistance and the retaining of educators in difficult-to-staff institutes. Findings revealed that individual development and the capacity to obtain from administrators expressive and coaching support effected educator's decisions (Hughes et al., 2015). Administrators providing emotional support to their educators in these difficult-to-staff institutes had a lower attrition rate than those who did not provide support (Biddle & Azano, 2016). Administrators in rural districts struggled with SET shortages, either having trouble

obtaining SETs to fill vacancies or not being able to fill the vacancies at all, mainly due to salary and isolation (Henderson, 2014). Current high needs fields include EBD teachers in low-income schools (Cancio et al., 2013). Serious teacher shortages existed in emotional and behavioral disorders subfields of special education (Cancio et al., 2013). As with their colleagues in urban areas, the most mentioned explanations for attrition was insufficient salary and lack of administrative support (Sutcher et al, 2016).

According to Hydon et al. (2015), conditions causing stress to novice special education teachers encompassed deficient working situations and a nonexistence of administrative encouragement. These factors caused burnout which led to attrition. Attrition of SETs who worked with students with EBDs was the highest among all teacher groups. For SETs, the decisions to leave teaching were aggregate and included isolation, caseload, and a absence of support, according to Gallant and Riley (2014). Retention was influenced by the variety and extent of support the SET received from administration (Rock et al., 2016). Leadership that provided positive emotional support was less likely to experience a high turnover rate (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Cancio et al. (2013) found that lack of administrator encouragement significantly influenced special educators' decisions to leave teaching. Cancio et al. (2013) argued that special education teachers who felt unappreciated by administration considered leaving, and the perception of not being appreciated by administration was an essential reason for teacher attrition in general. Cancio et al. (2013) found that emotionally supportive principals led to an increase in teacher satisfaction, which in turn, led to an increase in retention of special education teachers. Riordan (2014) found that principals reduced special education teacher turnover

by decreasing classroom demands and increasing the availability of resources that led to an overall decrease in teacher stress.

Caseload

According to Billingsley et al. (2014) perceived insurmountable caseloads were found to be among the most prevalent reasons why both special education and general education teachers not only considered leaving the profession but actually did leave. According to Clara (2017), Biddle & Azano, (2016), Skaalvik and Skaalvik, (2015), Vittek (2015), and Malinen and Savolainen (2016), stress increased as special education teachers were overwhelmed with unmanageable caseloads, which increased the likelihood novice educators choosing to exit special education either through attrition or recertification. Sagone and DeCaroli (2014), Biddle & Azano, (2016), and Conley and You (2016) found that most special education teachers who failed to reach five years of service cited overwhelming caseloads as the chief reason for departure from education. Teacher workloads, inadequate instructional time, unmanageable caseloads, and nonexistent time to plan with colleagues were genuine concerns of both GETs and SETs (Billingsley et al., 2014). Emotional support was critical to success in any occupation, and the overwhelming responsibilities (e.g., caseload and paperwork) of special educators made emotional support of administration even more critical (Kraft & Papay, 2014).

Paperwork

Legal issues concerning the regulations set forth in the IDEA (2004) required special education teachers to develop and maintain Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), as well as data collection and progress monitoring charts for each special education student, which results in increased paperwork for special education teachers (Bettini et al., 2015). Because of the increased paperwork and the learning challenges associated with teaching special education students, SETs often do not have sufficient time in a day to accomplish the myriad of work for which they are responsible (Bettini et al., 2015). Teacher scheduling, according to Brunsting et al. (2014), could be a source of unwarranted stress for all teachers, not just novice ones. According to Biddle & Azano, (2016), SETs who obtained both formal and informal support, including flexible schedules, emotional support, and assistance with paperwork, were further apt to continue in education than those SETs who did not.

Salary and Benefits

In their review of the literature on recruiting, retaining, and compensating teachers, Petty, Good, and Handler (2016) reported that approximately 500,000 teachers left their positions each year. Poor salary was cited 78% of the time as the reason for leaving, followed by lack of administrative support at 26.1% (Clara, 2017; Mansfield et al., 2016; Mansfield & Beltman, 2014). According to Rickman et al. (2016), comparative teacher earnings in the state influenced the distribution of education majors that were employed as public-school teachers. Kelly and Northrop (2015) collected data from the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Surveys to examine the attrition amongst university alumnae and

whether increased incidences of attrition could be clarified through procedures of initial profession adjustment. They found educator attrition numbers were inversely related to the amount of compensation received. Goldhaber, Krieg, Theobald, and Brown (2015) stated that states must move beyond the single salary schedule (SSS) where every educator is paid at the same rate. The deficiency of competent SETs was attributed to the SSS that most states used to pay their educators (Goldhaber et al., 2015). SSSs were not working and were among the main reasons teachers were leaving the field at alarming rates (Goldhaber, Bignell, Farley, Walch, & Cowan, 2016).

One reason teacher turnover rates were so high was because salaries were too low; an increase in salary and other financial incentives may decrease attrition (Fulbeck, 2014). It was difficult to revise the current salary schedule in many states because it was tied to the legislature (Petty, Good, & Handler, 2016). According to Mason-Williams (2015), offering SETs monetary incentives in the following forms—changes to the existing salary schedules, bonuses, or one-time incentive payments—may draw more highly-qualified teachers. Teacher dissatisfaction with salaries was further exacerbated by ever-increasing workloads with stagnant salaries (Clara, 2017; Mansfield et al., 2016; Mansfield & Beltman, 2014). Mason-Williams (2015) assessed the potential of salary augmentation programs in North Carolina as a means of recruiting and retaining SETs; while the programs were limited, salary augmentation helped in retaining SETs. Sappa, Boldrini, and Aprea (2015) found that 72% of teachers in South Carolina had second jobs due to poor salaries. These poor salaries coupled with deficient working situations and a nonexistence of trust from school leaders increased the likelihood of attrition. Charlotte-Mecklenburg

schools in North Carolina provided incentive pay for reaching certain goals (Petty, Good, & Handler, 2016). According to Mason-Williams (2015), offering SETs monetary incentives, such as changes to the existing salary schedules, bonuses (sign-on and retention), and one-time incentive payments, may draw more highly-qualified teachers.

Summary and Conclusions

The problem of teacher attrition is ongoing and appears to be a never-ending issue. SET attrition is widespread, according to Farrell (2016) and Zhang and Zeller, (2016), 40% of SETs exit the occupation in the first three years as compared to 25.5% of all public-school teachers. One-third of inexperienced educators depart in the initial three years, one-half quit before reaching five years of service (Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013). While reviewing the literature on SET attrition, Vittek (2015) found that administrative support, workload, level of stress, large amounts of paperwork, students' learning challenges, and overwhelming caseloads were the major causes of burnout that led to special educators choosing to leave teaching before reaching five years of service.

The problem is not only limited to retention of these educators, but also to recruitment. Retaining the special education teaching work force was not only limited to retention of educators, but also to recruitment. Since 1990, in excess of 50% of school districts nationwide, including greater than 90% districts with high enrollments of minority students reported complications not only employing but also maintaining SETs who were highly qualified (Goldhaber, et al., 2015). Special education was not the only area facing serious teacher shortages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) was also facing the same shortage; while not at the same rates as in special education (Goldhaber et

al., 2015).

Approximately 25% of SETs in South Carolina left their positions between 2014 and 2015 (CERRA, 2016). This is particularly problematic because special education represents the most difficult licensure area to staff (CERRA, 2016). Furthermore, special educator attrition negatively affect special education students through an interruption of services required for their FAPEs (Conley & You, 2016). Attrition is also costly to school districts because they must recruit and hire replacements for SETs who have vacated their positions. Although characteristics, conditions, and compensation have been identified as factors of attrition among special educators nationally, it is not known whether characteristics, conditions, and compensation are connected to attrition special education teachers in South Carolina.

Therefore, a study is needed to examine whether characteristics, conditions, and compensation are connected to attrition in SETs in South Carolina to help address the causes of attrition and potentially reduce attrition. The current literature indicated attrition is a major issue in the United States but did not indicate specific states where attrition is most prevalent. Data collected by CERRA indicated that attrition has been a serious issue for years. The proposed quantitative correlational study is designed to determine whether characteristics, conditions, and compensation are connected to attrition in SETs in South Carolina. The methodology is elaborated upon in Chapter 3, which includes the research design and rationale, information on the population, sampling procedures, recruitment, and data collection. Chapter 3 also contains descriptions of data analysis, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. Chapter 3 ends with a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The rationale of this quantitative correlational study is to explore the issue of attrition, and establish whether the independent variables such as: career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress, and attitudes towards students are significantly related to special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) in South Carolina leaving the field. Results will be considered relative to the conceivable inferences for special education classrooms in the framework of 21st century education. Acquiring data as to motives why special education teachers and related service providers in South Carolina abandoned special education completely will afford insight and therefore help alleviate the undesirable effects on student outcomes. This chapter includes the setting, methodology, participant selection, and measures for recruitment, involvement, and data collection. The chapter concludes with a data examination strategy to address the research questions, threats to validity, and ethical procedures.

Setting

The main setting of this study is the State of South Carolina, specifically the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands. All special education teachers and related service providers will be targeted to complete a survey regarding their intent to remain in special education or leave it.

Methodology

I employed a quantitative cross-sectional study of factors that contribute to SETs intent to remain or leave the special education field, using a four-point Likert-style survey

developed by Seidman and Zager (1986) to examine how teachers' perceptions regarding (a) career satisfaction, (b) perceived administrative support, (c) coping with job-related stress, and (d) attitudes towards students, influence teachers' and related service providers' decisions to leave the field of special education. The independent variables correspond to career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students. The dependent variable corresponds to teachers' intent to remain teaching special education, with three potential response options: intend to stay, intend to leave, and undecided. A quantitative research method is appropriate when analyzing for the strength of relationships between numerically measurable constructs (Coolican, 2017)

The following research questions were measured:

Research Question 1: What is the predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Research Question 2: What is the predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Research Question 3: What is the predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Research Question 4: What is the predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Population Selection

The population of interest included all special education teachers and related service providers employed in South Carolina during the 2017 to 2018 school year and those who have left within the last five years. Presently there are approximately 52,000 educators employed in South Carolina, of that number 5,900 are special educators. (CERRA, 2017). I drew specifically from the state of South Carolina population of special education teachers and related service providers. The population was all special educators and related service providers employed in the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River /Midlands regions of South Carolina and those who have left employment in those regions in the past five years. Of the approximately 150 teachers in the selected regions, a total of 51 special education teachers and related service providers participated. The breakdown of the population groups follows:

1. Special education teachers and related service providers who intend to leave teaching special education in South Carolina

2. Special education teachers and related service providers who intend to remain teaching special education in South Carolina.

3. Special education teachers and related service providers who are undecided about teaching special education in South Carolina.

4. Special education teachers and related service providers who are have already left teaching special education in South Carolina.

It is important to sample from an adequate pool of participants. The research questions were statistically analyzed using multinomial logistic regressions. A logistic regression does not have a true power analysis calculation. For a logistic regression, the sample size is determined by the number of predictors you are examining. For a logistic regression, the minimum sample size is 10 participants per predictor variable; however, 20 participants per predictor variable is preferred (Agresti, 2018).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Study participants came from all special education teacher and related service providers s currently employed by the state of South Carolina, in the targeted regions, during the 2017-2018 academic year and those who have left those areas in the last five years. I contacted the head of each district's human resource department for permission to conduct the survey. When permission was granted by a district, the head of human resources sent out a letter that detailed the research along with a link to the survey. Consent was built into the electronic survey. All special education teachers and related service providers who completed the electronic survey were included. All other responses were excluded. Data was collected from one survey instrument. Data was collected through 21 question Likert-scaled survey created by Dr. Steven Seidman and Dr. Joanne Zager.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Factors influencing the decision to leave were measured by a four-point Likert-scaled survey, created and used by Seidman and Zager in their 1986-1987 research. It is

appropriate for use in the present study because it meets the criteria for Bronfenbrenner's

ecological theory (1979). The 21-question survey includes the following subscales: (a)

career satisfaction, (b) perceived administrative support, (c) coping with job-related stress,

and (d) attitudes towards students. Each survey item uses a four-point Likert-scale anchor

ranging from 1 = Strongly agree to 4 = Disagree. A sample item includes "I look forward

to teaching in the future." The final composite scores were generated through a sum of the

relevant survey items comprising each scale. The internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha

for the scales ranged from $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .89$ (Babbie, Wagner III, & Zaino, 2018).

Permission has been granted from Dr. Steven Seidman to use the survey questionnaire for

the purposes of the present research (see Appendix A).

The demographic portion of the questionnaire collected data for gender, age,

ethnicity, years of experience, and additional characteristics. In addition, the data for the

dependent variable was measured through use of a survey item regarding intent to remain

in special education. The three possible responses to the item were intend to stay, intend to

leave, and undecided.

Data Analysis Plan

The survey data was compiled and entered into SPSS version 24.0 for data

analyses. Frequencies and percentages were examined for the demographics and other

nominal level data. The data from Seidman and Zager's survey was coded and composite

scores were generated to run descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. The data was

first examined for partial responses and potential outliers. Outliers were examined and

calculated through use of z-scores. Z-scores occurring outside of the range $\pm$ 3.29 standard

deviations absent from the mean were deemed outlying responses (Hox, Moerbeek, & Van de Schoot, 2017). Outlying cases were potentially removed from the inferential analysis process. The reliability of the subscales was evaluated through use of Cronbach's alpha test of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients will be assessed exercising the procedures proposed by Babbie, Wagner III, and Zaino, (2018) where $\alpha \geq$ .9 Excellent, $\alpha \geq$ .8 Good, $\alpha \geq$ .7 Acceptable, $\alpha \geq$ .6 Questionable, $\alpha \geq$ .5 Poor, $\alpha <$ .5 Unacceptable.

Research Question 1: What is the predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Research Question 2: What is the predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Research Question 3: What is the predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Research Question 4: What is the predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. Speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

To address the four research questions, multinomial logistic regressions was conducted to examine the predictive relationships between career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, and attitudes towards students.

among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education. A multinomial logistic regression is an appropriate statistical analysis when assessing the relationship between predictors and a nominal outcome variable (Coolican, 2017). Career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, and attitudes towards students are the predictor variables for the research question. The outcome variable is: intent to remain in special education.

Threats to Validity

This survey has previously been used by Dr. Steven Seidman and Dr. Joanne Zager. (Seidman & Zager, 1986-1987). There is always a risk that participants may not provide truthful responses. Threats to internal validity (history, maturation, statistical regression, etc.) and external validity (testing reactivity, variable interactions, etc.) as well as construct validity, were minimalized because of the type of study conducted (Orcher, 2016). By incorporating a quantitative research design, there is a limitation in that participants will not be able to provide in-depth responses and perceptions. Generalization of the statistical findings were limited to teachers who are employed within the state of South Carolina.

Ethical Procedures

All procedures outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University were adhered to. No humans were harmed during this study. I ensured that all data collected was free of participant identification. Data are confidentially stored in a double-locked cabinet and the key will remain in the sole possession of me. All data

gathered will be shredded after the 3-year time period has passed. All efforts to conduct this study through electronic means was considered and employed.

Summary

In Section 3, an overview of the research method for this research study was provided. First, the research design and approach were identified. A quantitative survey study to identify the relationship amongst the independent variables, teacher perceptions of career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students, and the dependent variable, teacher and related service providers intent to remain in the special education teaching profession was utilized. Consequently, I established the setting and sample. A stratified approach to a convenience sampling was used across the state of South Carolina to examine teachers' perceptions of career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students on their intent to remain in the field of special education. Teachers were sampled from three geographical locations in the state. Next, a description of the instrument and materials to be used followed. Influence on the decision to leave was measured by a four-point Likert-scaled survey, created and used by Seidman and Zager in their 1986-1987 research. This survey was used to assess teacher perceptions of career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress, and attitudes towards students. Next, the data collection and analysis plan were reviewed. A data analysis plan was presented to outline how the data was analyzed. Multinomial logistic regressions were used to address the research questions. To conclude Section 3, participant's rights were identified. Many efforts were employed to ensure the rights of the

participants were protected during all phases of the study. Section 4 will discuss the results,

findings, and conclusions for all research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional study is to investigate the factors contributing to SETs and related service providers' intentions to remain in the teaching profession in the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands regions of South Carolina. The data were examined for completion and outlying cases. Descriptive statistics were incorporated to present the trends of the demographic characteristics. Continuous variables were explored through use of means and standard deviations. A reliability analysis was conducted on the scales using Cronbach's alpha. Finally, the research questions were answered using logistic regressions in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory.

Preanalysis Data Screen

A total of 51 out of approximately 150 teachers and related service providers in the three areas where agreement to do research was granted, consented to participate in the online survey. A total of 13 participants did not respond to any portion of the survey. One individual did not respond to the survey item which represented the dependent variable, intent to stay. All 14 of these participants were removed from further analysis. Z-scores were calculated to examine for potential outliers. No participants had scores falling outside of the threshold, $\pm$ 3.29 standard deviations away from the mean. Therefore, no participants were removed for outlying responses. The final sample size consisted of 37 teachers.

Descriptive Statistics

  Frequencies and percentages of demographics. Most teachers were female ($n =$ 31, 83.8%). Age was randomly distributed among all the categories. The distribution of ethnicities consisted of White ($n = 22$, 59.5%), Black ($n = 7$, 18.9%), Hispanic ($n = 2$, 5.4%), Asian ($n = 4$, 10.8%), and other ($n = 2$, 5.4%). Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the demographics.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Sample Demographics

Demographic	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	6	16.2
Female	31	83.8
Age		
25 or less	4	10.8
26 to 29	1	2.7
30 to 35	2	5.4
36 to 40	8	21.6
41 to 45	6	16.2
46 to 50	3	8.1
51 to 55	6	16.2
56 to 60	6	16.2
Over 60	1	2.7
Ethnicity		
White	22	59.5
Black	7	18.9
Hispanic	2	5.4
Asian	4	10.8
Other	2	5.4

Note. All percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

  Employment items. Years in present position and in education altogether were distributed among all the possible categories, with many of the teachers having multiple years of experience. Nearly all the teachers were endorsed for the area that they were

currently teaching (n = 36, 97.3%). Most teachers had received a multicategorical

certification (n = 25, 67.6%). The distribution of grade level taught consisted of elementary

(n = 11, 29.7%), middle school (n = 8, 21.6%), high school (n = 13, 35.1%), and other (n

= 5, 13.5%). The socioeconomic level of the students for a most teachers was reported to

be low (n = 32, 86.5%). Most of the classrooms consisted of one teacher (n = 28, 75.7%).

The number of students in classrooms ranged from 0-7 to more than 30. Classroom type

was distributed between self-contained (n = 12, 32.4%), resource (n = 17, 45.9%), and

other (n = 8, 21.6%). Most the teachers were situated in the Pee Dee area (n = 23, 62.2%).

The teachers were employed in the following areas: Calhoun (n = 4, 10.8%), Marion (n =

7, 18.9%), and Florence (n = 18, 48.6%). The remaining eight teachers did not respond to

this item. Regarding plans to leave the special education teaching position, the teachers

responded: "Yes" (n = 9, 24.3%), "No" (n = 16, 43.2%), "undecided" (n = 9, 24.3%), and

"already left" (n = 3, 8.1%). Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages of the

employment items.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages for Employment Items

Demographic	n	%
Years in present position		
1	4	10.8
2	8	21.6
3	5	13.5
4	1	2.7
5	2	5.4
6-10	6	16.2
11-14	1	2.7
15-19	4	10.8
20-25	3	8.1
More than 26	3	8.1

Demographic	*n*	%
Years of experience in education altogether		
1	1	2.7
2	1	2.7
3	1	2.7
4	1	2.7
5	1	2.7
6-10	6	16.2
11-14	5	13.5
15-19	9	24.3
20-25	9	24.3
More than 26	3	8.1
Endorsed/licensed in area currently teaching		
Yes	36	97.3
No	1	2.7
Certification		
Multi-categorical	25	67.6
EBD	1	2.7
Other	11	29.7
Grade level teaching		
Elementary	11	29.7
Middle school/Junior High	8	21.6
High school	13	35.1
Other	5	13.5
Average socioeconomic level of students		
Low	32	86.5
Middle	4	10.8
High	1	2.7
Number of teachers within classroom		
1	28	75.7
2	2	5.4
3	3	8.1
Other	4	10.8
Number of students within classroom		
0-7	8	21.6
8-10	9	24.3
11-13	8	21.6
14-20	4	10.8
21-30	3	8.1
More than 30	5	13.5

Demographic	*n*	%
Classroom type		
Self-contained	12	32.4
Resource	17	45.9
Other	8	21.6
Geographical area		
Pee Dee	23	62.2
Low Country	4	10.8
Savannah River/Midlands	6	16.2
Other	4	10.8
County		
Calhoun	4	10.8
Marion	7	18.9
Florence	18	48.6
No response	8	21.6
Plan to leave position		
Yes	9	24.3
No	16	43.2
Undecided	9	24.3
Already left	3	8.1

Note. All percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

Reliability. Cronbach's alpha test of internal consistency was calculated for the scales. The results for all three scales met the acceptable threshold for reliability ($\alpha \geq .70$). The Cronbach's alpha reliability statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics for Composite Scores

Scale	No. of Items	α
Career satisfaction	5	.86
Perceived administrative support	6	.87
Coping with job-related stress	6	.85
Attitudes toward students	4	.80

Continuous variables. The subscales were computed through sums of the representative survey items representing the scales. Career satisfaction scores ranged from

5.00 to 20.00, with M = 12.59 and SD = 4.32. Perceived administrative support scores

ranged from 6.00 to 24.00, with M = 16.38 and SD = 5.02. Coping with job-related stress

scores ranged from 8.00 to 24.00, with M = 16.46 and SD = 4.81. Attitudes toward

students' scores ranged from 5.00 to 16.00, with M = 11.35 and SD = 2.95. Table 4

presents the descriptive statistics of the continuous level variables.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest

	n	Min	Max	M	SD
Career satisfaction	37	5.00	20.00	12.59	4.32
Perceived administrative support	37	6.00	24.00	16.38	5.02
Coping with job-related stress	37	8.00	24.00	16.46	4.81
Attitudes toward students	37	5.00	16.00	11.35	2.95

Because this survey was conducted entirely online, threats to external validity (testing

reactivity, variable interactions, etc.) as well as construct validity, were minimalized

(Orcher, 2016).

Detailed Analysis

To address the four research questions, a series of multinomial logistic

regressions was conducted to explore the relationship between career satisfaction,

perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, attitudes toward

students, and intention to remain in special education. All these variables are

contained within the chronosystem of Bronfenbrenner's theory. The variables do not

cause attrition in the immediate but over time, thus the reasoning behind placing them

within the chronosystem. The teacher represents the active agent at the center of the

system. Students comprise the mesosystem along with administrators. Links between

the systems may not be apparent but they are, nonetheless, there. The following will explain the relationships between the variables and the intent to leave, which is encompassed in the chronosystem because most teachers do not make the decision to leave teaching immediately after entering it.

Research Question 1: What is the predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and service providers (i.e. speech therapists, occupational therapists (OT), physical therapist (PT)) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1): There is no predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a predictive relationship between career satisfaction among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

For Research Question 1, the results of the overall model were statistically significant ($\chi^2(3) = 8.95$, $p = .030$), suggesting that career satisfaction does have a significant predictive relationship on intention to remain in special education. Career satisfaction was a significant predictor in the model (Wald (1) = 5.88, $p = .015$, $OR = 1.37$), suggesting that with every one-unit increase in career satisfaction, participants were approximately 1.37 times more likely to leave their current position as opposed to staying. The null hypothesis for research question one ($H_0$1) was rejected. Table 5 presents the parameter estimates of the multinomial logistic regression model.

Table 5

Multinomial Logistic Regression with Career Satisfaction Predicting Intention to Remain in Special Education

Intent to Remain in Special Education	Predictor	*B*	*SE*	Wald (1)	*p*	*OR*
No	Career satisfaction	0.31	0.13	5.88	.015	1.37
Undecided	Career satisfaction	0.08	0.12	0.41	.522	1.08
Already left	Career satisfaction	0.07	0.17	0.17	0.68	1.07

Note. Reference category is "Yes" to remaining in special education; Overall model: $\chi^2(3) = 8.95$, $p = .030$

Research Question 2: What is the predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0 2$): There is no predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis ($H_a 2$): There is a predictive relationship between perceived administrative support among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

For Research Question 2, the results of the overall model were not statistically significant ($\chi^2(3) = 5.92$, $p = .115$), suggesting that perceived administrative support does not have a significant predictive relationship on intention to remain in special education. Due to non-significance of the overall model, the individual predictors were not examined further. The null hypothesis for research question two (H_02) was not rejected. Table 6 presents the parameter estimates of the multinomial logistic regression model.

Table 6

Multinomial Logistic Regression with Perceived Administrative Support Predicting Intention to Remain in Special Education

Intent to Remain in Special Education	Predictor	*B*	*SE*	Wald (1)	*p*	*OR*
No	Perceived administrative support	0.15	0.10	2.49	.115	1.16
Undecided	Perceived administrative support	-0.05	0.10	0.23	.632	0.96
Already left	Perceived administrative support	0.16	0.16	1.02	.312	1.17

Note. Reference category is "Yes" to remaining in special education; Overall model: $\chi^2(3) = 5.92$, $p = .115$

Research Question 3: What is the predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis (H_03): There is no predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a3): There is a predictive relationship between coping with job related stress among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

For Research Question 3, the results of the overall model were statistically significant ($\chi^2(3) = 13.18$, $p = .004$), suggesting that coping with job-related stress does have a significant predictive relationship on intention to remain in special education. Coping with job-related stress was a significant predictor in the model (Wald (1) = 5.89, $p = .015$, $OR = 1.34$), suggesting that with every one-unit increase in coping with job-related stress, participants were approximately 1.34 times more likely to leave their current position as opposed to staying. In addition, coping with job-related stress was a significant predictor in the model (Wald (1) = 4.27, $p = .039$, $OR = 1.54$), suggesting that with every one-unit increase in coping with job-related stress, participants were approximately 1.54 times more likely to have already left their position as opposed to staying. The null hypothesis for research question three ($H_0$3) was rejected. Table 7 presents the parameter estimates of the multinomial logistic regression model.

Table 7

Multinomial Logistic Regression with Coping with Job-Related Stress Predicting Intention to Remain in Special Education

Intent to Remain in Special Education	Predictor	*B*	*SE*	Wald (1)	*p*	*OR*
No	Coping with job-related stress	0.29	0.12	5.89	.015	1.34
Undecided	Coping with job-related stress	0.03	0.12	0.06	.805	1.03
Already left	Coping with job-related stress	0.43	0.21	4.27	.039	1.54

Note. Reference category is "Yes" to remaining in special education; Overall model: $\chi^2(3) = 13.18, p = .004$

Research Question 4: What is the predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and their intent to remain in the field of special education?

Null Hypothesis (H_04): There is no predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

Alternate Hypothesis (H_a4): There is a predictive relationship between attitudes towards students among special education teachers and related service providers (i.e. speech therapists, OT, PT) and their intent to remain in the field of special education.

For Research Question 4, the results of the overall model were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 (3) = 7.62, p = .054$), suggesting that attitudes toward students does not have a significant predictive relationship on intention to remain in special education. However, it is worth noting that the results were near the significance threshold, $\alpha = .05$. Due to the non-significance of the overall model, the individual predictors were not examined further.

The null hypothesis for research question four (H_04) was not rejected. Table 8 presents the

parameter estimates of the multinomial logistic regression model.

Table 8

Multinomial Logistic Regression with Attitudes Toward Students Predicting Intention to
Remain in Special Education

Intent to Remain in Special Education	Predictor	B	SE	Wald (1)	p	OR
No	Attitudes toward students	0.27	0.17	2.65	.104	1.31
Undecided	Attitudes toward students	0.15	0.18	0.69	.405	0.87
Already left	Attitudes toward students	0.24	0.26	0.80	.371	1.27

Note. Reference category is "Yes" to remaining in special education; Overall model: $\chi^2(3) = 7.62, p = .054$

For Research Questions 2 and 4, concerning perceived administrative support and

attitudes towards students respectively, the null hypotheses were not rejected. Previous

research indicated that reasons for the exodus of special education teachers from the field

of education included a lack of support from administration. The current research did not

support it. As for Research Question 4 pertaining to attitudes toward students was not seen

in prior research but also indicated that it was not a significant reason for special educators'

leaving the classroom.

Qualitative Responses

Table 9 represents the respondents' narratives to the open-ended question: If you

plan to leave your position, please list reasons why you are choosing to leave your special

education position. Most of the reasons given by respondents in all counties indicated that

stress, salary, and paperwork were the major reasons why these respondents were going to leave. Other reasons listed were no support from parents, community and administration, lack of student accountability and materials, and unrealistic demands and caseloads. Several respondents from Florence also indicated that their main reason for leaving was a lack of respect and undue stress caused by the current Special Education Director.

Table 9

Reasons Why Choosing to Leave Special Education Position

Item	*n*
If you plan to leave your position, please list reasons why you are choosing to leave your special education position.	
Discipline	1
Salary	3
Teacher Age	1
Support (Administration, parents, community)	5
Getting higher degree to teach college	1
Commute	1
Transfer from high school to elementary school	2
Promotion	1
Unsafe work environments/additional duties	2
SPED director	4
To transfer and teach to different state.	1
Lack of Student Motivation and Accountability	2
Stress/Burnout	5
No response/N/A	18

Table 10 represents the responses to the question: What factors would contribute to you remaining in your special education position? Respondents indicated that in order to remain in their positions more positive support from administration, not only at the building level but also at the district level would have to occur. Other reasons indicated for remaining in special education were an increase in pay, reductions in paperwork, caseload

and stress, improved school discipline, and the educators' own passion for teaching and their students.

Table 10

Factors Contributing to Remaining in Special Education Position

Item	*n*
What factors would contribute to you remaining in your special education position?	
More classroom assistants	2
Changing the Director of Special Education.	1
Increased Administration and parental support	6
Lack of adequate training.	1
Change in grade level taught	1
Smaller caseload/Smaller class size	10
School Culture / Improved Discipline2	1
Better Treatment	1
Decreased Stress	3
Increased Salary	4
Decreased paperwork	8
Passion for teaching/Student success	6
more money, being able to teach like I want	1
Visa status	1
No response/none	10

Table 11 represents respondent's answers to the open-ended question: Please add additional information regarding special education teacher attrition in the school district. The same themes were present here that were seen in the first two tables. Teachers indicated that if support from administrators was increased, the desire to leave would decrease. Other factors that would lead to a decrease in attrition were smaller caseloads, more planning periods to complete the demands of the job, as well as a decreased caseload which would in turn lead to a decrease in paperwork and stress. Teachers also indicated that if they were appreciated more the chances of attrition would also decrease.

Table 11

Additional Information Regarding Special Education Teacher Attrition in School District

Item	n
Please add additional information regarding special education teacher attrition in the school district.	
More appreciation/more encouragement/better treatment of SPED teachers	6
More training for Administrators/superiors not knowing their job or doing it	3
Promotion.	1
More emphasis on student success	1
Decrease Paperwork and Caseloads	8
Decrease Stress	5
special education director does not know how to effectively communicate with her staff	3
More Planning Time	4
Better communication	2
No response/N/A	22

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional study is to investigate the factors contributing to SETs and related service providers intentions to remain in the teaching profession in the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands regions of South Carolina. This chapter presented the findings of the data collection. Descriptive statistics were used to explore the trends of the sample. The findings of the multinomial logistic regressions determined that career satisfaction and coping with job-related stress were significant predictors of intent to remain in special education. Perceived administrative support and attitude toward students were not significant predictors of intent to remain in special education. The null hypotheses were rejected for research Questions 1 ($H_0 1$) and 3 ($H_0 3$). The null hypotheses were not rejected for research Questions 2 ($H_0 2$) and 4 ($H_0 4$).

In the next chapter, the statistical findings will be further explored in connection with the

literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional study was to examine the factors influencing SET's and related service providers' intentions to remain in the teaching profession in the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands regions of South Carolina. Attaining data as to causes why special education teachers and related service providers in South Carolina plan to leave the field of special education will provide insight into and thus help lessen the damaging effects of continuous teacher attrition on student outcomes.

A quantitative cross-sectional study of elements that contribute to SETs intent to remain or leave the teaching profession was employed using a Likert-style survey developed by Seidman and Zager (1986) to examine intent to leave special education. The dependent variable corresponded to intent to remain teaching in special education. The independent variables were career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, and attitudes towards students.

The general population encompassed all special education teachers and related service providers employed in South Carolina, specifically the Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands during the 2017 to 2018 school year, and those who have left within the previous five years.

The classification of the population groups follows:

1. Special education teachers and related service providers who intend to leave teaching special education in South Carolina.

2. Special education teachers and related service providers who intend to remain teaching special education in South Carolina.

3. Special education teachers and related service providers who are undecided about teaching special education in South Carolina.

4. Special education teachers and related service providers who have already left teaching special education in South Carolina.

The present study was conducted to determine if the following factors, career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, and attitudes towards students, contributed to the attrition of special education teachers in the following geographical areas of South Carolina: The Low Country, Pee Dee, and Savannah River/Midlands. The following sections will interpret the findings of the study, explain the limitations of the present research, provide recommendations for future research, and discuss the implications of this research. Finally, a conclusion will follow, summing up not only this chapter but also the research itself.

Interpretation of the Findings

Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory as the theoretical framework, my investigation was executed in terms of continuing teachers' intentions to remain or leave. The theoretical framework for this study was drawn from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner separated the environment into five dissimilar echelons: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The microsystem represents the direct environment in which the individual (the teacher) lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner noted that the mesosystem represented the

relationships between microsystems in the individual's life. The exosystem is the setting in which there is a link between the context wherein the person does not have any active role, and the context wherein the individual is actively participating. The macrosystem setting represents the culture of an individual. The chronosystem includes the transitions and shifts in one's lifespan (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a microsystem is an arrangement of events, functions, and interactive associations experienced by a person in a face-to-face situation with specific corporeal and physical characteristics, and encompassing other individuals with distinguishing appearances of makeup, disposition, and beliefs. For the teacher, the microsystem is comprised of the classroom, then the school, and, finally, the district. These are the main places where the individual functions as a teacher. A mesosystem encompasses the connections between microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher's mesosystem consists of the students, the parents, colleagues, and, finally, administrators. The next layer in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory is the exosystem, which provides the linkage between two or more of the other settings. It does not necessarily contain the individual but the influential events within that immediate setting. The macrosystem encompasses an overarching pattern of the other three layers, which includes lifestyles, resources, and other systems embedded into each of the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher's macrosystem encompasses the socioeconomic level, the beliefs, values, and culture, and geographical locations (either urban or rural) of the students he or she serves. Finally, the chronosystem encompasses changes over the progression of one's lifetime (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Within the chronosystem lies the question of intent to

leave or stay as well as the probable causes: career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, job related stress, stress, and attitude towards students.

Results from Research Question 1 indicated that career satisfaction was a statistically significant predictor of the intent to remain in special education.). Results from the present research revealed that there was a predicative relationship between both job satisfaction and job-related stress and the intent to leave the profession. This is in direct relation to previous research completed on this topic. Researchers have identified stress as a key factor of attrition among special educators (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Vittek, 2015). Teacher burnout and attrition are troubling phenomena that can result in negative effects on student learning because funds that could be spent on students must be used on training new teachers (Bettini, Cheyney, Wang, & Leko, 2015; Biddle & Azano, 2016; Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Vekeman, Devos, Valcke, & Rosseel, 2016; Vittek, 2015). In addition, Vittek (2015) concluded that job satisfaction depended upon the following factors: administrative support, workload, and level of stress.

Results from Research Question 2 indicated that perceived administrative support was not a statistically significant predictor of the intent to remain in special education. Environmental factors that contributed to attrition included administrative support, workload, and autonomy, while individual factors included job satisfaction, stress and eventual burnout (Fernet et al., 2016). In contradiction to previous research regarding administrative support and attrition, results from the present study did not find a statistically significant relationship between the intent to leave special education and the

lack of administrative support. According to answers to the open-ended questions, most respondents indicated that administrators were supportive to some extent, but job satisfaction indicated by research question 1 and job-related stress indicted by research question 3 were more apt to cause an educator to leave.

Results from Research Question 3 indicated that coping with job related stress was a statistically significant predictor of the intent to remain in special education. Factors determined by answers to the open-ended questions indicated that some of the causes listed of job-related stress included paperwork, outrageous caseloads and an inept director of special education. Results from Research Question 4 indicated that attitudes toward students were not a statistically significant predictor of the intent to remain in special education. While teachers in all districts surveyed indicated that students had bad attitudes, this was a very low indicator of attrition.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to one state and does not represent special educators and related service providers in other states throughout the United States. An important limitation to note is that the current study is a survey study; therefore, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting study findings in terms of causal relationships among variables.

To address limitation concerns, through an agreement with the individual human resource directors; the cover letter; the ability to complete the survey online; and the fact that no individual identification was probable through the surveys, it was hoped that subjects trusted the anonymity of their responses to the attrition questionnaire. There was no way to know what bias or influence that a path of contact through the head of human

resources may have on any of the subjects. The ability to complete the surveys in an online format ensures the subjects' confidence of assurance of anonymity.

Recommendations

Results of the present study indicated that job satisfaction and job-related stress were the main reasons that attributed to the attrition of special education teachers and related service providers in the districts surveyed. Further research, perhaps either qualitative or mixed methods, may be able to determine better perspectives as to the causes and potential solutions.

While results of this study were not statistically significant concerning administrative support, perhaps this may warrant further study to see if a once problematic area concerning the attrition of special education teachers and related service providers has been truly alleviated or if this is just specific to this geographical area. Regarding attrition caused by attitudes toward students, this area, too, netted a statistically insignificant result. This may be an area that indicates further research is needed. While results of this study were statistically insignificant it was noted that the results were near the threshold for statistical significance.

People experience stress in very different ways. Teachers do too. Future research into the types of stress experienced by special education teachers and related service providers may reveal those specific stressors and how to alleviate them. Studies may need to be conducted to learn ways to reduce stressors. Maybe a qualitative or mixed methods study, or perhaps a case study utilizing multiple data sources can be utilized to gain further insight.

Implications

The findings of the present research indicate that there is still a need to determine what can be done to alleviate attrition in special education teachers and related service providers. The present research indicated that job satisfaction and job-related stress are indicators of increased attrition. Job-related stress can be attributed to increased paperwork, overwhelming caseloads, lack of planning time, and lack of collaboration time, as evidenced in both the present and past research (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Clara, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Vittek, 2015). This may warrant further research to see if the trend is moving from a lack administration support to these other factors.

The phenomenon of attrition has been a significant issue for decades. Further research may be needed to see if lack of administration support, a main cause of attrition in prior research has really been alleviated. The present research only focused on a small area of the state of South Carolina. It may be advantageous to determine if the same results can be replicated in a wider area. These results may not be able to be replicated in a different state or geographical area.

While the present research indicated that job satisfaction and job-related stress were the main causes of attrition among special education teachers and related service providers in the Pee Dee, Low Country, and the Savannah River/Midlands regions of South Carolina, participants indicated other reasons why they considered leaving due to these issues. Narratives left by participants indicated that their stress was caused by overwhelming caseloads, lack of planning time, paperwork, and too many meetings. These are issues that

can be addressed by districts to assist these individuals and possibly alleviate impending attrition.

In order to assist these individuals to increase their satisfaction in their careers, I would recommend that administrators work to find ways to minimize the stressors. Allowing the educator extra planning time to finish paperwork, plan for classes and destress could help. One district studied did just that by allowing special education teachers one day per month that they could use to catch up on paperwork, lesson planning, and grading. Another recommendation would be to provide professional development to make available destressing techniques or even different ways to make their jobs easier. This too would work to increase job satisfaction among the respondents. While educators are not looking for praise, perhaps, the occasional pat on the back or verbal recognition of a job well done would go a long way to assuage attrition.

Conclusion

The investigation emphasized the necessity for a way to evaluate career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students in special educators in relation to the intent to leave the field of special education. The main objective was to ascertain if career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students in special education teachers and related service providers could be related to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory using the Teacher Burnout Survey (TBS). The outcomes established that the TBS are, furthermore, an effective resource for determining career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students in

special education teachers and related service providers. This investigation showed that the TBS is a valid tool that should continue to be used to measure career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students in special education teachers and related service providers.

It also recommends that further research be executed to measure career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students in special education teachers and related service providers through approaches that also represent the distinctive circumstances that they encounter. The fundamental objective of such further research is the development of a diagnostic methodology that can be utilized for career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students' measurement. School populations have an accountability to concentrate on special educators' career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job related stress and attitudes towards students so that teachers will remain in the field, mature professionally, feel supported by administrators, and improve the learning and the lives of students with special needs.

While the present research determined that the issues in the forefront among special education teachers and related service providers in the Pee Dee, Low Country, and the Savannah River/Midlands regions of South Carolina are job satisfaction and job-related stress, it did not eliminate that lack of administrative support was not a cause of attrition in this area. A solution to attrition of special education teachers and related service providers may never be found but if we can change the mind of just one educator thinking of leaving then maybe the decades old issue can be alleviated.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Seidman/Zager Survey

March 7, 2018

Dear Dr. Seidman,

My name is Meta Turner and I am currently an EdD candidate at Walden University. My dissertation is tentatively titled: Investigating Attrition Among South Carolina Special Educators in Relation to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory
.
I am requesting permission to use your instrument, The Teacher Burnout Scale, for my research. If you could send the instrument and scoring guidelines, to me along with your permission to use it, I would be most appreciative. I will make the results of the research available to you.
Thank you in advance for your consideration.
I can be reached at this email address: meta.turner@waldenu.edu

Sincerely yours,
Meta Turner
EdD Candidate
Richard Riley School of Education
Walden University

Dear Meta,

The instrument is included in the article and scoring should be clear. If you have questions, please send them to me via email.

You have permission to use the scale in your research.

Best regards,
Steven Seidman

Steven A. Seidman, Ph.D.
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Appendix B: Original Seidman/Zager Survey

4. Teacher Burnout Scale

✳ Rank the following statements strongly agree to disagree. When you have complete the survey select submit to continue.

	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agre
1. I look forward to teaching in the future.	○	○	○	○
2. I feel depressed because of my teaching experiences.	○	○	○	○
3. I get adequete praise from my supervisors for a job well done.	○	○	○	○
4. The teaching day seems to drag out.	○	○	○	○
5. I am glad I selected teaching as a career.	○	○	○	○
6. The students act like a bunch of animals.	○	○	○	○
7. My physical illnesses may be related to to my stress in this job.	○	○	○	○
8. I feel administrators are willing to help me with classroom problems.	○	○	○	○
9. I find it difficult to calm down after a day of teaching.	○	○	○	○
10. Teaching is more fulfilling than I had expected.	○	○	○	○
11. I believe that my efforts in the classroom are unappreciated by the administrators.	○	○	○	○
12. If I had to do it all over again, I would not become a schoolteacher.	○	○	○	○
13. I feel that I could do a much better job of teaching if only the problems confronting me were not so great.	○	○	○	○
14. The stresses in this job are more than I can bear.	○	○	○	○
15. My supervisors give me more criticism than praise.	○	○	○	○
16. Most of my students are decent people.	○	○	○	○

17. Most students come to school ready to learn.	◯	◯	◯	◯
18. I feel that the administrators will not help me with classroom difficulties.	◯	◯	◯	◯
19. I look forward to each teaching day.	◯	◯	◯	◯
20. The administration blames me for classroom problems.	◯	◯	◯	◯
21. Students come to school with bad attitudes.	◯	◯	◯	◯

Part 2

Please provide the following information about yourself.

22. Gender 1. Male   2. Female
23. Age: 1. 25 or less   3. 30 to 35   5. 41 to 45   7. 51 to 55   9. 60 plus 2. 26 to 29   4. 36 to 40   6. 46 to 49   8. 56 to 59
24. Ethic Background 1. White   3. Hispanic   5. Native American 2. African-American   4. Asian   6. Other _____
25. How many years have you been in your present position? 1. 1   3. 3   5. 5   7. 11 to 14   9. 20 to 25 2. 2   4. 4   6. 6 to 10   8. 15 to 19   10. 26 plus
26. How many years have you had in education all together? 1. 1   3. 3   5. 5   7. 11 to 14   9. 20 to 25 2. 2   4. 4   6. 6 to 10   8. 15 to 19   10. 26 plus
27. Are you endorsed/licensed in the area you are currently teaching or providing services? 1. Yes 2. No
28. Certification 1. Multi-Categorical   3. EBD 2. Severe/Profound   4. Other_____
29. At which grade level do you teach: 1. Elementary   3. High School 2. Middle School/Jr. High   4. Other _____
30. Average socioeconomic level of the students attending my school is: 1. Low   2. Middle   3. High
31. Number of teachers in the classroom: 1. 1   3. 3 2. 2.   4. Other _____

32. Number of students in the classroom:
1. 0-7   3. 11-13   5. 21-30
2. 8-10   4. 14-20   6. Other_____

33. Classroom type:
1. Self-contained   3. Inclusion
2. Resource   4. Other _____

34. Geographical Area:
1. Low Country   3. Savannah River/Midlands
2. Pee Dee   4. Other _____

35. Please indicate which district you work(ed) for:

Open Ended Question: Please answer the following in as much detail as possible.
1) Do you plan to leave your position? 1-yes, 2- no, 3- undecided
   a) If so, please list reasons why you choose to leave your special education position.

   b) What factors would contribute to you remaining in your special education posit

   c) Please add additional information regarding special education teacher attrition in the school district.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

Appendix C
IRB Approval

IRB Approval Granted, Conditional upon Partner Approval - Meta Turner
Dear Ms. Turner,
This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Investigating Attrition Among Special Educators in Relation to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory," <u>conditional</u> upon the approval of the research partner, as documented in a notification of approval, which will need to be submitted to the Walden IRB once obtained. The researcher may not commence the study until the Walden IRB confirms receipt of that notification of approval.
 Your approval # is 06-05-18-0200834.
 Your IRB approval expires on May 4, 2019.

Reply all

Appendix D: Participant Letter

Dear District Special Education Teacher/Related Service Provider,

I am conducting a study for my doctoral dissertation on special education teacher and related service provider attrition. I am inviting you to participate in a survey concerning reasons educators abandon the classroom, because you are a classroom teacher or related service provider working or who has worked for one of the districts I am studying. Research has shown over 50% of public school teachers leave the classroom within their first 5 years of teaching, and more than 30% of those leaving are special educators. The title of the study is *Investigating Attrition Among Special Educators in Relation to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory* All survey answers and additional information will remain anonymous. No one in your school, district, or state will be able to view individual surveys, and reports on the results will not include data that could identify individuals. This should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Taking part in the study is voluntary with no risks foreseen to participants. The anticipated outcomes from this study are to apprise district leaders of probable actions to boost job satisfaction as well as decrease special education teacher attrition. You may resign from the study at any time. No compensation will be provided for your participation, but your participation is much appreciated.

 If you have any study related questions or problems, please contact me at meta.turner@waldenu.edu, 828-287-5559, or my faculty advisor Dr. Billie Andersson at billie.anderssonn@mail.waldenu.edu. If you need further information about your rights as a research participant, please contact Walden representative at 612-312- 1210. Walden

University's approval number for this study is 06-05-18-0200834 and it expires on May 4, 2019.

If you would like to participate, please click on the following link **https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/K7N5WH2** or cut and paste the link into your web browser to open the survey. When you have completed the survey, please click done to electronically send your survey. Participants may keep a copy of this invitation as their informed consent. Thank you in advance for your help and assistance.

Sincerely,

Meta Jane Turner

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University