Job Satisfaction Among Educators:

Recognizing Educators’ Motivational Needs

by

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ABSTRACT

The school system in the United States faces a tremendous teacher shortage, which has a devastating effect on students and their learning outcomes. The U. S Department of Education reported a teacher shortage of over 120,000 teachers and projected a need for an additional half million teachers between 2019 and 2020. This study investigated the relationship between need fulfillment and job satisfaction, using Maslow’s human motivation theory, “the hierarchy of needs” as a framework. All participants were interviewed in person. The selection of the participants was purposeful. The participants were current, tenured, and credentialed educators. All participants were PK-12 educators with work experience, ranging from six to 37 years, and all of them worked in public schools. The data were analyzed using concept-based codes, linking them into the hierarchy-of-needs framework to identify variables that can lead to job satisfaction. The findings were derived through the triangulation method, grounded in interviews, existing literature, and Maslow’s hierarchy-of-needs framework. The study’s conclusion is that a positive organizational school culture is essential to fulfilling educators’ needs in to prevent high attrition rates. Several variables were identified to increase educators’ motivation and job satisfaction.

Keywords: human motivation theories, hierarchy of needs, school organization, job satisfaction, teacher retention, concept-based coding, triangulation

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A problem in education today is a growing attrition rate in the educational profession, and part of the problem is a lack of job satisfaction among teachers. I was not aware of this problem when I first took a job as a substitute teacher three years ago to pursue my graduate degree in early childhood education. Because I was substitute teaching in five different preschools, I quickly learned that not only is it a problem, but it is also a devastating problem. It is devastating to schools, to families, and to children. It is also devastating and destabilizing to the entire community.

My work as a substitute teacher provided insight into how preschool educators\(^1\)—(PE) felt about their work environment. I was able to observe what they needed to feel satisfied with their work. I witnessed a dedication to young children’s well-being and a desire to create an environment in which they can thrive, and I witnessed how stressful and challenging being a preschool educator can be. I also learned during break-time conversations that the preschool educators were determined to work for the greater good—young children’s futures. Some enjoyed the camaraderie with their colleagues, while others expressed how the director’s support made a positive difference in how they felt about their jobs. Some mentioned that the structure of the organization made them feel safe.

On the negative side, I learned that PE felt that their compensation was less than fair for their work and that educators do not get enough societal respect. I observed a constant need in preschools for substitute teachers because of a shortage of full-time teachers. As a result, PE were frustrated and overwhelmed by their workload, with a sense of not being supported by their administrators. Although administrators tried, they could not hire new teachers fast enough.

\(^1\) defined as head teachers, teacher assistants, and substitute teachers who have at least 12 early-education units)
They either had to leave positions open or filled them with less-qualified educators who needed significant guidance and mentorship from the more experienced educators. The experienced PEs felt frustrated, while newly hired teachers in need of mentorship and advice were often left without having their needs met. In short, despite the love and compassion they feel for their students, some of these educators seemed burnt out, tired, without motivation, and as if they were just hanging in there to get the job done. Although perceived job satisfaction is an essential factor in organizational commitment (Mathieu & Farr, 1991; Ostroff, 1992), I observed that stakeholders (defined as those with a monetary interest in an organization) and administrators struggled to create a productive work environment in which teachers could feel content.

The inability of schools to create a work environment that increases perceived job satisfaction is a common problem in the educational sector in general. I became aware that the shortage of educators had serious consequences for all members of the learning community and wondered what role perceived job satisfaction played in the decision by educators to stay or to leave. Based on what I observed, I questioned what motivates educators and whether educational organizations' stakeholders do enough to meet educators’ needs.

**What Is It That Makes Educators Stay and Not Walk Away?**

Educators in the United States are leaving the profession rapidly with harmful effects on all education community members. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that 8% of educators are leaving the job and another 8% are changing schools annually, resulting in a turnover rate of about 16%. In numbers, this means that a school that employs 20 educators will lose about three of them annually, resulting in possible dysfunctional collegiality, chaotic schoolwide operations, and continuous cycles of turnover (Donley et al., 2019; Wang, 2019).
Reasons for the high turnover vary. According to a national survey conducted by NCES, the most frequently reported reasons for changing schools or leaving the profession were lack of administrative support, dissatisfaction with a teaching career, and dissatisfaction with working conditions. All these reasons contribute to a negative perception of job satisfaction in educators and affect their students (Wang, 2019; Todorova et al., 2019; Nigama et al., 2018). In times of high turnover rates in schools, administrators tend to focus more on how to get more educators into the profession. However, it is equally important to focus on keeping the educators we have in the classroom to provide the best outcomes for both students and school programs (Toropova et al., 2020). It is widely acknowledged that educators have a significant role in students’ learning outcomes.

The importance of educators’ perceived job satisfaction and its effect on the educational community is often unnoticed. Low job satisfaction levels can negatively influence an educator's well-being, resulting in reduced job performance, leading to lower student achievements and adverse organizational outcomes (Aazami et al., 2015; Sabawal, et al., 2021). Thus, educational organizations need to focus more on creating an environment where educators can feel job satisfaction to retain them (Desai et al., 2011). One of the most used human motivational theories in organizations is Maslow's humanistic theory of the hierarchy of needs. Maslow was the first theorist who offered insights into job satisfaction. Maslow believed that people are motivated by unfulfilled psychological and physiological needs. He depicted his motivational theory in a hierarchical order of five different levels of human needs that must be satisfied to reach satisfaction and the full potential of self.
Purpose of the Study

This study used Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a framework to identify the different factors that possibly influence educators’ perception of job satisfaction so that stakeholders and administrators of educational programs can pay more attention to those identified needs and thus prevent attrition.

Question Guiding the Study

The guiding question for this study was: What are the factors that determine educators' perception of job satisfaction?

Background

This section presents an in-depth explanation of Maslow’s human motivation theory, the hierarchy of needs, and how it applies to the work environment. The meaning of job satisfaction and its effects on educators is discussed and the effect of high attrition rates on educators and the entire school community is described, along with factors that contribute to high attrition rates among educators.

Theoretical Framework: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow was part of the humanistic movement that focused on people’s potential rather than human flaws (Al Taher, 2020). He related his theory to human motivation, which, according to existing research, is the driving force of goal-directed behavior (Bhalraj, 2008) and was inspired by functionalist theorists like James and Dewey. His theory is fused with the ideas of the holism theories of Wertheimer, Goldstein, and Gestalt psychology (Kelland, 2021) Although he critiqued Freud, Maslow admitted that his thoughts were also influenced by Freud and Adler and their ideas about dynamism (CITE). He called his initial theory a “general-dynamic” theory (Maslow, 1943, p. 371). Maslow knew that he was a pioneer with his positive theory of
motivation and was most likely to be criticized for his methodology. He explained that his research method was based on clinical, observational, and experimental data but was mainly derived from his clinical experiences. With this spirit in mind, he revisited his research throughout his life, corrected deficiencies, and added his theory findings.

At first, Maslow described human needs in a relatively static and rigid way. He believed that human progress is hierarchical whereby lower needs had to be mostly satisfied before a person would pay attention to the next higher need. However, in his first publication in 1943, Maslow added that the five human needs did not need to be completely satisfied before the next need emerged. He explained that most people are partially satisfied and partially unsatisfied with all their basic needs at the same time (p. 389). Later, Maslow described his needs theory as fluid, explaining that although most of the people he worked with showed the needs in the order that he presented, there were also exceptions that he had observed (Maslow, 1987, p.69). He realized that these exceptions were related to people’s ever-changing life experiences (Britton, 2016).

Maslow’s theory was based on the idea that humans have five basic levels of needs. The first four levels are what he called deficiency needs. He explained that these deficiencies of unmet needs motivate people toward a goal to have these needs met and that behavior is almost always motivated in this way. He added that behavior is also almost always biologically, culturally, and situationally determined. In Maslow’s opinion, a higher need emerges once a need is satisfied, and the lack of met needs leads to unpredictable behavioral outcomes. (Gawel,1997, p.1, Maslow, 1954). As shown in figure one, the five levels, from the bottom up, include (a) physiological needs, (b) safety needs, (c) love, affection, and the need to belong, (d) esteem needs, and finally, (e) self-actualization, which he defined as achieving one’s highest potential.
Note. Drawing of Maslow’s Pyramid—The Hierarchy of Needs. Adapted from “Application of Maslow’s hierarchy of need theory; impacts and implications on organizational culture, human resource and employee’s performance” (Nayameh, 2013)

**Deficiency and Growth Needs**

Maslow divided the five levels of human needs into two categories, deficiency needs, and growth needs. Deficiency needs are the four basic needs that need to be met before humans can focus on the growth need. Maslow explained that humans need to satisfy both the deficiency needs and the growth needs to reach peak levels of functioning (Maslow, 1943). The researchers Noltemeyer et al. (2012) used deficiency factors from a parent survey and results from an achievement test to determine the relationship between a set of two deficiency needs; the findings supported Maslow’s theory. They found a positive relationship between deficiency needs and growth needs. Maslow’s idea that the hierarchy is fluid rather than fixed became very clear when he addressed humans’ desire to know and understand. He felt that these needs could
be related to basic safety in the world and expressions of self-actualization. He explained that humans have a basic desire to know and be aware of reality, get the facts, and satisfy curiosity, referring to it as searching for meaning (p. 385).

**Physiological Needs**

According to Maslow (1943), physiological needs are automatic efforts to maintain a constant, normal state of blood flow, which can also be referred to as homeostasis. Maslow did not identify all the examples of homeostasis but those he did identify include food, water, breathing, sleep, and maternal responses. He explained that the possibilities are endless because the physiological needs and behavior that fulfill those needs serve as channels for other needs. Therefore, the elements of physiological needs should not be seen as isolated. He gave the example of a person who thinks he is hungry but wants comfort (Maslow, 1943, p. 373). Maslow explained that if the physiological needs are not met, people cannot think of anything else until this need is fulfilled. He also believed that this need deficiency would consume people’s outlook and the direction of their lives. Therefore, Maslow considered physiological needs to be the most elemental of all needs (p. 373).

**Safety Needs**

Maslow (1943) explained that once physical needs are met, the next level of needs is safety. Safety could be the need for order, the desire for a savings account, job security, or a preference for the familiar rather than the unfamiliar (p. 379). Safety needs are related to mental health and well-being. Research from the field of neural plasticity revealed that anger and fear are closely related to safety needs. Analysis revealed that the primary reason for mental disorders—PTSD, phobia, and depression—are underpinned by the need to be safe (Zheng et al.,
These findings correlate with Maslow’s ideas about safety needs. Maslow suggested that sometimes people make safety needs the focus of their lives (Maslow, 1943).

**Love, Affection, and Belongingness Needs**

After physiological and safety needs are met, love, affection, and belongingness needs emerge. The longing for affection from family, friends, and partners grows. Humans look for belongingness in their social interactions and environment. Maslow mentioned that people would strive to meet this need with great intensity. He pointed out that this level is related to giving and receiving love and is not synonymous with sex (Maslow, 1943, p. 381).

**Esteem Needs**

Maslow divided esteem needs into two subcategories. The first category reflects on the desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, and confidence in the face of the world. It also includes the longing for independence and freedom. The second category consists of the desire for a good reputation or prestige among others. Maslow considered this subcategory as the longing for recognition, attention, importance, or esteem from others. If these needs are met, people experience a sense of self-satisfaction and higher self-worth and capability, leading to the perception of being useful and necessary in the world (p. 382).

**Self-Actualization**

According to Maslow, self-actualization is the need to become more of what one can become (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). Maslow explained that when humans are at this level, and all other needs are satisfied, restlessness and disconnect will soon be developed if people are not doing what they are meant to do. It is the desire for self-fulfillment (p. 382). For example, Maslow said that an artist has to produce art, a musician has to be able to make music, and a poet
needs to write. Maslow mentioned that based on humans' uniqueness, self-actualization could look different in each of us, depending on our desires.

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in the Workplace**

When applied in schools' work environments, Maslow's motivation theory might shed some light on possible obstacles that hinder educators from experiencing job satisfaction. Maslow's framework might also help identify where educators need more support from the organization to reach their fullest potential. Researchers have sometimes viewed Maslow’s theory as controversial, and it has been argued that his theory is antiquated without significant contemporary theoretical importance. On the other hand, Maslow’s theory has also received tremendous empirical support from different cultures and countries. However, his theory in employee motivation is still prevalent among researchers, managers, and organizations alike, making Maslow's hierarchy of needs still relevant and timeless (Davis-Sharts, 1986; Kenrick et al., 2010).

**Physiological and Safety Needs in the Workplace**

Nyameh (2013) found that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is appropriate for organizational orientation and employee motivation. He explained that an organization's cultural framework reflects employees’ physiological and security needs, which must be prioritized to improve employees’ performance. The framework should include financial security, the promise of a stable career, and a safe work environment (p. 42-43). A study conducted on educators' health and safety in secondary schools found that workplace safety leads to health, motivation, and job satisfaction. The researchers concluded that if school organizations engage educators in discussions about health and safety policies, they feel motivated to implement these policies (Jonathan, 2016).
Love, Affection, and Belongingness Needs in the Workplace

Winter-Collins and McDaniel (2000) conducted a study to discover the relationship between a sense of belonging and job satisfaction. They found that there was a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and factors of total satisfaction and interaction opportunities. The importance of friendship in the workforce was investigated by Riordan and Griffeth (1995). Their findings were that employees’ perception of friendship opportunities directly affects job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and turnover intention.

Esteem Needs in the Workplace

Greg and Chung-Yan (2010) examined the interactive relationship between job complexity and job autonomy. Their results showed that job complexity and job autonomy considerably interact to predict job satisfaction outcomes, turnover intentions, and psychological well-being (p. 244). The importance of self-esteem in the workforce was investigated by Pierce and Gardner (2004). Their findings suggest that individual self-esteem in the work environment plays a vital role in determining employee behavior and motivation. They observed that sources and signals about the organization's worth, together with success-building role conditions, predict organization-based self-esteem.

Self-actualization in the Workplace

Ngai et al. (2016) researched the effects of vocational training on unemployed young people’s work and work engagement, using mediating effects of training adequacy and self-actualization. Their findings suggest that through vocational training, the unemployed youth gained hard and soft skills. With the acquired knowledge, the unemployed felt empowered and capable. The vocational training was strongly associated with the young people’s self-
actualization, thus instilling more positive work engagement and work motivation. Neto (2015) investigated how self-actualization impacts academic motivation and argued that self-actualization is connected to learning motivation and assumed that individuals engaged in educational activities are also focused on self-actualization. Neto came to this conclusion after drawing from the research results of Melnic and Botez (2014). Their research suggested that through higher levels of education, society could benefit by engaging in meaningful relationships and contributing to communities and individuals' well-being by giving meaning to their lives.

**Table 2**

*Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in the Organizational Environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Levels</th>
<th>General Rewards</th>
<th>Organizational Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physiological</td>
<td>• Food</td>
<td>• Pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Water</td>
<td>• Pleasant working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sleep</td>
<td>• Cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Safety</td>
<td>• Safety</td>
<td>• Safe working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Security</td>
<td>• Company benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stability</td>
<td>• Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social</td>
<td>• Love</td>
<td>• Cohesive workgroup, friendly supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Affection</td>
<td>• Professional association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Belongingness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Esteem</td>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
<td>• Social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-respect</td>
<td>• Job title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prestige</td>
<td>• High-status job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Status</td>
<td>• Feedback from the job itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-actualization</td>
<td>• Growth</td>
<td>• Challenging job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advancement</td>
<td>• Opportunities for creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creativity</td>
<td>• Achievement in work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Advancement in the organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Need for Job Satisfaction

The link between job satisfaction in educators and an increase in commitment to the school organization has been well-documented (Aazami et al., 2015; Chuan, 2007; Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007; Morrow, 2011; Shan, 1998). Content educators are more engaged with their students and offer better support for student achievement. Educators who are more satisfied with their jobs experience joy in their work, resulting in increased engagement with their students, which, in turn, increases student achievement (Sarmieinto, et al., 2004. Besides the benefit of better academic success in students, job satisfaction developed strong self-sufficiency and coping skills in educators, leading to better social support in the school environment (Toropova et. al, 2021). When these factors are not in place and educators are not satisfied with their jobs, high attrition is often the result, as educators decide to choose other careers that provide more job satisfaction.

To address the complexity of high attrition rates among educators and the effect of attrition on the learning community, it is important first to define attrition. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, attrition among educators is calculated based on the percentage who stop being educators during one school year (2021). High attrition rates have serious consequences. They not only undermine student achievement but are also demoralizing to educators. Ronfeld et al. (2011) found empirical evidence of a direct link between teacher turnover and a negative impact on student achievement. Turnover was particularly harmful to the achievement of low-performing students and Black students.
According to a national survey conducted by the National Center for Education (NCES), reasons for high attrition vary.

The most frequently reported reasons for changing schools or leaving the profession are lack of administrative support, dissatisfaction with a teaching career, and dissatisfaction with working conditions. These reasons contribute to a negative perception of educators' job satisfaction and affect both educators and students (Nigama et al., 2018, Todorova et al., 2014, Wang, 2019). Podolsky et al. (2016) examined the effect on different educational practices and policies that influenced teachers’ decisions to enter, remain, or leave the profession and discovered the following reasons educators leave the profession:

- personal life reasons, including pregnancy and childcare (37%)
- to pursue a position other than that of a K-12 educator (28%)
- dissatisfaction with school assessment and accountability measures on their teaching or curriculum (25%)
- dissatisfaction with support preparing students for assessments (17%)
- dissatisfaction with the school’s administration (21%)
- dissatisfaction with teaching as a career (21%)
- the need for a higher salary (13%)
- lack of influence over school policies and practices (13%)
- lack of autonomy over the classroom (13%)

Most of the attrition factors were related to being dissatisfied. Educators were dissatisfied with the administrative support, dissatisfied with a teaching career, dissatisfied with the working conditions, and dissatisfied with not having enough autonomy over their teaching and curriculum implementation. Interestingly, educator attrition or turnover rates had more to do with aspects of
their job rather than with monetary issues. In other words, job dissatisfaction with the job itself played the most prominent role in educators' decision to leave or stay.

**Lack of Administrative Support.**

Administrative support in schools is meant to ensure that educational services are functioning effectively (Repnik et al., 2019) and is at the heart of a well-functioning school organization because administrative support can increase positive perceptions of the work environment in educators. Cancio, et al. (2013) examined the effects of perceived administrative support on educator stress, job satisfaction, and school commitment and found that the extent of administrative support, the offered opportunities for growth, and the appreciation of trust increase educators’ positive views of the school and ultimately affect educators’ longevity in the field. Lack of administrative support is one of the key reasons people leave the field of education.

**Dissatisfaction with a Teaching Career.**

Another factor that leads to dissatisfaction with a teaching career is the lack of autonomy by educators. For example, Tolliver (2018) explained in his study that educators have ideas about how they conduct their classrooms that may clash with the policies and practices that are established by the school system. The author’s findings suggest that self-determination can increase educator motivation and motivate educators to stay in the profession. This research is supported by an analysis from the 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2013 Educator Follow-Up Survey (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017) showing that not enough leadership opportunities or professional advancement were factors that contributed to educators’ overall dissatisfaction with a teaching career. In a follow-up study of research conducted in a Connecticut school by Reichhard et al. (2008), the results showed that if educators feel a loss of
control over methods, curriculum, and projects, it reduces their ability to be creative, especially when creativity is needed to work with challenging students.

**Job Dissatisfaction and Outcomes**

One result of job dissatisfaction is burnout, defined as “...a psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. The three key dimensions of this response are an overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment.” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, para 3) Burnout is a problem that many educators endure, and it affects not only the educator's well-being, but also the learning community at large (Scott, 2019).

Factors that contribute to burnout include role conflict, role ambiguity, autonomy, lack of social support by colleagues, lack of participation in decision-making, perceived unfair reward structure, and ambiguous or unrealistic individual expectations for the job (Schwab et al., 1986). Burnout's psychological symptoms are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Jackson et al., 1986). Educators who feel burnt out often start to be absent from work and display diminishing effort on the job. They may also feel an increased inability and the unwillingness to expend effort, reflecting both exhaustion and disengagement (Bedawy et al., 2017).

Burnout affects students as well as teachers because when teachers are disengaged from their jobs, their disengagement can undermine student achievement. Without a sense of well-being, educators may show less empathy and lower expectations for their students (Scott, 2019; Bataineh & Alsagheer, 2011; De Stasio et al., 2017). These negative teacher attitudes can lead to disengaged students who experience adverse social and academic outcomes (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015)
Summary

The research on factors that lead educators to decide whether to stay or leave the profession concerning job satisfaction is plentiful. Lack of administrative support, dissatisfaction with the teaching career, and poor working conditions contribute to educators’ discontent in the workplace. These factors result in high costs for school organizations and low levels of educator well-being and undermine the most important aspect of education, which is student learning achievements. School organizations must look deeper and consider that we have to meet educators’ needs to avoid job dissatisfaction and, ultimately, attrition. Educators need to be motivated to find meaning in their work to provide an environment for students to thrive and for school organizations to be productive. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs posits that humans are driven to rise above the basic “deficiency needs” to what he describes as “self-actualization.” Using this theoretical framework as a starting point in analyzing reasons for attrition in schools might help administrators and lawmakers to better understand the factors that lead to job satisfaction so they can retain teachers and create more stability for their schools and students.

Methods

This research project was an exploratory case study utilizing qualitative methods. Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as a tool to explore and understand a group assigned to a social or human problem, and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) added that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). The qualitative approach for this study was well suited for this project because I was able to listen to what educators had to say about their work, feelings, and reasons for staying in their profession. To increase the credibility and validity of my qualitative study, I used triangulation. Patton (1999) explained that no single method could
investigate a problem beyond the existing explanation of phenomena. He argued that single methods only describe one aspect of a problem. Therefore, he suggested that multiple different data sources provide more insight about the subject to be researched. I triangulated existing research, 22 scripted interviews, and Maslow’s human motivational theory for a more comprehensive understanding of what job satisfaction means among educators.

**Researcher Description**

My interest in this topic is personal. I am a preschool educator who had worked for the three years prior to this study in different schools that shared common problems: high attrition and turnover rates. I observed that these schools had a constant shortage of teachers and that the vacant positions were either filled with less-qualified educators or remained vacant. I wanted to explore what it is that makes educators stay and what it is that makes them walk away. In 2019, I participated in one of my graduate-level courses in a class research project in Northern California. We investigated specific factors that contribute to helping PK-12 teachers thrive and remain in the profession.

When I looked at the data, I was astounded to realize that there was nearly a one-to-one correlation to Maslow’s hierarchy-of-needs theory. The themes were all related to need and motivation factors that led educators to stay in the profession. I wanted to learn more about this possible connection and wondered if there was a relationship between need factors and job satisfaction. I wanted to build on the existing data and connect it with Maslow’s motivation theory, using the hierarchy of needs as a framework and lens to detect possible factors that may lead to educators' job satisfaction.
Worldview

The worldview that influenced the design and practice of this research is social constructivism. Jackson and Sorensen (2016) defined social constructivism as a “set of ideas, a body of thought, a system of norms which certain people have arranged at a particular time and place” (p.62). The authors explained that these bodies of thoughts are happening in a human’s social world and that this world is intersubjective; it is meaningful to people who made this world and lived in this world, making them experts because they created it. The authors concluded that these intersubjective beliefs are based on shared beliefs, assumptions, and conceptions. The constructive research often focuses on the world in which people live and work and intends to analyze the ideas and meaning. Like Jackson and Sorenson, the author of this research felt that choosing constructivism would shed light on educators’ thoughts about their work and what they feel is important to them to experience job satisfaction. In addition, it would give the reader a contemporary idea about factors that lead to retention or high attrition rates.

Participants

Participants included 22 educators. Three of the educators were males, and 19 were females. All participants were from rural and urban areas in Northern California and were interviewed at the school site or off-site. I chose this sample size after I learned through my research that the sample number for a research design using interviews to gather data should include at least 20-30 people to be large enough to address the phenomena of interest and answer the research question (Shetty (2018).

Participant Recruitment Process

Potential participants were sent a formal invitation through e-mail explaining the research study: its purpose and the educator’s role in it (semi-structured protocol). Before an interview
began, participants were asked to ensure their full participation, consent, and understanding. Participants were informed that there was no compensation involved and were told that their interview would be recorded and then transcribed. They were informed that I would be taking notes during the interview to ensure the transcriptions' accuracy and that their participation had no impact on evaluations or their standing at the school. They were also told that their responses would be listened to by other researchers (all students involved in the class research project) and the professor. The participants were assured that their responses were not shared with administrators, school board members, students outside the class, or community members. I formed participants that it could be possible that some interview questions would make them feel uncomfortable and that if so, they were free to decline to answer them or to stop participation at any time. Finally, I asked participants if they had any questions before the interview began.

**Participant Characteristics**

All educators were current, tenured, and credentialed. All participants were PK-12 educators with work experience ranging from six to 37 years. Participants were both male and female. All of them worked in public schools.

**Materials and Procedure**

Data were collected through in-person, semi-structured interviews via a two-part questionnaire. Eighteen questions in total were asked. Part 1 focused on the participant’s background, while Part 2 focused on their experiences and feelings. Participants were interviewed for approximately 60-90 minutes. The educators were audio-recorded digitally on phones or tablets. After the audio recording, the researchers then transcribed the recording. The intention of using interviews as an instrument was to bring forth views and opinions from the participants. The gathered information was always on a password-protected computer or cell
phone. All data collected throughout the study (including demographic information, interview notes, and transcribed interviews) were kept confidential. Teacher numbers were ascribed to each participant instead of names. The researchers made sure that any mentions of specific names and employers were removed from the interview transcript. The data, audio recordings, and transcripts were kept for a year, after which they were destroyed.

The data collected from the educators showed why educators stay in their profession; I used these data to qualitatively investigate the possible relationship of the educators’ perceptions about their job satisfaction and motivation to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. To do this, I first re-read all transcripts to get more familiarized with the content. From this re-reading, I identified one additional theme/code and two other subcodes that reoccurred in the transcripts. These themes helped answer the research question, “What are the factors that determine educators’ perception of job satisfaction?” in the light of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The theme that I added was job security, with two additional sub-themes: the social impact educators made on the community and educators’ well-being.

This approach is explained by DeVault (2019), proposing that the creation of concept-based codes is found in the research questions with the use of the analytical framework. She explains that “the researcher works through narrative and codes the text according to theoretical reasoning” (DeVault, 2019). After identifying the codes and sub-codes, the participant’s quotes were then extracted to display their perspectives and quotations. Themes were identified and based on the subject matter; they were classified into the five levels of Maslow’s needs categories. One interview question in the questionnaire was: “Have you ever thought about leaving the teaching profession?” This question was analyzed but not considered as useful to identify a need. However, the responses to this question contributed to the importance of need
fulfillment as a stabilizing factor to keep educators in the teaching profession. Therefore, the data of this analysis were used in the findings section.

**Analysis of the Coding**

Medelyan (2020) describes coding as a procedure of labeling and organizing qualitative data. She explains that through this process, the researcher can then identify themes and the relationships between them. Creswell (2018) describes the necessary steps to accomplish a successful coding process. For this study’s coding process, I first used a deductive coding process from the 2019 research that I was part of. As I previously mentioned, I saw a direct correlation between the educators’ answers in the interview about why educators remain in their profession and Maslow’s human motivation theory. Based on these findings, I decided to use predefined codes and assigned them to my qualitative study. This approach is also known as concept-driven coding. These codes addressed the six themes:

1) Administrative support
2) Peer relations
3) Love for students
4) The educator’s recognition of their strength
5) The purpose of teaching
6) Work and life balance

**Methodological Integrity**

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) considered the researcher an instrument of the data collection and explained that it is collected through this human instrument. For the study to be trusted, the
reader must understand the human instrument. For this reason, the researcher needs to reflect on
his or her bias, values, and culture (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In my own experience working
as an early childhood educator, I always felt that administrators needed to pay more attention to
staff members individually. I believe that each educator has different needs and must have the
chance to express those needs to administrators to feel satisfied. In my experience, open-door policies and the practice of a positive culture in a workplace are crucial to keeping educators in
their schools. If everyone is treated the same way despite their special uniqueness, educators feel
neither acknowledged nor valued.

In reflecting on my feelings as an educator, I realized that I experienced job satisfaction
the most when I had a supportive work environment, a balanced workload, and an appreciation
for my work by administrators and colleagues. My experience may shape the interpretation of
this study. It may direct me to themes that would provide evidence to support my position on
possible factors that I have experienced that can lead to job satisfaction. To avoid bias, I began
with the codes found in the data that were identified as a class effort with 19 other people
participating in the coding process. This is called deductive coding (starting with a predefined set
of codes). The class research coding procedures were done with an inductive coding process
(open coding process) taken directly from the interview responses. Using the predefined codes
for my study helps to remove possible bias during my coding process.
Findings

Physiological Needs

A Sense of Well-being: Work and Life Balance

Many educators discussed the importance of maintaining a work and life balance to experience job satisfaction. This theme relates to Maslow's description of physiological needs and was described in terms of having more time, setting boundaries and practicing self-care. It was also described as a supportive family and the ability to work from home when necessary. Educator 18 discussed the need for having more time and not having too much of a workload waiting at home as follows:

I think that being a teacher, you do have an outstanding work-life balance as well. And especially in what I teach, I can help with after-school sports and things like that and not have a huge grading load to come home to every day. (Educator 18)

Educator #19 discussed this as well, as she talked specifically about setting boundaries and how to practice self-care. In this way, she focused on her basic physiological needs. Here is what she said in her interview:

I tell parents at back-to-school night: If you email me, I will try as hard as I can to answer you that day, as long as it's Monday through Friday, by 5pm, because I don't work at night and I don't work on the weekends. The other thing is... knowing how to draw boundaries. To say, no, I don't want to be ...on this committee? No, that's not going to work for me...and to be able to take care of me. I need to take time to eat my lunch, and unless it’s raining, to do it outside. I just need to be ... out under the sky. That’s one way I'll take care of myself or make sure that I get exercise... and to not listen to a bunch of negative stuff from the staff ... kind of all those things.
In addition to setting boundaries, several educators discuss how their families supported them in doing enjoyable things outside of work, and how being able to do things outside of work hours helped their work-life balance. The quote below by educator 6 is representative of several comments focused on this topic.

I have a family of three. My husband and three boys and I have my own intermediate family that are close by, so we try to combine a lot of that and my own personal, um, well-being and taking care of myself like doing things I like to do ...like finishing off and doing my work even outside of school hours.

Safety Needs

A Sense of Job Security

Here, educators discussed the importance of being tenured in providing a sense of security, both economic and in terms of a secure place of belonging. An example of comments around this theme comes from Educator #14, who discussed how being tenured provided more opportunities and how this changed her performance and views on being an educator.

Since I became tenured, I have taken on a great deal more responsibility. The school has given me much more leadership roles…and it has become much more a part of my entire life, as I devote myself to students sporting events and clubs.

This view was echoed by Educator #2, who expressed that being tenured provided a sense of job security. As she put it,

I think things will get better. The longer you teach and after you become tenured, things are a little more secure ...you have more confidence in what you're doing, and you have more backing from the union. There's no backing from the union at all if you're not, if you're not tenured.
Educator #6 looked at tenure as the ability to feel explained that being tenured empowered her to be a better advocate for herself and others.

Before I got tenured, they would... remind you that you are not tenured; you should not be involved in this. You should step back and let the other teachers that are tenured follow through with these actions in terms of whatever rights that were or are there in situations that were happening at the time, because the administration of the district could say, hey you are not tenured, and we do not like what you are, what you are doing right now. So, you are out of here or what not.

And finally, several educators talked about the need for financial and retirement security. An example is from educator #9 who stated,

The biggest factor that keeps me teaching now is that I am seven years from retirement, six years before retirement. If I maintain my position for those years, I will retire with a nice benefit package.

**Love, Affection, and Belongingness Needs**

*Theme 1: Administrator Support*

The majority of participants discussed the importance of administrative support and links to the need for love, affection and belongingness in Maslow’s hierarchy. Educators discussed the importance of administrative support and the importance of relationships with their peers and their students. Some of the comments by educators related to theme included one by educator #8. She stated that “I feel that I'm supported by the administration. If I need some help, I can always ask for it, and they are there for me.” Educator #14 concurred, stating that Educator #14 talked about a positive relationship with the administration. My relationship with my administration has overall been positive. I feel that the school has solid leadership and
support structure for teachers. And finally, educator # 5 talked about how the administration valued the educator’s expertise. This statement summed up why educators valued administrative support:

It's more like we're on the same playing field. I am your boss, so I need to make the final decision, but I want your input, and no task is underneath me. And I think that changes how you view the principal when it's like, wow, you're willing to get to do this with me. It makes a huge difference.

**Theme 2: Educator’s relationship to peers**

This theme is also related to the need for love, affection and belongingness in Maslow’s hierarchy and links to the need for love, affection, and belongingness. It is specifically related to the need for work relationships, the importance of peer support and peer relationships and collaboration. Here is what educator #4 said about relationships with supportive peers.

I love my colleagues! We have a good relationship. With my Kindergarten team. We get along well. We meet up each week to check in and have PLCs. We also meet to prep the whole month and make copies with each other. We also plan for the whole month at the end of each month. We are constantly talking and checking in.

Educator #16 talked about the value of having a collaborative relationship with peers.

What I value most is the collaborative nature of the department that I'm in there. Their strength and their support have helped me be successful in my teaching over the past 27 years. I've been together with three of the teachers for almost 20 years. And finally, educator # 1 talked about the friendship with peers and how they became a community within the school community.

We're such a small school, we've really created a good family-like climate. We don't
just talk to each other at work. We text each other on the weekends. We go on
hikes together. We see each other in the summers, too. And because we're a small
school, we depend on each other so much. Even if they're in a different grade level, I can
talk to anyone here and we're able to support each other through our
small group work that we do for professional development. We’re able to
help one another. We have a strong-knit community.

Theme 3: Educator's relations with students

This was the third theme related to the need for love, belongingness, and affection. Participants
described this aspect of a sense of belongingness as they described their love for and
relationships with their students as contributing to their job satisfaction. Here is how educator
#19 described her relationships with students.

I still love teaching kids. What I really love is creating a classroom community. I love
what I feel and have always felt the absolute most important thing in education is a
relationship. Like, if I have a relationship with you, no matter how screwed up your
family is or what kind of learning problems you have, or you're on the spectrum or
whatever, if I have a relationship with you, then I can teach you something. I really
believe that and, I’m finding, that a big thing now in education is relationships; so
important.

Educator #17 framed her relationships through the lens of being an advocate for her students.
She said, “We are talking about kids like they are bad, right? What if nobody stands up
for them?... I want to advocate for students who are pigeon-holed as bad kids.” Her commitment
to her students was framed by her relationship to them. And finally, educator# 3 talked about
caring for students by creating a safe environment for them to learn and to feel loved. Here is what they said:

I went into [education] just [wanting to make] kids love learning and love each other and bring that kindness out because our world is just changing so much. And it's hard...And so I think having that safe spot for kids, where they can learn and feel safe and be loved by others is important.

Their comments reflect what Weiss (1999) discovered: A supportive environment by administration, positive relationship and collaboration with peers, and a love for students and teaching, may be factors for educators to feel satisfied in their profession and are related to teachers’ motivation to stay in the profession. It seemed that the sense of belonging may have been instilled through positive support and relationships with members of the school community.

**Esteem Needs**

The needs for esteem can be measured through knowledge of perceived strengths such as patience and social impact.

**Theme 1: Educator’s self-reported strengths**

Educators mentioned strengths such as patience, being organized, and deep knowledge of their content. All of these qualities have been shown by research to exemplify the qualities of excellent educators. (Walker, 2018) Here is what educator # 15 had to say about the quality of patience that she perceived herself to have:

I am extremely patient. I'm very understanding. I don't have an expectation that is out of the box for someone, even if it is if they feel it is. So, I'm very good at seeing the bigger picture and being able to break it down in a very much comprehensible way that makes everybody feel good. I think that's a big strength that I have.
Educator #7 talked about being organized and how it was both important to her, and a perceived strength. Here is what she said:

I also... want things to be nice and... want things to be... perfect and pretty. I think that's important, trying to be organized, trying to be structured, trying to make things look nice... that's an important quality.

And finally, Educator # 21 talked about her ability to meet the challenges of being a good teacher, stating that she viewed herself as “a natural teacher.”

I've always loved teaching because it's a challenge. Every day is a challenge. It's not repetitive at all. My strength...is that I'm very knowledgeable in my subjects. And I'm, just a natural teacher. I'm friendly. So, I think the students like to connect with me. I've always been a good teacher and I'm good at languages, and I like the kids.

**Theme 2: Social Impact**

Another aspect of the need for esteem relates to a person’s perceived social impact. Here, educators stressed the social impact they have made in their community. For example, educator #3 talked about the importance of inviting members of the community into the classroom.

A huge part of teaching is about bringing in the community and bringing parents into the room, working with... the PTO, and any adult outside of the classroom. Just welcoming them in and having them be a part of the learning progress.

Educator # 1 talked about making a difference for families.

A lot of our families don’t have the academic backgrounds; they are low economic, and they have... a second language at home. So, these communities are different. I feel...I make a difference for these families.
Self-Actualization

Maslow described self-actualization as the realization of one’s potential, and the development of one’s abilities and appreciation for life. Two themes emerged that describe participants’ sense of self-actualization. The first was a sense of purpose/identity and the second was continued professional growth.

Theme 1: Purpose/Identity

Here is what educator #14 said about her “inner calling” to become an educator.

I have always known I wanted to be a teacher. I was the type of kid if a student missed a day of class, I always wanted to help. Even in cheerleading, I was captain of the team, and if any kid forgot a move or missed a session, I was super-helpful in wanting to show them what they missed. I have always been...the teacher’s pet and wanted to please the teacher. It is just something I always loved to do. Even when I was playing house, school, or doctor when I was little, I always wanted to be a teacher.

Several educators talked about knowing since they were children that they wanted to become educators and that this “knowing” becomes the identity of oneself. Here is how educator #5 explained it:

When I was a little girl, I'd always wanted to be a teacher. And then in Santa Barbara I did after-school programs, and I did a preschool program and fell in love with it ...I really want to be a teacher. I worked in a Kindergarten class to get volunteer hours, and just fell in love with it. I think the biggest factor that keeps me teaching is that it's my career. I think part of it is the seniority. I love teaching, and I love the kids. How scary would that
be to leave this job and try something new? Because I'm familiar with it, and now I have experience. I feel it becomes your identity...who would I be if I'm not a teacher? What if I wanted to go try this other path, but so much... of me has been invested because you give so much of yourself. That's probably the biggest factor. It does become a part of who you are.

Educator # 6 agreed and talked about playing being an educator as a child and becoming an educator as an adult.

   Early on as a kid, I just practiced being a teacher with my siblings, and my mom. At the time, I was in a daycare, and I remember taking home old booklets the teacher didn’t want anymore, and bringing them home, and having play teaching. From early on I enjoyed being a teacher and would use the garage as my classroom and the garage door as my white board and... I just enjoyed that. I didn’t know that was something I would be doing when I entered high school and then college. I always would catch myself wanting to help others, and I think that intrigued me.

Theme 2: Educators’ professional growth

In addition to a sense of self-identity as a key component of their sense of purpose, participants also talked about the importance of continued training within the school organization. Here is what educator #14 said:

   I believe that staff training on a weekly constant basis is vital. That way, teachers and administrators can constantly keep each other updated on the progress of their school goals or the progress of what standards they feel like the school needs to improve upon.

Educator # 5 talked about her love of training and how it motivated her to stay in the teaching profession.
And I do love it...I do love being a part of the community, and so I feel that I need to find things that will sustain me within the teaching field like going to new trainings, or trying out new lessons with the kids and...doing that kind of stuff. Maybe stepping up into roles that I didn’t think I was quite ready for. So, I think that’ll help me to keep that motivated.

**Analysis of Findings**

The analysis of participants’ quotes and individual perspectives in the light of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs led to more clarity as to why these educators decided to stay in their profession. One common denominator was a positive culture within the school organization, because not only was it closely connected to all variables found in this research, but it also was the driving force for educators to stay in their profession. Confeld (2016) described the importance of school culture as a place of shared values, where traditions and beliefs are reflected by supervisors and educators alike. She explained that academic success in students is based on a culture that promotes an inviting, challenging, and safe environment for all members of the school community.

The factors identified in this study helped to clarify what educators need to be motivated in their work environment; the research alone could not produce a specific definition of how educators define job satisfaction. Job satisfaction and human needs are determined by people’s unique life circumstances and can often be influenced by issues in people’s personal lives and inner emotional state of mind. Therefore, instead of an exact definition of job satisfaction, I conceptualize educator job satisfaction as educators’ positive response to their work environment and their ability to self-actualize.
Finally, the research findings helped to answer the research question, “What are the factors that determine educators’ perception of job satisfaction?” The following variables were identified:

- Administrative support
- Positive peer relations
- Purpose and identity
- Personal growth within the school organization
- Job security
- Healthy self-perception
- Balanced life and work environment

**The importance of administrative support and relationships with peers.** By far, the most mentioned variables were the importance of administrative support and the importance of relationships with their peers with 71% of the participants mentioning one or both of these variables. Maslow mentioned that people will strive to meet the need for relationships with great intensity since this need represents belongingness in educators’ social interactions and environment (Maslow, 1954). The sub-themes related to the theme were trust and support from the administration, the positive relationship to the administration, and the importance of feeling valued based on the educator’s expertise. Littrell, Billingsley, and Cross (1991) found that encouraging educators’ participation in decision-making about school issues, fostering a sense of the educator’s importance, and giving feedback about an educator’s performance are critical factors that influence an educator’s decision to stay in their profession. In addition, research findings suggest that the principal’s support also enhanced educators’ well-being and job satisfaction. Based on this, it may be safe to assume that effective administrative support and
skilled leadership strengthen the feeling of belongingness in educators. Existing research suggests that leaders who trust and support their educators, and who are knowledgeable and efficient managers, were more likely to have been able to retain educators in their schools (Marinell & Coca, 2021).

Another important factor was the educator’s relationship to their peers. The research findings suggest that having good relationships with colleagues and sharing common goals and values within the workforce created not only a sense of being part of a team, but it also created a sense of belonging and community. The importance of friendship in the workforce was investigated by Riordan and Griffeth (1995). Their findings were that employees’ perception of friendship opportunities in the workplace have direct effects on job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. The study by Skaalvik and Scaalvik (2016) explained that a lack of belonging can also create psychological stressors that may lead to emotional exhaustion, which can motivate educators to leave the profession.

**Purpose, identity, and the need to grow professionally.** 38% of the educators talked about their purpose and identity, as well as the need to grow professionally. Maslow identified the self-actualization need as a growth need. He explained that the need to self-actualize in the work environment is the need to have the ability to grow, to be challenged but not to be overwhelmed, and equally important, to find a place where people feel fulfilled and aligned with their values (Maslow, 1954). The educators talked about their inner calling, their purpose of being an educator, and the importance of training to achieve advancement and growth in their school organization. The inner calling could be explained as one’s true self. These findings are aligned with existing research. Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010) demonstrated that one’s true self could also be defined as authenticity, an alliance between a person’s behavior and perception of
the true self. The researchers explained that the sense of doing something meaningful results from the fulfillment of being and staying authentic (Rosso et al., 2010, p.108 as cited in Martela & Pessi, 2018).

Personal growth was another factor found in this research and is closely connected to a person’s inner calling, since the desire for self-growth in the organization of choice will bring employees closer to the sense of being “the best that one can be.” Training often leads to personal growth and enables employees to master challenges, gain freedom, and have more opportunities to practice their autonomy. It seems that the educators in this research understood the value of training as a tool to satisfy their needs. Wilson and Madsen (2008) explained in their study the importance that trainees must understand the link between their learning and satisfying their needs. They found that if employees do not understand the connection between the two, the interest in learning may vanish due to a lack of motivation.

**The need to feel safe.** Thirty-three percent of the educators talked about the need to feel safe. The safety need was expressed by the importance of being financially secure and of being tenured, which gave them a sense of having job security. The teachers understood the importance of seniority and displayed financial literacy. This made me understand that motivation and job satisfaction was both intrinsic and extrinsic. Damion Lovett (2020), the director of the financial education program at the University of South Florida, emphasized the importance of financial literacy, explaining that financial literacy affects all aspects of a person’s life (Lovett, 2020 as cited in Rose, 2020).

**Making a difference.** Twenty-nine percent of the educators mentioned that making a difference in students’ lives, making a personal contribution to the field of education, and connecting with their community were the main factors keeping them in their profession. Roberts
(2015) explained that self-esteem can be beneficial for an organization. Employees with high levels of self-esteem trust their own thinking and know about their own strength, which ultimately leads to better decision-making. In her opinion, employees who have these qualities contribute more to the work environment since they can focus more on others and their development, rather than focusing and questioning their own performance (Morgan Roberts, 2015). The researcher Von Kaenel (2015) found that mental stress affected homeostasis and suggested that behavioral factors like positive mood might potentially lessen the acute stress response (von Kaenel, 2015). When asked what the biggest factors were to keep them in the profession, educators' response was happiness and the fun factor of their work. It was expressed by 24% of the educators during the interviews.

Although the factors identified in this study helped to understand better what educators need to be motivated in their work environment, the research could not produce a specific definition of how educators define job satisfaction.

Discussion

Research Limitations

This research had several limitations based on the nature of the study and the time this research was conducted. This study was qualitative research, using semi-structured interviews as a tool to collect data. The means used to evaluate the data were solely the researcher herself, and the evaluation of the data was based on her views, which could have weakened the validity of this study.

Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in the pre-COVID-19 era. Supposing this research had been conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the educators’ outlook on their needs in the work environment, as well as their perceived job satisfaction, might have looked
profoundly different. There are still a lot of unknowns about how COVID-19 will affect the work environment for educators in the future, and much work and research remain to be done to have a proper understanding about how school organizations can meet educators’ needs to increase job satisfaction to prevent high attrition rates during and after the pandemic era.

**Contribution to the Field of Education**

Despite these limitations, this research was able to contribute to existing research for a better understanding of what job satisfaction looks like among educators by using Maslow’s framework, the hierarchy of needs. The present study helped to identify educators' needs to help school organizations create a culture for educators to thrive and to remain in their schools. Although there is plenty of research to be found about job satisfaction in the work environment, there is little research about the connection between human motivation theories and job satisfaction in educators, and more research needs to be done to completely understand what the needs are in educators’ work environments that ultimately lead to job satisfaction.

This study may be considered for future research on this topic, with a bigger sample size to get a deeper understanding of educators’ needs within school organizations to reduce high attrition rates.

**Study Implications**

This research suggests that a positive school culture, which is often created by administrators of school organizations, must include paying close attention to educators’ needs, job satisfaction, and teacher retention. Administrative support is best demonstrated by supporting educators by encouraging positive relationships with peers and students. These relationships create a sense of belonging and strengthen the bond between administrators and educators.
Also, administrators can empower educators by giving them more autonomy, which, in return, make educators feel valued and appreciated. With a positive work culture in place, educators are more motivated and satisfied with the work they provide, leading to increased self-esteem. The increased sense of the educator’s own strength can then be deepened with ongoing training by the school organization, leading to professional growth and better advocacy for students.

In addition, existing research explains that employees are more conscious of healthy life outcomes than ever before and that organizational policies have a significant effect on the possible work-family conflict of employees. Research suggests that family and work conflict are considerably connected to the culture created by supervisors of work organizations (Kossek et al, 2001, Buddhaprya, 2005). Offering resources, such as where to find caregiver service, recommendations for good preschools, and offering time off in a case of an emergency, are all helpful tools to meet educators’ needs.

**Specific Recommendations:**

- Conduct surveys every three months that relate to Maslow’s hierarchy-of-needs theory
- Have an open-door policy to discuss possible problems that accrue in the work environment
- Celebrate educators’ birthdays and accomplishments at work
- Arrange events that create relationships among educators
- Support mentorship relationships with staff members
- Create a professional growth plan for each educator
- Offer support of any kind to create smooth workflow
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https://doi.org/10.1016/s0742-051x(99)00040-2

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00565-z


https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5050353/.
### Appendix A

#### Table 2

**Research Questions**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why did you become an educator and how do you feel about being a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Is this your first career? Second career? Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Please tell me about your teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Was your teaching experience different before and after becoming tenured?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Please describe the school settings in which you’ve worked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Describe the school cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Describe your relationships with your administrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Describe your relationships with your colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Describe the communities in which you’ve taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Have you ever thought about leaving the teaching profession? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What is the biggest factor that keeps you teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What are some of your personal strengths and strategies that have helped you to continue in education? For example: patience, empathy, work-life balance, self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What support from your peers, administration, or community members has helped you remain? What support do you value the most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What professional development or training have you participated in that has sustained you in the teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Have you ever thought about leaving the teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Figure 2

Qualitative Research Process

Researcher poses generalizations or theories from past experiences and literature

Researcher looks for broad patterns, generalizations, or theories from themes or categories

Researcher asks open-ended questions of participants or records field notes

Researcher looks for broad patterns, generalizations, or theories from themes or categories

Researcher gathers information (e.g., interviews, observations)

Three sources that were reviewed to gain multiple perceptions about educators’ job satisfaction and motivation.
Appendix D

Figure 4

The Process of Channeling Data through Codes, Themes, and Theories

Note. This is how the 2019 research on “why educators stay in their profession was conducted. “A streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry” Saldana (2016).
## Appendix E

### Table 3

Identified Codes as they relate to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator’s Work and Life Balance</td>
<td>● Time management&lt;br&gt;● Setting boundaries&lt;br&gt;● Self-care&lt;br&gt;● Having a family of their own</td>
<td>Physiological Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job – Security</td>
<td>● Educators being tenured&lt;br&gt;● Financial security&lt;br&gt;● Seniority</td>
<td>Safety Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>● Trust and support from supervisors&lt;br&gt;● Positive relationships with supervisors&lt;br&gt;● Value expertise</td>
<td>Love Affection, and Belongingness Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators’ relations to Peers</td>
<td>● Friendship and collaborative work with peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators’ relations to students</td>
<td>● Being an advocate for students&lt;br&gt;● Caring for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators’ self-reported strength</td>
<td>● Patience&lt;br&gt;● Organizational strength&lt;br&gt;● Empathy&lt;br&gt;● Social Impact</td>
<td>Esteem Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator’s purpose and identity</td>
<td>● Love for children</td>
<td>Self-Actualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Enthusiasm for learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Inner calling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Educator’s own experiences with schooling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator’s professional growth</td>
<td>● Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Eight codes and 22 themes were classified and merged into the five levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.
Appendix F

Table 4

Answers to the question “Have you ever thought about leaving the teaching profession?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number for each educator</th>
<th>Have you ever thought about leaving the teaching profession?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 4</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 5</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 6</td>
<td>did not answer the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 7</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 8</td>
<td>did not answer the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 9</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 10</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 11</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 12</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 13</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 14</td>
<td>did not answer the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 15</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 16</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 17</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 18</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 19</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20</td>
<td>did not answer the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 21</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Twenty-two educators were asked if they had ever thought about leaving the teaching profession.
Appendix G

Analysis of Table 5 in Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.

Answers to the question “What are the biggest factors that keeps you teaching?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1</th>
<th>Fun factor, love for kids, support of administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2</td>
<td>Joy of teaching, love for kids, sense of accomplishment, Success in learning outcome for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3</td>
<td>Happiness factor, making a difference in students’ lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 4</td>
<td>Fun job, love for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 5</td>
<td>Seniority, and being afraid of a new career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 6</td>
<td>Experience and confidence in oneself, contribution, own motivation helps the kids, love for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 7</td>
<td>Students, pers. contribution, pos. challenges, growth, seniority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 8</td>
<td>Benefit package for retirement, love the kids, close relationship with staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 9</td>
<td>Implementing new programs for benefit of students, self-fulfillment, and success in my profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 10</td>
<td>Love for children, consistent paycheck, fulfilling work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 11</td>
<td>Freedom, helping kids, relationships to families, paycheck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 12</td>
<td>Love of teaching, love for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 13</td>
<td>Pers. Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 14</td>
<td>Making a difference connectedness, pers. reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 15</td>
<td>Intrinsic reward, excitement of teaching students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 16</td>
<td>Advocacy for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 17</td>
<td>The love of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 18</td>
<td>Cannot afford to retire, I like my autonomy, fun job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 19</td>
<td>Benefits, fun job, love for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 20</td>
<td>The love for students and helping them to progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table shows educator responses.
Appendix I

Table 6.1

Analysis of Table 6 in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love for students, helping students, and 15 educators mentioned the love of teaching as some of the main factors keeping them in their profession. (71%)</th>
<th>Love, Affection, and Belongingness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments, personal challenges to help them grow, self-fulfillment, autonomy, and freedom were mentioned by eight educators as some of the main factors keeping them in their profession. (38%)</td>
<td>Self-Actualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a difference in students’ lives and educator’s personal contribution to education and connecting with their community were mentioned by six educators as some of the main factors keeping them in their profession. (29%)</td>
<td>Esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five educators mentioned benefits package for educator’s retirement, paycheck, benefits, and the inability to afford to retire as some of the factors keeping them in their profession. (24%)</td>
<td>Safety Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two educators mentioned seniority as one of the main factors keeping them in their profession. (9.5%)</td>
<td>Safety Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five educators mentioned fun job and happiness factor as some of the main factors keeping them in their profession. (24%)</td>
<td>Physiological Need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages of educators who named each factor that made them stay in their profession. These answers were then linked to the need factors to which they belonged.