THE HIGH COST OF LEAVING: VETERAN TEACHERS IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

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Utilizing a traditional qualitative approach, this study explored the experiences of veteran teachers in Islamic private schools and their retention decisions through the lens of the job embeddedness framework, which examines the attachment factors that keep people in their positions through three distinct dimensions *(Links, Fit, and Sacrifice)* The participants in this study include eight veteran teachers with five or more years' experience teaching at the same school and two current principals. The study site is a private, well-established, K-12 Islamic school in North Texas. The participants engaged in semi-structured, in-depth interviews to share their motivations for remaining at their school. Findings from this study revealed that the participants experienced a high level of comfort and compatibility with the school mainly due to its Islamic mission, shared goals, and culture, and because of their deep-rooted connections in the community. Despite encountering many challenges that mainly resulted from the financial health of the school, the participants remained committed to working at the school due to the high cost of leaving and the disruptions they anticipated encountering if they left (*sacrifice*). The study contributes to the limited research on teachers' retention in Islamic private schools.

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DEDICATION

This Ph.D. has been truly a family project and would have been impossible without the support of my amazing five children and to my husband, Nizar Almasri, my rock. I could not have survived this journey without your unconditional support and encouragement. Thank you for believing in my ability, for lifting me up when all seemed impossible, and for always reminding me, "if someone can do it, you can." To my amazing grown children, Rema and Susan, thank you for listening and sharing your thoughts about my research during dinner table times and for editing my work. To Sammy, Yasmeen, and Ameen, thank you for keeping me motivated and for understanding when "mama" needed time away from family to do her schoolwork. I am very blessed to have every one of you. I couldn't have asked for better children.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention continues to be a challenge in the field of education for both public and private schools. Recent studies show that in the United States, 16 percent of teachers leave the field each year (Broughman et al., 2017; Sutcher et al., 2019; Thomas & Hammond, 2019), and an average of 25 percent resign within their first five years on the job (Broughman et al., 2017). This rate of turnover translates to an estimated annual shortage of 112,000 teachers (Sutcher et al., 2019). Further, the number of educators changing professions is expected to increase through 2025 (Houdyshell, 2019).

Inability to retain teachers poses numerous problems in education (Ingersoll et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). For instance, high teacher turnover negatively impacts students' academic progress due to the disruption of learning and "inevitably" results in poor academic performance (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 6). Evidence revealed that schools that experienced higher teacher turnover scored poorly on state exams in tested subjects across grade levels (i.e., reading, mathematics, and science) (Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2019). Additionally, the loss of knowledge and expertise of skilled departing teachers (Carr et al., 2017; Latifoglu, 2016) may lead school leaders to lower their standards to fill openings by hiring inadequately trained teachers, using more substitutes, or canceling classes (Tran & Smith, 2020).

As a result of these issues, considerable research has focused on why teachers leave the public-school classroom (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). Tran and Smith (2020) indicated that high turnover among teachers could be the result of retirement, raising a family, spousal job relocation, or leaving due to negative causes related to

"dissatisfaction with the work conditions" (p. 86). Other researchers included reasons such as pressures linked to state-mandated testing, lack of opportunities for advancement, student discipline issues, dissatisfaction with salary, lack of input in school policies, insufficient administrative support, and inadequate induction programs (Gaikhorst et al., 2014; He et al., 2015; Mee & Haverback, 2014; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2019). Thus, the reasons for leaving the field of education vary greatly from personal needs to school and even classroom-related issues.

While numerous studies concentrated on teacher attrition, limited research focused on factors that make teachers stay at their jobs (Baroudi et al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Glazer, 2018). Glazer (2018) and Chiong et al. (2017) pointed out the importance of learning about the positive reasons that keep teachers motivated as part of understanding teacher attrition. Other researchers reported that positive interpersonal relationships with other colleagues, administrative support, teachers' participation in decisions about teaching practices and school policies, finding a sense of purpose in teaching, and overall satisfaction in making a difference in students' lives contributed to teacher retention (He et al., 2015; Ingersoll, 2001; Podolsky et al., 2016). Because teachers' decisions to remain at their jobs may be influenced by various factors, it is critical to better understand their motivations so policymakers and educators can keep "talent and experience" in place (Chiong et al., 2017, p.1084).

Most studies explored teachers in public schools (Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2019), while the research on private schools is scant (Jones & Watson, 2017, Broughman et al., 2019). Yet, there are 34,576 private schools, of which 70% are parochial (primarily Catholic), accounting for 25% of the nation's schools and 10% of elementary and secondary students (Broughman et al., 2017). Additionally, the available

research on private schools does not focus on teacher retention. Rather, it investigates school characteristics related to job satisfaction (Broughman et al., 2019), comparing public and private school education (Gius, 2015; Harfitt, 2015; Small, 2020), and why parents choose private schools (Cheng et al., 2016; Egalite & Wolf, 2016), and characteristics of private schools (Broughman et al., 2019).

Further, much of the research on teacher retention in private schools is dated (O'Keefe, 2003; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005) and focuses primarily on Catholic schools (Cimino, 2001; Convey, 2014; O'Keefe, 2003). Studies on teacher retention at Catholic schools are mostly quantitative and thus may not truly reveal the "depth and complexities of teachers' lives and careers" (Harfitt, 2015, p. 25). While some existing studies have compared the differences in teacher satisfaction and motivation between public and Catholic schools (Harfitt, 2015; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Przygocki, 2004), most only addressed intrinsic motivators that lead teachers to stay, such as identity factors, Catholic schools' missions, and spiritual connections (Convey, 2014; O'Keefe, 2003; Tamir, 2014). Though results from these studies may have implications for Catholic school administrators, further research is needed to examine if these results apply to different religious schools in the United States (Convey, 2014).

Islamic Schools in America

Although there is considerable literature about Islam and Muslims in the United States due to the rapid growth of the American Muslim population (Callaway, 2010; Clauss et al., 2013), little has been reported to inform educators of the needs of private Islamic school students (Callaway, 2010; Clauss et al., 2013; Keyworth, 2012; Merry & Driessen, 2005). Like other private religious schools in the United States, Islamic schools do not receive state or federal funding, resulting in having far smaller budgets to support students' and teachers' needs. Small

budgets also translate to lower teacher salaries and the inability to provide adequate resources that enhance teacher effectiveness (Hibbert, 2020; Ingersoll, 2003; Merry & Driessen, 2005). Merry and Driessen (2005) reported that most Islamic schools "do not have a library or extracurricular activities. Institutional developments are slow, schools are understaffed, and corresponding standards in many schools are poor" (p. 424). All of which negatively impact teachers' satisfaction. In addition, unlike other parochial schools, full-time Islamic schools are considered to be a relatively new addition to the K-12 educational landscape in the United States and thus have lower student enrollment contributing to their financial difficulties (Keyworth, 2012, Merry & Driessen, 2005). However, despite these challenges, many teachers are committed to working in these schools because of their "noble aims" (Merry & Driessen, 2005, p. 424).

Further, the mission of Islamic schools is the reason why more parents choose to send their students to these schools (Callaway, 2010; Clauss et al., 2013). They are not unique. "For years, Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant parents have withdrawn their children from public schools to preserve their religious identity and cultural norms" (Clauss et al., 2013, p.3). Similarly, when considering Islamic schools, Muslim parents also believe the private school will help preserve spiritual values and build a strong cultural and religious identity that is consistent with their home environments (Callaway, 2010; Clauss et al., 2013; Keyworth, 2012).

The growth of Islamic schools in the United States and the importance of fostering positive Islamic identities compel educators to understand the needs of this cultural group (Callaway, 2010; Merry & Driessen, 2005). "Muslims have become more visible in recent years and, like other immigrants, their stay on American soil made a great impact on American

society" (Clauss et al. 2013, p. 2). Yet, to date, very few studies have examined teacher retention in Islamic schools (e.g., Abd-El-Hafez, 2015; Ezzeldine, 2004).

Problem Statement

Teachers are leaving the field of education at a rapid rate, which may adversely affect students learning (Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). This critical issue has been the subject of much research. However, the focus has been on public schools, not private schools, and certainly not on parochial, private schools. Moreover, the available research on parochial schools is primarily on Catholic schools, not on other religiously affiliated institutions, such as Islamic schools (Abd-El-Hafez, 2015; Clauss, 2013 et al.; Keyworth, 2012). This is not surprising because compared to Catholic schools and other parochial schools, Islamic schools are relatively new in the United States (Callaway, 2010; Keyworth, 2012). Yet, according to the Pew Research Center and U.S. Census data, the Muslim population in the United States grew from 2.35 million people in 2007 to 3.45 million in 2017, accounting for 1.1% (Mohamed, 2018).

As the population has grown, so has the number of schools. A report by Keyworth (2012) indicated that there were 50 full-time Islamic schools in 1989. Still, according to the Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA), there are now 300 Islamic schools in the United States (S. Azmat, personal communication, November 12, 2021), representing a major increase in the last 30 years. The limited research that has been done on Islamic schools focused on the experiences of students (Callaway, 2010), parents' choice to send their children to these schools (Clauss et al., 2013), and the characteristics of Islamic schools (Keyworth, 2012). However, research on teacher retention is still in its early stages (Abd-El-Hafez, 2015; Ezzeldine, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

Given the importance of attracting and retaining quality teachers in private religious schools, the purpose of this study is to understand veteran teacher retention at one Islamic school in North Texas. The study will examine Islamic school teachers' experiences in these religious private schools. By understanding the deeper motivations of teachers who choose to work and remain in their jobs, school leaders may be able to retain their best teachers, thus improving the quality of education for this student population.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Job Embeddedness framework (JE), which examines the attachment factors that keep people in their positions (Lee and Nie, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001; Watson, 2018). Because it comes from outside the field of education, few studies sought to understand teacher turnover in public schools through the lens of this framework (e.g., Shibiti, 2019; Takawira et al., 2014). Yet, it offers a way to better understand teacher retention in schools. As defined by Lee and his colleagues, Job Embeddedness describes

"the extent of an employee's "stuckness" or enmeshing, within a larger system, and it results from numerous external (or contextual) forces – which are labeled links, fit, and sacrifice—in the organization and community that operate on a focal employee" (Lee et al., 2013).

The six dimensions of job embeddedness (i.e., on and off the job) are organized under three domains (Links, Fit, and sacrifice), as shown in Table 1. Lee et al. (2013) explained that links refer to having a high connection with other people and activities in the organization and community (e.g., church-related activities, membership in community organizations, years of service, and friends and groups at the workplace). Job fit relates to perceived comfort with the organization and community and the level of alignment between individuals' values, goals,

skills, and their organization's culture. The final element of the construct is *sacrifice*, which refers to the level of disruption an individual would experience and what they would have to give up if they decided to leave. Examples of disruption include loss of established relationships and connections, further distance to work location, undesired work environment, or forgoing opportunities for promotion.

The concept of Job Embeddedness is beneficial in this study because it offers a different perspective on teacher retention (Coetzer et al., 2018; Lee and Nie, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001; Watson, 2018). The embeddedness lens, with both off-the-job (e.g., the culture of the community, involvement in church, commute to work) and on-the-job factors (e.g., work conditions, pay, team cohesion), offers a novel way to explore teacher retention. The concepts of human connections through links, cultural connections through fit, and personal disruptions through sacrifice may provide a deeper understanding of the issue.

Table 1

Job Embeddedness theory adapted from Mitchell et al. (2001*) and Holtom & O'Neill (2004)*

Component	Definition
Fit	**Organization fit** describes employees' compatibility and comfort in the workplace. It includes the alignment between one's goals, personal values, skills and abilities, and " initial job choice and socialization" with that of the organization (Mitchell et al. 2001, p. 9). **Community fit** describes the level of comfort and alignment of the employee's goals, values, and worldviews with that of the community.
Links	**Organization links** relate to the personal connections and relationships within the workplace, which may include formal and informal connections with team members, supervisors, and other members of the organization. **Community links** include personal connections and relationships that extend beyond the workplace's boundaries, which may include family, religious and other social affiliations (e.g., church, service, activities) that tie the employee to the community.

Sacrifice	**Organization sacrifice** is the anticipated loss of material or psychological benefits that an individual may encounter if they leave their organization. It may include forgoing established patterns of working, loss of organizational links, job perks, stability, and advancement.
	Community sacrifice is the anticipated cost of material or psychological benefits that are forfeited by leaving the community, which may include further commute if relocating, changing established patterns of living, and the loss of community links.

Research Questions

The following questions and sub-questions will guide this study:

RQ 1: How do veteran teachers describe their experiences while teaching in a private Islamic school? (Reasons for teaching at a private Islamic school)?

RQ 2: How do veteran teachers describe their reasons for remaining at a private Islamic school? How do veteran teachers describe their roles, responsibilities, and relationships in the workplace and the community? (i.e., fit, links)

RQ 3: Do veteran teachers perceive they will encounter disruptions (i.e., sacrifice) if they leave their current school? If so, what are they, and how will these obstacles affect their retention decision?

Position of the Researcher

My interest in teacher retention in private schools stems from my past professional roles as an educator. My journey in education started in 1996 as an Arabic teacher at a small weekend school and then as a full-time elementary teacher. Though I always felt that teaching was my calling and enjoyed the rewards of working with students, as time went by, I wanted to step out of teaching to extend my reach beyond the classroom and join the administration world. My first position as an administrator started in 2008 as a curriculum director and an instructional coach. I did that for eight years. During this time, I completed my master's degree in Educational

Leadership and Policy Studies and earned the Texas principalship certification. At that point, I joined a full-time K-12 Islamic in North Texas as a high school academic counselor for a year. Then, I transitioned to Dean of Academics serving in the capacity of the high school principal at the same school. Driven by my passion for leading change, I accepted a position as a middle and high school principal in 2017 at another Islamic school in the surrounding area, which experienced a high principal and teacher turnover. I worked at this school for two years, 2017-2019.

As a teacher and later as an administrator, I saw many new teachers come and go, and there was no telling as to when or why a new teacher might leave. For instance, in my two years as a middle and high school principal, we had a newly hired English teacher who left after one month, a math teacher who left after only six weeks, and other teachers who moved after one semester or one year. I have experienced first-hand the challenges that come in the wake of departing teachers, including time spent recruiting and training new teachers and the stress inflicted on existing teachers, who sometimes took on additional teaching loads to cover classes until replacements were found. There were times when the school resorted to hiring out-of-field long-term substitutes to fill vacancies for an entire semester because we had an immediate need and could not wait for someone more qualified.

Teacher turnover is a challenge for school administrators and parents. Parents, rightfully, expect a quality education and a stable school environment for their children. I saw when the students came from upper-middle-class families, they could afford to hire personal tutors to fill the void and keep the students up-to-date with their academics. However, equity issues were more apparent among the student population who could not afford external tutors. As a result, those children lagged academically (as reflected in the schools' benchmarks and state exams). I

suspect that high teacher turnover was among the factors that contributed to the learning gaps for

these less-advantaged students.

To better understand the reasons behind teacher departure, the school's human resources

office used to conduct exit interviews with departing teachers. Unfortunately, these interviews

did not reveal much about the teachers' decisions to leave. In some cases, departing teachers

reported that they left primarily due to family-related circumstances or financial reasons.

However, not all teachers indicated the reasons behind their decisions to go, which made me

question if other school-related factors could have contributed to their departure and if the school

could have done anything to encourage their retention.

I believe it is hard to retain teachers due to low salaries and lack of other financial

benefits (i.e., insurance and retirement plans). However, I often wondered why some teachers

decided to leave while most veteran teachers (e.g., those with five or more years of experience)

persisted. It is my hope that by using the Job Embeddedness construct while examining the lived

experiences of the teachers who continue to work at one private Islamic school that this study

will add to the research on teacher retention.

Key Terms and Definitions

Fit: Refers to teachers' level of comfort and compatibility within the culture of their school and

the outer community. Fit also refers to the level of alignment between one's "goals, values,

future plans" (Watson, 2018, p. 30) with that of their organization.

Islamic School: A parochial school founded on the teachings of Islam.

Job Embeddedness Framework (JE), as referred to in this study: Collection of on-the-job or off-

the-job factors are categorized into three dimensions: fit, links, and sacrifice. To understand the

level of individual embeddedness, JE considers the three dimensions within the workplace (on the job) and within the community (off-the-job) (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Links: Refers to teachers' human connections with members of the school (e.g., colleagues, principal, staff, and students) and the surrounding community (e.g., parents).

Parochial Schools: Any private religious school (e.g., Catholic, Jewish, Islamic).

Sacrifice: Teachers' perception of what they would be losing when leaving their jobs (e.g., cost of relocating, missing out on potential opportunities for promotion, loss of connections).

Teacher retention: The continuing employment of teachers in specific schools.

Veteran Teacher: In this study, teachers with five or more years of experience are veteran teachers.

Significance of the Study

Research shows that retaining good teachers has the most significant influence on students' achievement (Carr et al., 2017; Hammond, 2003; Latifoglu, 2016). By understanding the lived experiences of teachers at Islamic schools and the motivating factors that keep them committed, Islamic school leaders may be better equipped to provide conditions that improve teacher satisfaction and retention. Moreover, the findings from this study may be informative about teacher retention practices in other schools (e.g., parochial and non-parochial private schools) and help fill the gap in the research on private religious schools.

Summary

Because of the adverse effects on student learning, teacher retention in public and private schools is a concern for educators. While there is research on factors contributing to teacher retention in public schools, there is a gap in research on the private school sector despite their growing numbers. The available research on private schools primarily covers Catholic schools

leaving a void in research on other religious schools such as Islamic schools. This study will examine the experiences of veteran teachers to understand what contributes to their satisfaction and longevity, thus addressing the research gap and informing the retention practices at these schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study seeks to understand teacher retention through the experiences of veteran

teachers working in Islamic private schools despite the familiar challenge of low pay in parochial

schools (Convey, 2014; O'Keefe, 2003; Tamir, 2014). Because of the limited literature on

private, parochial schools in the United States, this review of the relevant literature is organized

broadly into the following sections: 1) the factors influencing teacher retention; 2) the effect of

workplace conditions on teacher retention; 3) motivations for teaching at private schools; and 4)

an overview of the Job Embeddedness framework (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Factors Influencing Teacher Retention

Researchers have found that public and private school teachers' decisions to enter and

remain in the field are influenced by several aspects of job satisfaction (e.g., Gultekin & Acar,

2014; Tahseen, 2015), including intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Akhtar et al., 2010; Baroudi et

al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Njiru, 2014). The following paragraphs provide an overview of the

research regarding factors influencing teacher retention: a) extrinsic-related factors such as

salaries and student-teacher ratio, family needs, and past experiences, and b) intrinsic-related

factors including autonomy, self-efficacy, and school cohesion.

Researchers found one of the most significant extrinsic factors affecting retention is the

considerable disparities in teachers' salaries compared to other professions requiring similar

levels of postsecondary education (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020; Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et

al., 2019). On average, teachers earned 10%–35% less than professionals in other occupations

(Allegretto & Mishel, 2020, Podolsky et al., 2016). Further, teachers' wages fluctuated among

different types of schools and across states (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020), so there was a range

within the profession. Factors cited as affecting pay level included poverty levels in the student population, rural or urban locations, private or public-school status (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020), and the state's cost of living (Sutcher et al., 2019).

Salary gaps appear even greater in private schools due to their limited funds (Convey, 2014; Hibbert, 2020; Przygocki, 2004; Tamir, 2014). Most teachers are motivated by their love of teaching and do not "enter teaching with expectations of becoming wealthy" (Podolsky et al., 2016, p.22). Still, teachers expect to earn a salary that allows them to sustain desired lifestyles (Podolsky et al., 2016), a fair financial reward for their services (Przygocki, 2004), and the ability to meet their financial obligations (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). As teachers' wages continue to fall behind, attracting and keeping qualified teachers becomes more challenging (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020). Thus, addressing salary inequities becomes imperative for school leaders seeking to improve teacher retention (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020; Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019) to "ensure that the brightest, most highly skilled professionals" (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020, p.10) are in every classroom.

In addition to teachers' salaries, student-teacher ratios and workloads are considered extrinsic factors influencing teachers' motivations to remain in the profession (Gius, 2015, Sutcher et al., 2019). For instance, there were lower retention rates when teachers had to manage larger classes making it more difficult for them to complete basic tasks such as lesson preparation and grading, which led to higher stress levels (Cheng et al., 2016). Conversely, smaller class size has been highlighted as a reason for some private school teachers' job satisfaction, as reported by Gius (2015) and Akhtar et al. (2010), suggesting that teachers may be willing to make a financial tradeoff when other working conditions are optimal (Gius, 2015).

Among other extrinsic motivators that attract teachers to the field is the ability to afford more time with family and enjoy similar schedules (Baroudi et al., 2020; Convey, 2014; Przygocki, 2004). For example, Convey (2014) found that while religious factors (e.g., school mission, ministry roles) were essential motivators for teachers' choices to teach in Catholic schools, many teachers in his study reported that compatibility with family responsibilities was another factor they considered. Similarly, in his review that examined teacher retention in all types of schools and aimed to inform retention strategies in Catholic schools, Przygocki (2004) found that many Catholic teachers attributed their decisions to work in an educational setting to "time compatibility" (p. 533). For example, teachers enjoyed "the number of vacations and holidays associated with teaching, weekends, summer vacations, and extended holiday breaks" (Przygocki, 2004, p. 533), adding that these external job perks were among the main contributors to teachers' career choice decisions.

In addition to perceiving teaching as a family-flexible career, researchers found that people's past experiences influenced their decisions to pursue a teaching job (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Houdyshell, 2019). For example, Hennessy and Lynch (2017) studied Irish teachers from five different disciplines to find out their motivations for entering the teaching field. The results of their study indicated that "prior teaching and learning experiences, as well as the perceived ability" (p.13) to teach, were among the key factors in the participants' career choices (p.13). Likewise, Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) sought to understand how pre-service teachers' background and characteristics and the quality of their training programs related to their motivation to become teachers. They found out that the quality of teachers' training programs related positively to their self-efficacy and interest in pursuing teaching as a long-term career. Among the background characteristics that affected emerging

teachers' career choices in his study, Houdyshell (2019) found that, in general, there was a change in parents' outlook on teaching, perceiving it as a less lucrative career path. For example, parents without a college degree were less likely "to favor their child becoming a teacher"(p. 22) due to their perceptions of the job demands and its lower financial rewards.

However, while extrinsic motivators play a significant role in teachers' decisions to enter and stay in the profession, many researchers found that intrinsic and altruistic influences were among the critical factors for pursuing this career (Baroudi et al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Eren, 2015; Njiru, 2014). They reported that teachers chose the field out of personal interest and because they found the teaching work enjoyable in and of itself (e.g., love for children) (Baroudi et al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Tamir, 2014) and having a personal passion for their subjects (Chiong et al., 2017).

Additionally, researchers found that most teachers are driven by their sense of responsibility for student learning outcomes and the ability to make a difference in students' lives (Aliakbari & Babanezhad Kafshgar, 2013; Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013; Matteucci et al., 2017; Parker, 2018). Lauermann and Karabenick (2013) explained that teachers felt bound by an "obligation and commitment to produce or prevent designated outcomes"(p. 127), including students' success or lack thereof, thus fulfilling their professional obligations while helping students. Researchers (e.g., Aliakbari & Babanezhad Kafshgar, 2013; Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013; Matteucci et al., 2017; Parker, 2018) delineated four responsibilities: student achievement, motivation, fostering positive relationships, and accountability for the quality of their teaching. For instance, in his report about retention factors of veteran teachers, Parker (2018) concluded that teachers' commitment and persistence are related to their impact on students' learning outcomes, thus seeing the bigger purpose of their work. He added that veteran teachers often take

extra measures to "ensure success occurs" (p. 3), including making themselves available after

school hours and mentoring students in various capacities. Parker cited an account of a teacher in

his study who described his fulfillment and satisfaction when "watching students grow to have

original ideas when they actually get excited about doing something well" and seeing "the fruits

of my labor" (p. 3), which further affirmed his satisfaction and sense of responsibility toward

students.

In addition to teachers' sense of responsibility, autonomy and self-efficacy have also

been cited as intrinsic motivators for entering and staying in the teaching field (Baroudi et al.,

2020; De Neve et al., 2015; Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Ingersoll et al., 2016; Zavelevsky &

Lishchinsky, 2020). Teacher autonomy refers to their level of freedom to express and implement

ideas (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020), influence over classroom decisions such as how and

what to teach (Ingersoll et al., 2016), and involvement in school-wide policies and processes

(Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). Teachers reported more satisfaction in schools that allowed their

input in discipline policies, professional development offerings, and curriculum adoptions

(Sutcher et al., 2019), such as choosing textbooks, teaching methods, homework, and evaluation

practices (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). Moreover, teachers who have autonomy are more likely

to experience ownership, try out different ways of teaching and learning, and develop their

professional competencies (De Neve et al., 2015). When teachers were able to "choose tasks that

fit their skills and interests" (De Neve et al., 2015, p. 33), they were more likely to gain

confidence to perform their job and advance professionally (De Neve et al., 2015; Tamir, 2014).

All these factors enhanced teacher self-efficacy, which has been cited as one of the highest

motivating factors for attracting and keeping teachers (Baroudi et al., 2020; De Neve et al., 2015;

Tamir, 2014). Thus, teachers' intrinsic motivation may be enhanced by allowing them to create

an optimal teaching environment, improving their professional growth and, in turn, positively impacting student learning. Moreover, Nhuta and Nhuta (2017) and Parker (2018) emphasized that teachers' self-esteem is related to recognition for making a difference in students' lives. Researchers spoke of different types of recognition (e.g., recognition from students, parents, and community members) (Nhuta & Nhuta 2017; Parker, 2018). For example, one respondent in Parker's (2018) study explained that "behavior toward teachers by the community is not limited to simple respect with the school setting, but respect was evident through widespread recognition in the community" (p. 3) when she was greeted by her students and parents thus contributed to her satisfaction.

Using a mixed-method approach, Chiong et al. (2017) examined the reasons why some long-serving teachers stay in the profession. "Longer-serving teachers can see the wider impacts of their work and thus have stronger identification with intrinsic and altruistic reasons" (Chiong et al., 2017, p. 1102), contributing to satisfaction and lengthy commitment. In other words, intrinsic factors grew over time as these teachers gained more professional confidence (e.g., subject interest, fulfillment from educating children).

The work from Chiong et al. (2017) and others indicated that driving influences might change over time, validating the importance of addressing the varying needs of veteran teachers, both intrinsically and extrinsically, because they could impact teacher retention (Eren, 2015; Baroudi et al., 2020; Fuller et al., 2016; Houdyshell, 2019). This example suggests two things. First, teachers may be motivated by different things at different points of their work life. Second, it is necessary to attend to extrinsic needs rather than simply depending on the intrinsic rewards of teaching to sustain teachers' satisfaction and, in turn, retain them (Fuller et al., 2016). For

example, "since retirement becomes more of a reality with age, retention of experienced teachers may be more difficult without an adequate benefits package" (Przygocki, 2004, p. 539).

Researchers have also found that underlying attributes of the school context, such as social relations, membership within the school community, recognition for efforts, and close connections with fellow teachers, can enhance teachers' intrinsic enjoyment, thus increasing attachment to their places of employment (Eren, 2015; Fuller et al., 2016). Drawing on data from 548 elementary and high school teachers in Los Angeles schools, Fuller et al. (2016) examined the effect of intrinsic motivation and school cohesion (e.g., collaboration among teachers and influence of leadership) on teacher turnover. These researchers concluded that teachers' views of "strong leadership and school cohesion, not one's own intrinsic motivation, more strongly predict the likelihood of remaining at one's school" (Fuller et al., 2016, p. 537). In fact, recent trends, such as those discussed by Baroudi et al. (2020), Chiong et al. (2017), Fuller et al. (2016), IWU et al. (2018), and Nhuta and Nhuta (2017), have linked workplace conditions to perceived intrinsic rewards, thus increasing attachment to the organizations, and, as a result, employees' likelihood of remaining in those organizations.

Finally, using a case study approach, Houdyshell (2019) investigated college students' perceptions of an introductory teaching course at a university in Florida. The researcher sought to determine the current validity of prior research regarding students' motives for choosing the teaching profession. When asked about their initial reasons for enrolling in education courses, some participants indicated that they had always wanted to be teachers; others saw teaching as a feasible career option and a backup plan to other career options. At the same time, others enrolled because of the good reputation of the teaching program at the university. At the end of the program, several participants indicated that their experiences in the teacher preparation

program affirmed their passion. One participant said, "It showed me that I could really make a difference to someone" (Houdyshell, 2019, p. 13). Students revealed that they became more enthusiastic about teaching as they gained more skills from the program. Houdyshell (2019) noted that "participants now have the needed confidence and if their perceptions are correct, also have higher levels of competence" (p. 15). Still, several participants admitted that though they enjoyed teaching, they still found it more complicated than anticipated, recognizing the need for a continuous inner drive to persist in the profession over time. This finding implies that over-relying on teachers' intrinsic motivators may not be enough to retain teachers (Fuller et al., 2016), making it necessary to provide a work environment that may mitigate the challenges that teachers endure (Houdyshell, 2019; Sutcher et al., 2019; Thomas & Hammond, 2019).

The Effect of Workplace Conditions on Teacher Retention

Numerous researchers have examined the various factors contributing to teacher retention, including workplace conditions (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019; Thomas & Hammond, 2017). Specific aspects of working conditions examined in schools were a) the level of administrative support and relationships with colleagues (Hughes et al., 2015), b) accountability systems and teacher autonomy (Ingersoll et al., 2016; Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019), and c) induction and mentoring support (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). The sections that follow discuss the literature on each of these subthemes.

Administrative Support and Collegiality

Erichsen and Reynolds (2020), Thomas and Hammond (2017), and Sutcher et al. (2019) reported that teacher satisfaction and retention are directly impacted by school culture and climate, specific relationships with colleagues and campus leaders. With regard to school

leaders, a key component in teacher retention involves their perceived level of support from their principals (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Hughes et al., 2015; Jones & Harris, 2014; Jones & Watson, 2017; Player et al., 2017; Thomas & Hammond, 2017). Thomas and Hammond (2017) defined administrative support as a "construct that measures how teachers rate an administrator's ability to encourage and acknowledge staff, communicate a clear vision and generally run a school well" (p. 28). For example, teachers indicated satisfaction when working under principals who provide instructional resources that contribute to their effectiveness, such as textbooks, teaching guides, targeted curriculum training, and classroom technology (Jones & Harris, 2014). Lee and Nie (2014) found that teachers are more likely to remain when school leaders support their emotional needs in ways such as valuing their input, showing care and concern, recognizing their efforts, and providing structures that allow for collaboration (Hughes et al., 2015; Jones & Harris, 2014), valuing their professional expertise, and allowing them to reflect on their practices and effectiveness (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020).

Moreover, Gray and Summers (2015) argued that leadership support involves creating a culture of trust and respect in which teachers can be "vulnerable" (p. 5), meaning they feel safe being honest and opening themselves up for constructive feedback. Such a culture that supports vulnerability is built upon teachers' confidence in their leaders' reliability, honesty, and openness in viewing mistakes as part of the professional development process. On the other hand, lack of administrative support (e.g., lack of trust, unavailability of resources) between school leaders and teachers correlated negatively with their commitment and the likelihood of staying at their schools (Thomas et al., 2021; Thomas & Hammond, 2019). Teachers might feel unsupported if they do not find their leaders to be trustworthy or if they lack the instructional resources needed to be successful. Thomas and Hammond (2019) claimed that teachers who reported receiving a

low level of administrative support were "twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching" (p. 15) than those who perceived strong support from their administrators.

In addition to the influence of school leaders, researchers have found that relationships with colleagues also predict teacher retention (Buchanan et al., 2013; Shah, 2012; Thomas et al., 2021; Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). Shah (2012) and Buchanan et al. (2013) concluded that teachers are more satisfied when working in a collegial environment with cooperative relationships and friendliness among staff. Buchanan et al. (2013) noted that a sense of community amidst faculty serves as a "morale-booster to newcomers, both in terms of new knowledge, insights and perspectives gained, and in terms of a welcoming gesture to the profession and to the school" (p. 118). Thus, a warm school culture may improve teacher retention as they experience a sense of belonging and bonding with colleagues (Buchanan et al., 2013; Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Shah, 2012; Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020).

To gain insight into ways of enhancing teacher retention, Gaikhorst et al. (2014) examined the effect of school culture on teacher retention by interviewing eight beginning teachers and 11 principals from 11 Dutch urban primary schools. This qualitative study showed that teachers who view their school culture positively feel that they can turn to colleagues for support and also perceive a high level of collaboration with the more experienced faculty members. Further, these teachers indicated having the chance to acclimate to the new school environment gradually because of the principal's support. These novice educators were assigned fewer challenging students, had less frequent additional duties (e.g., participation in school-events committees), and an instructional coach. On the other hand, participants who judged the culture at their schools negatively reported feeling isolated. Their dissatisfaction was attributed to heavy workload, structured and inauthentic collaboration, the unwillingness of veteran

teachers to share their experiences, and "considerable gossip at their school" (Gaikhorst et al.,

2014, p. 30). These conditions may have resulted in teachers losing motivation to continue

working at their respective schools (Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Shah, 2012). Gaikhorst et al.'s (2014)

findings are supported by other researchers who examined the effect of collegial culture on

teacher retention.

Pogodzinski and colleagues (2013) used survey data from novice teachers in Michigan

and Indiana to analyze the relationship between their perceptions of the collegial environment

and retention. Conclusions from these researchers suggested that teachers' relationships with

their colleagues influence their perceptions of the school environment as a whole, "socialization"

(p. 47) of new teachers, and decisions to stay or leave. Similarly, Thomas et al. (2021) employed

a mixed-methods approach to understand how the network among beginning teachers at a school

in Belgium influenced their attitudes toward their jobs. Findings from this study indicated that

the support of more experienced colleagues influenced beginning teachers' attitudes toward their

jobs. This support can be something as simple as an encouraging conversation or the sharing of a

proven instructional strategy. Teachers were also likely to develop close ties and trusting

relationships with colleagues who were more accessible; conversely, "a large physical distance

might constrain relationships" (Thomas et al., 2021, p.18). An implication established in these

studies is that school leaders should provide structures that allow for collaboration among

colleagues through access to resources, staff workrooms, intentional scheduling, etc. (Goddard et

al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2021).

In summary, teachers have reported greater satisfaction in school environments with high

collegial support from other teachers and administrators. While school leaders may indirectly

influence the level of collegiality among staff, they play a direct role in creating favorable

working conditions, allowing teachers to address some of the mentioned barriers that could inhibit "meaningful collaboration" (Goddard et al., 2015, p. 504).

Accountability Practices

Accountability practices are often cited among school conditions that influence teacher retention (Ingersoll et al., 2016; Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). Ingersoll et al. (2016) argued that using state standards and assessment data to guide teaching practices and adjust curriculum based on established student needs would improve educational outcomes. However, other researchers noted that state or district performance pressures were negatively associated with teachers' satisfaction and retention decisions (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020, Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016). For instance, Erichsen and Reynolds (2020) found that teachers associated high levels of accountability with a loss of autonomy in teaching. Participants felt that they had little influence over curriculum, assessment, and teaching methods, which negatively impacted their morale "because accountability pressures derived from imposed mandates over which teachers and administrators have relatively little control" (p.13), thus hindering teachers' creativity and autonomy. Glazer (2018) echoed other researchers when describing the accounts of invested leavers in his study (e.g., veteran teachers) who left their school when they perceived loss of authority when having to teach "scripted lesson plans" or when they were told by their new administrators that " they could no longer teach using novels" replacing them with standardized district books instead (p. 9). These examples demonstrate the teachers' lack of autonomy over the teaching and learning process and thus led to their decisions to leave their positions.

Similarly, Glazer (2018) contended that tying professional evaluations and promotions to test scores caused resentment among teachers and pressure to teach to the test. Additionally,

Glazer (2018) and Ingersoll et al. (2016) found that accountability pressures profoundly affected

teacher retention in low-performing schools. These researchers noted higher turnover rates in

schools with low state assessment scores than those experienced in schools displaying better

student performance. To that end, Ingersoll et al. (2016) suggested that "holding teachers

accountable for results must be paired with giving them control over the instruction that produces

these results" (p. 1). This conclusion implies that giving teachers greater classroom autonomy

and trusting their professional judgment could lessen the negative effect of accountability

demands on teachers, thus influencing their decisions to remain at their schools (Ingersoll et al.,

2016).

Induction and Mentoring Support

Another working condition associated with teacher retention is induction and mentoring

support (Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Podolsky et al., 2016). Ingersoll and Strong

(2011) described induction as the period of orienting new teachers to the new school's

environment and reducing the pressure of this transition. Examples of induction are helping

novice teachers in understanding the school culture, working with students, managing the

classroom, dealing with parents, etc., thus, "learning to operate within the school organizational

environment" (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 201). Induction includes various types of support,

and mentoring may be one of the most important. Mentoring involves assigning experienced

teachers to those who are just beginning their careers to help them develop professional skills,

such as instructional strategies, analysis of student data, and lesson reflection. Mentors might

also observe in the beginning teacher's classroom and provide feedback (Hammond, 2017;

Kearney, 2014). Confirming earlier study by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), Ronfeldt and

McQueen's (2017) longitudinal national study of 13,000 public and private school teachers

indicated that teachers who received mentoring support during their first year were less likely to leave. The support of a mentor teacher has been shown to be crucial for novice educators during their early years on the job and can predict retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

Ingersoll and Strong (2011), Kearney (2014), and Thomas and Hammond (2017) further concluded that the effectiveness of mentoring depends upon the type and quality of the program. For example, mentoring activities that provided ample time for collaboration and pairing with mentors who taught the same subject impacted teacher retention more than other methods, such as informal mentoring (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, researchers did not dismiss the value of informal mentoring (e.g., Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Bynum, 2015). Formal mentoring involves matching seasoned teachers with those with fewer experiences. Informal mentoring refers to the unstructured and more spontaneous relationships that may form between teachers without prior arrangements, including conversations with other colleagues or the principal, "peer review meetings in which teachers could exchange experiences and expertise" (Gaikhorst et al., 2014, p. 28), and serving as a source of "emotional and moral support" (Bynum, 2015, p. 2) by providing valuable insights and advice to new teachers (Bynum, 2015).

Thomas and Hammond (2017) described high-quality mentoring programs as those that allow teachers more opportunities to meet with their mentors. It also included "observation and feedback, time for collaborative planning with colleagues, a reduced teaching load, and a focus on high-leverage activities–such as analyzing student work and discussing instructional strategies" (Thomas & Hammond, 2017, p. 9). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) concluded that while receiving any mentoring support was beneficial, combining it with the right working conditions

(e.g., teaching schedule, common planning time, etc.) was essential to reap the full benefits of mentoring.

In conclusion, researchers have suggested that providing a supportive work environment has a positive influence on teacher satisfaction and their decisions to remain in the field of education in general. In this section, research was presented identifying the importance of cultivating teachers' professional development through induction and mentoring programs, recognizing the importance of their autonomy and decision-making in the teaching and learning processes, and considering the impact of accountability practices (e., district, and state exams) on teacher retention. Additionally, the previously mentioned researchers have emphasized the important role of school leaders in providing the optimal structures that allow for meaningful collaboration among colleagues, further contributing to teacher retention decisions.

Motivations for Teaching at Private Schools

Studies involving both public and private school teachers have indicated that they share similar reasons for retention, such as a love for teaching and working with students (Convey, 2014; Przygocki, 2004). However, some researchers have noted an additional motivator for parochial teachers is a strong commitment to the religious mission. For example, Convey (2014) and Przygocki's (2004) studies showed that Catholic school teachers describe a moral responsibility to help students' spirituality as the main reason for staying at their schools. O'Keefe (2003) added that teachers' abilities to express their faith also motivated them intrinsically and contributed to their commitments. O'Keefe (2003) wrote,

> The teachers described a setting in which they could be forthright and explicit about their
> beliefs and commitments, as opposed to those in state schools who often have the same
> convictions but can never share the religious dimension of their lives with students and

colleagues… they talked about the importance of praying together, of being a faith

community. (p. 2)

These findings imply the importance of considering teachers' identities and job fit with regard to

the school's mission when trying to attract and motivate teachers in religiously affiliated schools

(Convey, 2014; Przygocki, 2004). As such, "providing teachers with greater opportunities to be

successful and happy in their profession could promote greater teacher retention" (Przygocki,

2004, p. 542).

Convey (2014) examined the motivation and satisfaction measures that impacted

retention decisions among 716 elementary and secondary teachers working in Catholic schools

but not necessarily of the Catholic faith. Participants were asked about reasons for choosing to

work in a Catholic school specifically related to 1) a call to share their values, 2) an academic

philosophy that mirrors their own, and 3) attraction to the school environment. Satisfaction

measures included 1) teachers' abilities to teach (i.e., self-efficacy), 2) relationships with school

members, and 3) satisfaction with the school's religious philosophy. Like their non-Catholic

colleagues, Catholic school teachers attributed their satisfaction to the ability to help students

academically and have a sense of accomplishment; however, "Catholic teachers had higher

satisfaction with their ability to help students spiritually and the recognition of their ministry,

two items that related directly to the religious nature of Catholic school" (Convey, 2014, p. 20).

Here, teachers' identification and commitment to the school's religious mission were recognized

as the leading cause of their fulfillment.

Similarly, the ability to teach through a religious lens seemed to strongly influence faith-

based school teachers' satisfaction and intent to stay in their jobs, as indicated by Engel and

Cook (2006) and O'Keefe (2003). Drawing on the data from a nationally representative survey,

The Next Generation: A Study of Catholic High School Religion Teachers, involving 1,089 teachers in 195 randomly selected high schools, Engel and Cook (2006) sought to identify reasons affecting teacher retention at Catholic schools. Results revealed that while teachers were motivated by perceived self-efficacy and community support, teaching religion was the strongest predictor of enjoyment among the participants. Engel and Cook (2006) conceded that while the results of their study could be generalized to all Catholic schools in the United States, there was no certainty that they would apply to other religiously affiliated schools, thus the need to examine these findings in different contexts, such as Islamic schools.

Other motivating factors unique to private school teachers were enjoying fewer constraints in accountability measures and having the freedom to devise instructional methods and curricula while still teaching faith and fulfilling their ministry roles (Nhuta & Nhuta, 2017; O'Keefe, 2003). Private school teachers were not bound by test-driven priorities and the accountability pressures typical in public school education (O'Keefe, 2003). Some Catholic school teachers perceived that the "work of colleagues in public schools is becoming mechanical and uncreative, cramming high-stake tests and curriculum framework," adding that "this is the vocation to which they have been called" (O'Keefe, 2003, p. 2). Such perceptions support previous studies about the negative effects that accountability pressures can impose on public school teachers (Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016). Additionally, this sentiment indicates that similar to their public-school counterparts, parochial school teachers place a high value on their professional autonomy and ability to plan and implement lessons with the creativity to meet the needs of students.

In conclusion, while educators in religious schools share similar intrinsic motivators as those in public schools, the ability to not only maintain their identities but actually incorporate

their values and religious philosophies in their classrooms is unique to teachers in parochial institutions. Improving teacher retention requires understanding all the factors that inspire and keep teachers motivated, including both intrinsic and extrinsic conditions.

Job Embeddedness Framework

Researchers have argued that teachers leave their jobs for a variety of reasons related to job satisfaction, including school environment (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019; Thomas & Hammond, 2017), student characteristics (Podolsky et al., 2016; Sutcher et al. 2019), and lack of self-efficacy (Baroudi et al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017). However, the lens of "job embeddedness, especially its off-the-job components, represents a new perspective on why people stay on their jobs" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 36). Job embeddedness is a relatively new construct from the management field and only a few studies have employed it in the field of education. Initially, researchers Mitchell and his colleagues (2001) sought to improve the traditional retention models, which primarily focused on the reasons people leave, by incorporating the retention effects of off-the-job factors such as environment and community (Hopson et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2001). Using their own experiences as researchers who remained at the University of Washington for over two decades, Mitchell et al. (2001) concentrated on contextual influences that lead people to form a sense of commitment to their workplace, which later became known as job embeddedness. The researchers described job embeddedness as "a net or web in which an individual can become stuck" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 7). This theory emphasizes the combination of forces that may keep people from leaving their current jobs. In other words, individuals who have many links and close ties with members of their community and organization are said to be highly embedded. Mitchell et al. (2001) suggested three factors that contribute to job embeddedness:

links, fit, and sacrifice. The following is an overview of the literature that explains each of the three dimensions of job embeddedness.

Links

"Links" describe the level of attachment and the level of connection a person has with other people on the job or within the community (Mitchell et al., 2001). Researchers found that individuals form links within a work environment that allows collaboration and opportunities to bond, resulting in developing a sense of belonging (e.g., through friendships and building networks, positive teamwork interaction) (Lee et al., 2013; Ma et al., 2018; Prout et al., 2019; Parker, 2018). Moreover. Lee et al. (2013) suggested that when people increase their social capital (i.e., form more connections with peers), they feel more obligated to remain at their workplace and develop a higher sense of responsibility. Similarly, Ma et al. (2018) noted that "employees with more links on and off the job are more likely to stay, even when they may not like the organization as a whole… you can find it harder to leave when you develop friendships with coworkers" (p. 6), thus savoring relationships that took long to establish. Prout et al. (2019) research supported these findings when examining the reasons for the commitment and satisfaction of 11 Australian veteran teachers. He found that all participants remained motivated due to engaging in a collegial network, which they described as reasons for surviving work challenges. The participants identified many benefits from their social network, including encouraging each other to advance their career goals and gaining experience and confidence due to developing a high sense of belonging with other team members.

Furthermore, researchers found that one way to increase links and improve the job embeddedness of new teachers is by providing them with mentoring support (Holmes et al., 2013; Ingersoll & Strong; 2011). For example, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) argued that effective

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mentoring programs increased the likelihood of beginning teachers remaining in their positions. This finding was also supported by Holmes et al. (2013). Building on Mitchell et al. 's (2001) seminal work, Holmes et al. (2013) examined the three dimensions of job embeddedness through the lived experiences of 18 human resources employees working in a mid-sized government agency. The participants were asked open-ended questions, including: What type of work do you do? How long have you worked with your current organization? What made you stay with your current organization? What would make you leave? The findings indicated that participants who perceived strong connections with colleagues (links) were more satisfied with their job and were likely to remain. The majority of the participants called for improvement within the organization, specifically a need for better training and mentoring, supportive leadership, and better communication. These results suggested that employees may experience low embeddedness and leave if their needs are not met and when they do not develop links (e.g., a sense of community) with other team members or experience a lack of opportunities for collegial interactions (Holmes et al., 2013; Ma et al., 2018; Watson, 2018).

In addition to the organizational ties that may influence retention decisions, Lee et al. (2013) included aspects of the job community that enhance an individual's sense of belonging. Lee and colleagues concluded that people often consider the "quality of available leisure activities" and " family-oriented environments" (p. 5) (e.g., such as participating in church activities and community projects) that keep them embedded. Parker (2018) suggested that since schools are essential to the community, they often represent the community culture. He concluded that people might become more inclined to " seek out a place to call home" (p. 2) where they can integrate with people who share their values, practices, and traditions. However, it is essential to note that the current research is mostly focused on organizational links, which

suggests the need for future research to understand the effect of off-the-job links that may influence teacher retention.

Fit

Within the job embeddedness framework, "fit" refers to the match between people's jobs and their community, addressing the individual's compatibility with the position as well as the match between individuals' personal and career goals (Mitchell et al., 2001). Researchers illustrated that job fit is among the strongest predictors of people's commitment and job satisfaction (Convey, 2014; Miller et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2018; Tamir, 2014). Ma et al. (2018) suggested that people are less likely to leave when they have a better fit with their workplaces (e.g., knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the job). They added that to increase job fit, managers should invest in the development of their employees by identifying their goals and offering training that helps them attain these goals (Ma et al., 2018). Further, "employees identify with, and commit to, organizational goals they help formulate" (Ma et al., 2018, p. 6), resulting in having a sense of belonging and strengthening their attachment to the workplace. In the context of education, school leaders can increase the chances of job fit by recruiting teachers who share similar goals and investing in retaining those teachers by providing opportunities for growth (Miller et al., 2020; Watson, 2018). Ma et al. (2018) suggested that organizations can increase employee's engagement by "identifying long-term career objectives" (p. 6) and providing training opportunities that are tailored to meet their future goals. Further, Miller et al. (2020) indicated that early career teachers who participated in their study attributed their retention decisions to having a strong fit with other colleagues who shared similar values and professional goals.

Another aspect of the fit dimension of job embeddedness can be explained through teachers' perceptions about their compatibility with the school culture (Hibbert, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013). In his study about employee perceptions and the factors that affect the climate in the private school system, Hibbert (2020) indicated that organizational culture encompasses how individuals in a workplace "learn and communicate what is acceptable and unacceptable in an organization," (p. 1) which reflects the norms and values in specific contexts. For example, teachers often adapt to a classroom management style and "teach in congruence with their own educational beliefs and values" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, p .3) and subsequently may not feel comfortable when they are not able to represent their own values while teaching. This finding may explain why private, parochial schoolteachers who are usually driven by a religious mission may find it hard to teach in different settings (e.g., secular schools). Pogodzinski (2013) explained that when people "perceive low levels of fit (i.e., lack of congruence with the norms and the expectations of behavior" (Pogodzinski, 2013, p .8), they are less likely to stay.

Moreover, job embeddedness considers fit with the outside community (e.g., the general culture of the job location) (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Watson, 2018). Watson (2018) suggested that school leaders could enhance teachers' attachment by purposefully developing "these associations" (Watson, 2018, p. 35) through school-community projects (e.g., outreach). These findings suggest that the more fit a person has, the more personally and professionally tied they are likely to their job.

Sacrifice

"Sacrifice" addresses the things a person might deem too essential to give up by leaving the job (Mitchell et al., 2001; Shibiti, 2019; Takawira et al., 2014). According to the job

embeddedness framework, links and fit are often considered when looking at the dimension of

sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001). Examples of things that might be difficult to forfeit include

working with well-liked colleagues and highly effective teams (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004) and

when individuals' career and future goals match those of their organization (Shibiti, 2019;

Takawira et al., 2014). Additionally, "leaving a community that is attractive, safe, and where one

is liked or respected can be hard" (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004, p. 9). Moreover, moving to a new

job place may require a further commute, which may result in forfeiting "membership in local

communities" and losing other "amenities," thus creating a great inconvenience for people when

considering changing their jobs (Juhdi et al., 2018, p.5). These findings suggest that both on- and

off-the-job perks might increase one's attachment to their organization and discourage them from

considering other work options.

Watson (2018) analyzed Mitchell et al.'s (2001) survey data to assess how job

embeddedness affected the retention of K-12 teachers in three school districts in central

California. The study's findings indicated a negative relationship between feeling connected at

school and within the surrounding community and the teachers' intentions to leave. This meta-

analysis confirmed those of Takawira et al. (2014), who explored the relationship between job

embeddedness, work engagement, and intention to stay of 143 employees in a higher education

institution in South Africa. The study revealed that formal and informal links among employees

and other community members, fit between people's values and the organization's culture, and

fear of sacrificing colleagues had significant negative relationships with their decisions to stay.

Additionally, Ma et al. (2018) suggested that teachers' sacrifice levels can be

strengthened by increasing benefits that they are not willing to give up, such as good salaries,

flexible work hours, and professional development, thus improving their embeddedness and

retention. Furthering this conclusion, Convey (2014) and Tamir (2014) noted that decisions to remain in some religious schools were also influenced by a solid commitment to the sacred mission, indicating a fit with the organization as well as something they were not willing to sacrifice.

The sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness can also be applied to teachers' career decisions among parochial school teachers who choose to stay despite significantly lower salaries compared to their public school counterparts (Przygocki, 2004; Tamir, 2014). When examining retention in Catholic schools, Przygocki (2004) reported that teachers found it too troublesome to leave after investing years of teaching. "Changing occupations after a number of years becomes less attractive an option, as teachers with experience acquire skills" (Przygocki, 2004, p. 523); Holtom and O'Neill (2004) added that over time an individual may acquire influence over work schedules and other job benefits, implying that the dread of changing schools might become more evident as teachers gain familiarity and become intrinsically motivated and, as a result, embedded in their jobs.

Because people often consider many factors when changing employment, researchers suggested several strategies organizations (e.g., schools) can apply to increase the level of sacrifice, thus improving retention rates (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Ma et al., 2018). For example, Holtom and Inderrieden (2006) suggested providing job benefits according to the needs of their employees and getting employees' input on the types of benefits they deem beneficial (e.g., on-site childcare, retirement, and insurance plans). Ma et al. (2018) suggested providing employees attractive work job packages that " make people reluctant to leave" (p. 3), such as flexible work hours and giving bonuses to high-performing employees and those with more tenure. However, these suggestions are focused on the tangible aspects of the sacrifice

dimension, which may not always be enough for people in the long run. Thus, consideration of job fit and links become essential when designing retention strategies (Mitchell et al., 2001).

While most available research on job embeddedness reflects its positive side, researchers also explained an undesirable aspect of this framework that may deepen our understanding of retention decisions (Lee et al., 2013; Marasi et al., 2016; Shah et al., 2020). While Lee and colleagues deemed social links as a main part of job embeddedness, they postulated that as some people accumulate more connections and become more embedded in their workplace, "they gradually lose interest in developing additional social capital" (p.11). The lack of interest in networking opportunities with newer people may adversely affect the organization's growth.

In addition to losing motivation to build up additional social capital (Lee et al., 2013), Marasi et al. (2016) posited that high embeddedness could result in limiting people's ability to consider other job options. They explained that "embeddedness may create obstacles for employees" (p. 5) when the perceived sacrifice is too high, thus resulting in "anguish and frustration" (p. 5), which may have adverse outcomes for individuals and the workplace.

To conclude, improving teacher retention requires understanding all the motivating factors that attract and keep teachers in their positions. Despite some undesirable aspects of job embeddedness, this framework offers a variety of explanations for teacher retention. It thus holds a great deal of promise as a framework for the present study, allowing the researcher to fully comprehend the factors that make veteran teachers stay at an Islamic school. A better understanding of veteran teachers' experiences and reasons for staying through the lenses of links, fit, and sacrifice may equip educational leaders in Islamic schools with strategies for retaining more teachers.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study aimed to address the research gap of teacher retention in private, parochial schools by exploring the lived experiences of veteran teachers and their decisions to remain at an Islamic school in North Texas. Participants had the opportunity to share insights about working at this type of institution.

The study addressed the following questions:

RQ 1: How do veteran teachers describe their experiences while teaching in a private Islamic school? (Reasons for teaching at a private Islamic school)?

RQ 2: How do veteran teachers describe their reasons for remaining at a private Islamic school? How do veteran teachers describe their roles, responsibilities, and relationships in the workplace and the community? (i.e., fit, links)

RQ 3: Do veteran teachers perceive they will encounter disruptions (i.e., sacrifice) if they leave their current school? If so, what are they, and how will these obstacles affect their retention decision?

The following sections provide details about the a) research design, b) study site, c) data collection, d) participants recruitment and selection, e) data analysis, f) ethical consideration, g) strategies to ensure trustworthiness, and h) limitations.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to learn about veteran teachers' experiences in one Islamic school and their retention decisions through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative research approach allowed me to explore these teachers' perspectives to discover meaning through their lived experiences. It allowed for in-depth exploration and

understanding of teachers' perceptions, unique stories, and attitudes about the school environment (e.g., how they interact with other people in the group, setting, organization, etc.) (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2016, Gall et al., 2007). "The details can only be established by talking directly with people… allowing them to tell stories unencumbered by what we expect to find in the literature" (Creswell, 2007, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 48). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to collect data and obtain essential insights while building rapport with participants using their own words and thoughts to describe their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This study revealed teachers' deep motivations for staying at their current schools, thus advancing our understanding of teacher retention in private Islamic schools.

Study Site

The study site for this research was a K-12 private Islamic school in North Texas that met my study's criteria (e.g., a private religious school) referred to as Shining Star Academy (pseudonym) or SSA. I chose this site because I had previous relationships with the people there as a former middle and high school principal from 2016 – 2018, making it easier to access. It also had a relatively high number of veteran teachers (25 veteran teachers out of 65 total) who stayed. According to the information gathered from the school's HR office, the current retention rate among all teachers is 89%, while retention among veteran teachers is 92%.

SSA is recognized in the Muslim community as one of Texas's most prominent accredited Islamic schools, established in the late 1980s to meet the growing demands for an Islamic environment for children and families residing in the area. The school started with 16 students and currently serves approximately 880. The student population comprises of 65 percent East Asians (India and Pakistan) students and 33 percent Middle Eastern students. Class size is

similar to that in public schools, with about 24 students per class. SSA now has 108 employees to serve the student population (i.e., teachers, non-teachers, principals, secretaries, and custodians), including 65 teachers (36 in the middle and high schools and 29 in the elementary grades).

In addition to standard coursework (e.g., Math, history, science), the school offers Islamic studies and Arabic as a second language. It is also a college-preparatory school. High school students can participate in advanced placement and dual credit courses in conjunction with Dallas County Community Colleges and can complete up to 48 college credit hours or earn an associate degree upon graduation.

Data Collection

Upon securing the IRB approval from the University of Texas at Arlington, I emailed the two principals at SSA requesting they disseminate an official recruitment letter via email to all 25 teachers identified as a veteran (i.e., having five or more years of experience) (See Appendix C for teachers' recruitment letters). I also invited the two principals to participate in my study (See Appendix D for principals' recruitment letter) to provide their perspectives on teacher retention so I could gather a fuller understanding of the topic. In the invitation letters, I explained that the purpose of the study was to understand veteran teachers' reasons for working and remaining at SSA, learn about their needs and challenges, and thus inform school leaders about strategies for retaining teachers. I outlined the interview procedures and participants' level of involvement in the study. I emphasized their rights, the protection of their identities, and the possible benefits of contributing to my research while assuring participants that their participation was voluntary and that their identities would remain confidential. I also requested that the teachers contact me directly to maintain anonymity.

My goal was to do a single interview with 12-16 teachers across elementary, middle, and high school and the two principals who were likely to produce useful data. Gall et al. (2007) stated that a sample of 12 relatively homogeneous participants (e.g., all veteran teachers) could be sufficient to reach data saturation. Data saturation is reached when no new information is discovered from the interviews (Gall et al., 2007; Lasch et al., 2010) and when "gathering new data no longer sparks new theoretical insights" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 213). However, a total of 10 people, including eight teachers across elementary, middle, and high school and the two principals, communicated their interest in participating in my research.

After verifying the number of participants who met the criteria, I sent a follow-up email with links to a consent form (See Appendices E and F), demographic questionnaires, and interview schedule details (See Appendices G and H). The demographic questionnaire was disseminated via Qualtrics (a software tool for online surveys) and collected background information about the participants, including years of experience, level of education, prior teaching experiences, subjects, grade levels, and current salary.

Prior to conducting the current research, I did a pilot study with two teachers from another Islamic school. Based on that pilot study, I made some protocol adjustments. For example, the question about teachers' involvement in the community did not seem to be clear. The participants asked if I meant the parents or the school community. I adjusted the question to ask about the local community. Another question that I modified based on the pilot study: "How would you describe SSA to someone who does not know anything about the school?" One of the pilot participants asked whether the question was directed at Muslim or non-Muslim parents. I adjusted this question to be clear that I meant any parent inquiring about the school.

After making these minor changes to the protocol, the final interview questions focused on exploring teachers' unique perspectives and views about their decisions to stay at SSA. All interviews were scheduled and conducted on Zoom over the two weeks between February 21, 2022, and March 1, 2022. They were audio-recorded and transcribed within 24-48 hours. The interviews included questions about veteran teachers' experiences and reasons for working in private Islamic schools, how they described their relationships with different members of the school and community members, and perceptions about working in a different environment (See Appendix A for Teachers Protocol). The principals' interview protocol focused on their perceptions of teachers' reasons for working and remaining in their jobs, their experiences, and how they described their leadership styles (See Appendix B for Principals Protocol). I also asked follow-up probing questions to check for understanding and clarity.

As part of the data collection process, I kept a researcher journal and took notes about the participants' comments and my thoughts during the interviews within 24 hours. In addition to my research journal, I wrote reflective memos from the data that emerged, which evolved throughout the research and helped me identify possible themes (Charmaz, 2014). This process allowed me to capture important details of each interview, examine my biases, and revise any questions that seemed confusing to participants.

Participants

A total of ten participants, including eight veteran teachers and the two current principals, contacted me individually and indicated their interest in participating in my research. See participants' information in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Teachers' Pseudonyms and Background Characteristics

Name	Highest Level of Education	Years of Experience in Education	Previous School Type	Years Of Experience in Current School	Current Role	Annual Income
Sara	Masters	11-15	Faith-Based	11-15	Elementary Teacher, Department Head	$45,001-$55,000
Anna	Masters	20+	Private & Faith-Based	5-10	Elementary Teacher, Department Head	$35,001-45,000
Rue	Bachelors	11-15	N/A	11-15	Middle, High School Math Teacher	$45,001-$55,000
Jasmine	Bachelors	11-15	Faith-Based	5-10	Middle School Religious Studies, Department Head	Prefer Not to Answer
Nora	Masters	11-15	N/A	11-15	Middle, High School Religious Studies, Department Head	$30,000-$35,000
Basma	Bachelors	16-20	Private & Faith-Based	16-20	High School Arabic Teacher, Department Head	$45,001-$55,000
Jamila	Masters	16-20	Public & Faith-Based	16-20	High School Math Teacher, Department Head	$45,001-$55,000

Name						
Nadine	Bachelors	16-20	N/A	16-20	High School Science Teacher Department Head	$55,001-$65,000

Table 3

Principals Background Characteristics

Name	Current Role	Highest Level of Education	Total Years of Experience in Education	Years working as a Principal	Years working at current school	Previous school type
Wisam	Middle-High School Principal	PH.D.	16-20	1-5	1-5	Public School & Private/Non-Sectarian School
Farah	Elementary Principal	Masters	20+	6-10	20+	Out of Country Public & Private schools

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the ten participants came with various levels of experience in education (i.e., 10 years or more). Two participants had been in the field of education for over 20 years. Three teachers were veterans of 16- 20 years, three had been with SSA for 11-15 years, and two teachers were veterans of eight years. All but one teacher served as department heads. Only one participant (middle and high school principal) had been with the school for less than five years. Six participants held Texas teaching certificates in different subjects (e.g., PK-6th generalist, middle school math, middle school science, high school physics, chemistry, and math). The majority of the participants exclusively worked in religious-based schools; only two

participants experienced teaching in the public school system. As shown in the survey, teachers'

salaries ranged from $30,000 to $60,000 compared to a neighboring public school district, which

indicated that teachers' salaries ranged between $56,325-$84,838 in the 2020/2021 school year

("GISD 2022-2023 Salary," 2022).

Data Analysis

The analysis began with the transcription. After checking the transcripts for accuracy, I

emailed them to the participants to review, check for accuracy, and add or clarify any unclear

points. All transcripts were shared with the participants within a week of conducting the

interviews. Out of the ten participants, two responded with feedback about their transcripts.

Jasmine expressed concern about her identity being revealed due to some negative critiques of

the current administration. After assuring her that what she shared was appropriate to the purpose

of the study and that I would take all measures to remove any identifying remarks, she felt more

at ease and sent me back her transcript without making any changes.

On the other hand, after receiving her transcript, Wisam contacted me and expressed that

she was embarrassed after reading her transcript. Mainly, she indicated that she "got off-topic"

and "talked too much" about herself and noticed several grammatical errors. Despite assuring her

that what she shared was applicable and relevant to the study, she still expressed that she would

like some responses not to be reported in my research; subsequently, she made some

amendments to her transcript before sending it back to me. Luckily, the final transcript still had

rich, pertinent information that I was able to use in my findings. The two participants' concern

about their transcripts alerted me to send a follow-up email to the rest of the participants to

explain that the transcripts would be verbatim (e.g., all words, pauses, filler words) would be

included and are meant to capture and reflect "naturally conversational language" (Carlson,

2010, p. 10). Carlson (2010) advised that qualitative researchers should make participants "aware of what they may feel or think when they read or listen to the transcripts" (Carlson, 2010, p. 10), such as feeling embarrassed and having the desire to change what they initially shared as the case with Wisam. I did not anticipate that reading the transcript would cause uncertainty. According to Carlson (2010), this issue might have been prevented by sharing parts or sending a cleaned version of each transcript instead of sharing the full unedited version.

After confirming the final transcripts, I started the second phase of the data analysis process by first reading each transcript and clustering data under initial topics. I developed a color-coding system to make notes of repeated words and ideas. The open coding process and continuous comparison allowed me to break the data into specific parts, labeling relevant details (e.g., repeated words and actions) and then developing general categories (codes) based on the participants' insights. I then coded all transcripts line-by-line to get a closer look at what the participants said and identify any subtleties in their insights while staying open to examining new ideas (Charmaz, 2014). The initial open coding allowed me to "stick close to the data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 245), thus mitigating my personal biases. During and after the initial coding process, I used a constant comparison method, cyclically reading the transcripts while organizing and reflecting on each transcript to discover patterns among the participants' responses and narrow those codes into distinct groups (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

After the initial coding and several readings of the transcripts, I used prior coding by looking at the data through the lens of Job Embeddedness dimensions (i.e., fit, links, and sacrifice). Analyzing data through this theoretical framework helped me identify other interview patterns and produced new themes, thus strengthening the analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Maxwell, 2008). I continued to compare the codes and themes between and across the transcripts and was

able to create new themes and sub-themes from the emerging codes (Maxwell, 2008) while looking for commonalities and differences until I reached data saturation which was when no new information was discovered in the analysis. While the participants described their experiences differently, I started to hear similar responses after the seventh interview, which indicated that I had reached data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) concluded that depending on the "depth of data," saturation may be "attained by as little as six interviews" (p. 2), which was the case in my research. Through this process, I determined the major themes that emerged from this study which were also aligned with the three dimensions of job embeddedness. The three major themes were *Personal and Organizational Compatibility (Fit), Community Ties (Links), and Sacrifice*.

Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness

Researchers suggested several strategies to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the data, including clarifying biases, member checking, peer review (Agee, 2009; Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016), triangulation, and journaling and memo writing. I clarified my personal biases by including my biography in Chapter one, explaining my positionality and interest in this research. I intentionally insisted that the participants describe their experiences in their own words to avoid overgeneralization (Charmaz, 2014). For example, whenever a participant used an Arabic phrase or assumed I knew what they were talking about, I asked them to clarify what they meant and how they would describe these terms to a reader unfamiliar with Islamic schools or the Arabic language.

In addition to clarifying my biases, I conducted member checking by sending back all the transcribed interviews to all the participants within 72 hours of each interview to check for accuracy and allow participants to comment or add anything they may have missed. After

sending the transcripts, I heard back from two participants, one of which made some amendments to her transcript, as previously mentioned.

After the analysis phase, I conducted member checking by sharing a summary of the final themes with the eight veteran teachers and the two pilot study participants (as potentially more objective reviewers). The participants were given a week to respond with any comments regarding the themes and ensure that my findings concurred with what they shared. I received feedback from three participants confirming that the results described their experiences and depicted the reasons for staying at SSA. In her email, Rue wrote, "It's pretty on point, MashaAllah [power of God]. I think all points are valid and in line with what keeps me at SAA." Similarly, Anna noted that "it's a relief" to see that "others" shared similar insights.

Peer review was another strategy I used to ensure trustworthiness and clarify research bias (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I collaborated with a colleague who has an earned doctorate in the educational leadership program at UTA and was familiar with qualitative work, making her qualified to review this work. She aided me by coding some of the transcripts, asking clarifying questions, and helping me refine the final themes while ensuring that my data interpretation was accurate. Enlisting the assistance of a peer reviewer who was not familiar with the study context was especially helpful because she asked many clarifying questions that helped me reflect further and check any biases, thus ensuring credible findings. After discussing our interpretations of the data, we came to similar conclusions regarding the coding and the themes.

To attain data saturation and increase the validity of the results of the study, I utilized the triangulation strategy (Fusch & Ness, 2015), which allows the researcher to "explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon" (p. 411). Triangulation was accomplished through interviewing teachers from different grade levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high

school) and by interviewing the two current principals at SSA to hear their perspectives about teacher attrition and retention and to see how their responses compared with the comments from the teachers. Though the principals' interviews were intended as a secondary data source, they helped provide more depth to the study. Further, interviewing principals helped situate the environmental factors that influenced teachers' choices to stay, thus adding another layer of context to the study and providing more validity and transparency to this research; therefore, the principals were used to confirm the ideas shared by the teacher but were not prominent in the findings.

Finally, I kept a research journal and wrote memos throughout the analysis process as a reflection method and to examine my bias. This process helped me reflect on my feelings, thoughts, and ideas, making me more aware of my preconceived assumptions about the participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2014). This process helped me mitigate my biases as a former teacher and principal close to the study.

Ethical Considerations

During each phase of this study, I made every effort to ensure no harm was done to any participant. Although I knew most of the participants as former colleagues, they were still assured that their participation was completely voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any point. Participants were also reminded at the beginning of each interview that they had the choice not to respond to any question they did not feel comfortable answering. All procedures outlined by The University of Texas at Arlington's Institutional Review Board and the participating institutions were followed. Participants' identities were protected through all data collection and analysis stages by eliminating identifying information, safely storing the data, and destroying records when appropriate. Finally, I utilized pseudonyms

in the interview transcriptions and in the findings of this study to ensure participants and their institutions will not be identified.

Limitations

As with all studies, there were several limitations to this research. First, the study was based on the responses and views of a select group – 10 participants from one private Islamic school. Other teachers in this school or other schools may have different experiences. Secondly, although I did not hold supervisory roles over any of the participants for the past three years, doing the study at a school where I previously worked as a principal could have potentially biased my research. Participants could have become less inclined to be open with me because of this past connection as their supervisor. Nonetheless, due to my rapport with these participants and the established trust, they were forthcoming with their responses and did not seem hesitant to share any insights.

Despite these limitations, employing five strategies to mitigate my biases and ensure the validity of the data reduced the chances of any misrepresentations of the participants' responses. The study helped shed light on teacher retention in private Islamic schools by providing valuable insights into the experiences of veteran teachers who remained at their schools. The veteran teachers' experiences at SSA could apply to other types of schools in similar circumstances.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of eight veteran teachers across elementary, middle, and high school and two current principals to understand teachers' experiences and reasons for staying at one private Islamic school in Texas. Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness theory provided a lens to help explain the retention decisions of these teachers who served as educators for five or more years. Job embeddedness describes how people are often compelled to stay due to high levels of (a) job *fit* with the organization and community, (b) connections and relationships or *links* among community members, and (c) perceived levels of disruption they would encounter (*sacrifice*) when leaving their jobs (Mitchell et al., 2001). The findings in this study are presented in the following sections: (a) Personal and Organizational Compatibility (Fit), (b) Relationships (Links), and (c) Anticipated Loss (Sacrifice).

Personal and Organizational Compatibility (Fit)

Fit describes an employee's compatibility and comfort in the workplace and the community. It includes the alignment between one's goals, personal values, skills, and abilities, and "initial job choice and socialization" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 9) with the organization. All participants' responses exemplified personal and organizational fit with their goals and values. The teachers indicated many reasons that contributed to their perceived level of compatibility with the school, including (a) fit with skills and family influence, (b) fit with personal rewards and values, (c) sense of responsibility and community mission, and (d) fit with the school environment or sense of belonging.

Fit with Teachers' Circumstances

The teachers shared different reasons for entering the field of education, but most were persuaded because it felt like the right job according to their family situations. For example, four participants indicated that even though their initial course of study was not education, they reconsidered their career choices after having children. Jamila noted,

> When my kids were young…I thought that …it was becoming too much, and a career in software engineering was becoming too much for me. So, I took a break… when my son was born, and during that break…you kind of think and…analyze what your priorities are.

Similarly, Basma saw teaching as the perfect job for her as a mother of four school-aged children. She said,

> It's the most convenient for me. I don't want it to be . . . taking time [from]…my family, my kids' time. And also when I joined SSA, I took my kids with me. So, it was very convenient for the whole family.

These examples illustrate the participants' initial teaching interests stemmed from their family life's perceived advantages.

Other teachers also talked about early influences on their career choice, including their parents and exposure to the teaching environment. Jamila shared that her parents, both educators, instilled in her a sense of appreciation for teachers. She explained, "I grew up in that environment where I was around teachers, and I valued teachers a lot, and I saw how hardworking they were." Similarly, Basma discussed how her father influenced her decision to become a teacher:

I have good memories with my dad being a teacher and…meeting with all his

colleagues… When I was a child, I used to go with him, visit his …school, so when I

grew up, he also, you know, talked to me a lot about it, about being a teacher.

These examples demonstrate that their parents' influence played a pivotal role in Jamila's and

Basma's career decisions. Their parents were role models who instilled the love of teaching and

helped them see the rewards of this career path early in their lives.

While most teachers perceived family influence as a primary reason for entering and

staying at their jobs, they all expressed their natural inclination toward working with children

and the desire to make a difference. Nadine said, "I guess I was meant to be a teacher." Sara

explained that she was always drawn to teaching, recalling how she played the role of teacher

when she was a middle school helping her peers:

Maybe that's funny about me. When I was in eighth grade, I used to be very good in

math… Sometimes when I helped other students,… I [would] group them, and uh, after

we finish all our classes back home, we have up to the seventh period. So… eighth period

[was] my class, and I used to just like stand up on the board and teach them. I am happy

to feel like they're doing good on the test.

Sara's conceptualization of her ability to teach at a young age influenced her later career choice.

In this example, she illustrated that she derived satisfaction from helping students and seeing the

results of her efforts.

Rue explained that although her bachelor's degree was in computer programming, she

had never worked in that field. She became interested in teaching when she volunteered as a

parent at SSA, helping math teachers grade work and tutor students. She expressed how she

became deeply involved in the school because of a love for teaching her subject:

It's something that I know how to do. I can, you know, push on my passion, I guess you

can say, of math or a subject matter, um, and teach it with a passion. And the kids will

develop the same thing.

While Rue's initial interest in teaching stemmed from observing a need for more robust math instruction at SSA, her love for teaching math and the desire to influence students drove her passion.

More specifically, four participants talked about their reasons for choosing to work and stay at an Islamic school. For example, Jasmine noted succinctly, "Uh, I really love education and especially Islamic education." Nora stated, "I would love to say [*sic*] at an Islamic school . . . because of my bachelor's degree in Islamic study, and currently, I'm doing Islamic education." Jasmine echoed this sentiment, stating that she preferred to stay at SSA because of "my major as a Quran teacher." Basma expressed that though she considered working in public schools, she saw a better fit with her field of study. She said, "My major was Arabic, and I was like, 'I want to work. I wanna teach Arabic.'" These examples indicate that participants' choices to remain at SSA were partially driven by their majors, as few schools offer their specific subjects (e.g., Arabic and Islamic studies).

While fit with the subject was essential to four participants, other teachers also indicated that they had a "passion for education" (Nora). Basma shared her enthusiasm for teaching her subject, stating, "I've been, you know, writing curriculum, um, in Arabic, planning, all this experience, uh, you know, pours in my Arabic language major. So also, that's what I'm passionate about." Like Basma and Nora, the reasons teachers shared about their choice to join the field and to stay in their current jobs represent the *fit* dimension of job embeddedness when

employees' work aligns with their passion, skills, and abilities (Holmes et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2001).

Fit With Values

All the elementary, middle and high school participants expressed high levels of enjoyment when they described what they liked most about their jobs. They used expressions such as "rewarding," "helping students learn," "fulfillment," "being happy," and "making a difference" when discussing their experiences. Jamila, a high school math teacher and a veteran of 16 years, stated, "The most rewarding things can be very little things . . . that *aha* moment" when a student who is having trouble with a math concept finally understands. She continued,

> You, kind of like, find you your teaching strategy, . . . and you say, "Okay, let me try to reach the student this way." And you erase the board, and you try a new approach. Now, all of a sudden, his face has lit up [with] that "I get it" [look].

Jamila's comment illustrates her dedication and commitment to student success and how she took extra measures to ensure that students progressed, resulting in her sense of fulfillment.

While all the participants described what they perceived as the immediate rewards of seeing students learning, five teachers, Nadine, Jamila, Rue, Basma, and Jasmine, also conveyed a delayed sense of gratification when they received praise from alumni. Nadine, a high school science teacher and a veteran of 17 years, shared one of her former student's sentiments recognizing her as a good teacher:

> Actually, just yesterday, I had a student come in, and he just graduated last year. He was telling me how he's taking physics at UTD, and he was saying, "That one class that you taught was way better, and we understood you more."

She continued, "It's really fulfilling when they come back, and they say they really liked your class and they remembered your class, and they learned a lot." She admitted, "So I think…, that's the biggest part, like, seeing the students succeed." Likewise, Jamila felt hearing from her former students "just makes my day . . ." because "it's rewarding to know that I have made a difference in someone's life." These examples reveal that the participants' positive influences on students affirm their work.

Anna, a 20-year elementary teacher with eight years at SSA, described a different view about the personal rewards of teaching young children. She saw herself as a source of inspiration for her students, especially when trying new things:

> It was so important for me that the children looked up to me, you know, like whatever we do, "Oh, this is really cool." . . . I blow their mind away with anything. You know, [they say], "It's my teacher."

Feeling admired by her students enhanced Anna's sense of gratification.

Like those in science and math, Islamic studies teachers attributed their motivation to making a difference in students' lives through their religious instruction. For example, Nora, a 12-year veteran teacher, felt pride when her students' parents shared affirmations like, "My son . . . loves Quran because of you." Similarly, Jasmine, an eight-year veteran teacher, felt "happy" when she saw female students wear the Hijab because some do not want to wear it in or out of school. She spoke for many of the participants when she stated that her Quran teaching was a "blessing" in her life. Such instances illustrated the participants' delight in making a difference through their spiritual teaching.

In addition to the perceived impact the participants had on students, five teachers described the school's alignment with students' home environments and values as one of the

reasons they chose to work at SSA. As one of the principals (Wisam) confirmed, "We are an extension of their home." Anna shared that she likes working in a school that resembles students' home environments:

> Like I'm wearing hijab, and everybody's wearing hijab and their moms. We all have, I mean, we experience the same things... I always like to connect with Islam…with who we are as Muslims… our identity… to help the children identify who… they are.

As seen in this example, it was important for Anna that her students see someone who dressed and behaved like their parents, which further reinforced her sense of fit with the school.

Though teachers perceived their impact on students differently, all the responses were examples of the fit dimension of job embeddedness theory, which describes teachers' values through their influence on students and the personal rewards they perceive. Participants expressed the desire to work in a field that matches their experience and abilities, which, in turn, provides them with greater opportunities for impacting students' development and success.

Sense of Responsibility and Fit with the Community Mission

All the teachers in this study perceived a sense of responsibility toward their school and community as important factors contributing to their retention decisions. Jasmine shared, "I feel it's my duty to help the youth." Similarly, Nadine indicated that she has never considered leaving the school because she felt responsible for her students and the teachers in the science department: "If I left SSA, who would be here? Because especially being a department head, I see the challenge of finding good teachers." Both teachers attributed their decisions to stay at the school to a sense of obligation toward student learning; Nadine's perspective as a leader amplified this feeling.

While all the teachers shared that they have a general sense of responsibility "to educate students" and "serve the community," a few also added a feeling of obligation related to the education of their own children. Rue, who identified herself as "a convert" and a single mother of four grown children, acknowledged that the school played a crucial role in helping her children maintain their "Muslim identities." She said,

> I can't pay the school enough because there's no way on God's earth I could have taught the Arabic reading, writing, or [the Quran] and Islamic studies… My kids are safe in every aspect, where they don't have to be ashamed of being Muslims. I have more of a personal attachment to the school, more of a sense of owing them back, paying them back, so this is what keeps me.

Rue's sentiment reveals her appreciation of the school due to its perceived positive influence on her children. Educating her children in an Islamic school was important for her because she felt that the school environment was conducive to raising them to be proud Muslims.

Like Rue, Jamila, Farah, Wisam, and Jasmine discussed valuing the school's goals and Islamic mission. Jamila noted,

> We have the same goals for our kids in mind that we want our kids to be successful both in this world and, in, the hereafter. So, we want our kids to be leaders of the community while being good Muslims and while being servants of Allah. So, those are the things that, that we share, right?

Nora echoed Jamila's views: "I love SSA, and I would recommend SSA …because I, I see how we teach… manners through Quran." Jasmine also added, "Everyone is doing their best to seriously help students be better Muslims, especially in the Islamic environment."

Nevertheless, several participants acknowledged that the values and goals of SSA, as a private Islamic school, are like other religiously affiliated schools. Jamila explained,

> The basic doctrines, the basic teachings of Islam are [the] same as any other religions like Christianity, like Judaism… All religions teach peace; all religions teach honesty,… modesty,… compassion and empathy and sincerity.

They noted that SSA, like the other religious schools, "focuses on character building," citing this as the primary reason many parents send their children to religious schools. Basma, a high school Arabic teacher and a veteran of 16 years, compared SSA's mission to public schools noting that the faculty and staff at SSA "do care" that their graduates are of "good character, a good person, while a lot of, you know, other schools don't." Therefore, several participants felt that SSA and other religious schools have different goals for the students they serve compared to public schools.

Along with the school's religious mission, teachers also valued its academic mission. Jasmine and Anna were the only teachers who experienced working at other Islamic schools before joining SSA, so they could compare it with other schools as well. Anna indicated that she was attracted to SSA because of its strong emphasis on academics, describing it as "well-established." She added that "we have established curriculum… We have a system in place." Jasmine echoed Anna's point: "With my experience in [previous schools], I feel there's professionalism over here, um… they have high expectations." She added,

> We prepare the students to be ready when they go to college. The type of assessment that we do, the type of assignments that we do, very high expectations. We use a lot critical thinking in our assessment… I see the difference, you know; I see the difference, and I like it.

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In comparing her experiences at SSA with those at her previous schools, Jasmine noted differences between the schools' standards and instructional approaches, which ultimately contributed to her professional growth. These considerations were important for Jasmine and Anna when they decided to join the faculty of SSA.

Other participants highlighted the quality of education at SSA, describing it as a school with "strong academics." For example, Rue, Nadine, Jamila, and Basma prided themselves on witnessing growth within the school over time. Rue explained that she often tells new parents about the school's dual credit program and students' ability to attain an associate degree while in high school. She described the dual credit program as one of the school's selling points."

> So many times, when our kids are in high school, they're doing a dual credit through
> Richland and SSA, and by the time they graduate, they graduate with two years under
> their belt. And many times, I grab 'em with that… Some of these kids graduate with an
> associate, some of 'em graduate with 45 credit hours.

The dual credit program was a point of pride for Rue because it reflected the school's high academic standards and its emphasis on college readiness. Most participants were proud of the school's academic and religious missions, contributing to their attachment to the school and the community's goals and values.

Fit with School Environment (Sense of Belonging)

According to the job embeddedness theory, comfort and compatibility play pivotal roles in people's attachment to their places of work (Mitchell et al., 2001)**.** All the research participants expressed a high level of comfort with the school environment and a "sense of belonging"(Jamila). Nora shared that she never considered working at other schools. She said, "I'm comfortable with SSA… I like the school. I like the, uh, students. I like the teachers… I

don't see myself teaching [anywhere] other than SSA." Nadine shared that even though she had

thoughts of moving to public schools "mainly for benefits… having better insurance… stuff like

that," she never proceeded with any job applications, stating, " I'm comfortable here, and I like it

here." Participants' feelings of comfort lent to their decisions to remain; the idea of working

elsewhere was not feasible.

    The teachers described comfort and a "sense of belonging" as the main reasons for

working and staying at SSA. They also expressed their fear of not being able to fit in at a school

where people may have different values and practices. Jamila described feelings of being a good

fit amongst students and staff.

> [At SSA], Our kids, uh, don't feel strange, or [like they] are sitting with someone who
>
> has completely different values from [them]… Those are the things that make [the] SSA
>
> environment more compassionate, and we have that sense of empathy for each other
>
> because we understand that we are all in the same boat… There is sisterhood; there is a
>
> brotherhood; there is that sense of belonging.

In this example, Jamila recognized the importance of working in a Muslim school environment

where people share similar cultures and backgrounds. She also illustrated her strong attachments

and established fit with the people at the school (e.g., colleagues).

Links (Relationships)

    This section explains how participants perceived their relationships and ties with different

community members, including work-related and out-of-work linkages. Mitchell et al. (2001)

posited that the *links* dimension of job embeddedness refers to personal connections in the

workplace, including formal and informal relations with coworkers and supervisors. The links

dimension also includes out-of-work interrelationships that attach employees to the larger

community, such as church-related and community service activities. While admitting that things "are not always perfect" in a "tight-knit community," most participants in this study valued their connections when they described different examples of links, including (a) external community ties, (b) relationships with colleagues, (c) relationships with students, and (d) relationships with school leaders.

External Community Ties

This section illustrates how the participants perceived their links with the community. While the teachers described different levels of involvement with the community outside of SSA, they all appreciated working in a place that represented their shared values, belief system, and norms. Seven participants referred to "a sense of community," which was especially true for SSA as a private Islamic school that represented "a diverse population" with students from many different countries united by the same "religion" and "shared values" (Jamila, Wisam, Rue, Farah, Basma, Sara, and Anna).

Almost all participants perceived community connections as a way to preserve rituals and Islamic practices through continued interactions with community members. Eight participants noted that they frequented nearby Mosques where they intermingled with parents, current and former students, and colleagues. Nadine noted how her relationships with students and SSA families extended beyond the school walls saying, "I see them all the time . . . any kind of like [events], even just Taraweeh (a special prayer Muslims perform during the month of fast/Ramadan)." Similarly, because of participating in activities in neighboring Mosques, Nora recognized that "Parents respect me" as a result of these positive interactions. She emphasized the importance of teachers "to be more involved in, um, work outside" the school. She offered a suggestion that teachers might "volunteer… in organizations like [MAS]," which she clarified

"stands for Muslim American Society." MAS is an Islamic Center that is "a place of worship for all ages… [but] also provides a hall… [that] people rent for celebration and have monthly family worship." Through this vibrant community center, Nadine believed "there is no limit" of ways to be engaged.

Rue and Farah mentioned other ways SSA teachers "respond to the needs of our community." Farah, one of the principals, explained:

> We do a lot of fundraisers, whether for canned food drives, whether hygiene… whether winter drives, coats, blankets, you name it… we respond immediately. I mean our students and our staff. It's either through our time and effort, or again, through… Texas food bank, Red Cross… so many organizations that we support through our community service programs.

These examples demonstrated that the participants understood their roles as a part of the larger community and how they perceived forging these connections as an essential part of their integration.

Some participants talked about the benefits and rewards of working in a community school (i.e., Jamila, Rue, Anna, Sara, Wisam, and Farah), including a "sense of belonging." Rue added:

> I've been in the community long enough to know that members in the community are very supportive. And it is more like a family-based environment. Everybody knows everybody. Muslim, or non-Muslim, you are protected. You, you feel safe, you feel comfortable.

As a result, Jamila explained that people from different states started relocating to be close to SSA mainly because of its reputation of "being a tight-knit community" where people share similar cultures and values and because of the school's "strong" academic programs. Anna noticed "a lot of people have started building homes, um, either next to a Mosque… or close to the school," where they have a support system.

Teachers described additional attractions, including residing in a community that represented "educated" professionals and business owners. Rue noted how intermingling with community members eventually provided opportunities for her children in their academic and career pursuits. She said, "I know of a Muslim clinic that one of my kids volunteered in, and that's how she also got into pharmacy school." Being a long-standing member of this community helped Rue and her family network and strengthened her attachment to the community and the school.

Relationships With Colleagues

While teachers in this study perceived the relationship with community members as an important part of their work and decisions to stay at SSA, many participants equally appreciated bonding with their team members. For these teachers, relationships with their colleagues were among the things they "liked most" (Nora) about their jobs. For example, Jamila appreciated her bonds with teachers in the math department, stating, "I always say these are the sisters I never had, so it's an amazing relationship, and I'm so blessed to have them." Similarly, Nadine expressed that while her closest ties were with the teachers in the science department, she also appreciated her association with teachers in other departments. She explained,

> Like when I had surgery, I would have a teacher, she's not in my department… she
>
> would tell me, I would make [supplication] for you during my [night prayers] every day.

And I was like, wow, you know… like I'm not even that close to her. And she would tell

me… "I'd be [praying for you]." And that's a big thing, I think. And it's just a very, very,

very supportive community, especially anytime there's a challenge that you're facing.

You see that… everybody comes in and really supports you.

These personal connections were significant for several of the teachers' sense of well-being.

Even though all the teachers who participated in the study perceived a high level of

camaraderie and support forged with coworkers throughout the years, their particular

circumstances affected how important these relationships were to them. For instance, Sara and

Basma recalled their excitement when they first joined SSA because they moved to the area to

teach. Sara remembered how "lonely" she felt when she first moved away from her family

overseas. She referred to the school as "my second home, especially that my family is like back

home and, and some of my closest friends are teachers, and… I knew them from the school

itself."

Sometimes these connections extended beyond the school. For example, Sara cherished

her friendship with colleagues and her ability to build lasting relationships outside the school,

stating, "whenever we have spring break… we had a plan… like Arabic teacher[s] love to meet

outside." Nora also described her interactions with colleagues noting, "Sometimes we discuss,

you know, raising kids. Sometimes we talk about… husbands and, you know, some challenges,

because we're working moms and, you know, we have kids, and we have responsibility."

Though these conversations were not work-related, Nora viewed them as contributors to a sense

of camaraderie.

Although these teachers mentioned ties that were more personal in nature, some

participants talked about how those connections also helped them with their work. Five

participants described how teamwork was key to the teaching and learning process (e.g., lesson plans and sharing resources). For example, Jasmine appreciated working with others in her department and being able to bounce ideas off one another: "We prepare lesson plans together. We review things together. If we do classwork, we share." Similarly, Anna described how teachers in her department work together. She stated,

> When we do collaborative meeting, I can easily go to any teacher, and we discuss a concept that works [for us when] trying to teach or when we do vertical alignments, and we're trying to touch on all the concepts that we need to teach in third grade... So, I can go to all the teachers and just like openly discuss it with no judgment.

Anna's example illustrates the trust shared among teachers and their perception of the school as a non-threatening environment that allowed them to learn and grow in the profession.

Jasmine also appreciated when the middle and high school teachers shared duties. She offered:

> So we help each other... when we work with each other at the assembly in the morning, and dismissal time. So, you know, we, we split things when we go to Salah [prayer], you monitor this bathroom... you monitor that.

This example shows how teachers drew support from each other as they distributed work responsibilities and shared their professional expertise (e.g., resources and skills).

Linkage with team members was also evident in the way teachers described interactions with new teachers. Nora, for example, enjoyed her role as mentor as Islamic studies department head, noting that new and old teachers were comfortable asking for her input. She felt that her teammates valued her experience:

I feel this is a bonus to me… They, trust me and they are willing to take my advice. I have new teachers; they joined this year in the Islamic department… They always email me [asking] how to respond to this parent and what should we do. And, you know, if, if any student is not behaving well in the class, or he's not, you know, doing his best . . . how can we help them? You know, can you give us ideas?

Colleagues' trust and appreciation for her expertise validated Nora and contributed to her satisfaction in being able to make a difference.

Anna added that in her role as an elementary department lead, it was critical for her to "to get to know all the teachers… mingle with everybody," learn from them, and understand their needs. She expressed, "If they're young teachers, I like to know their perspective on certain things, how to approach things, you know. 'Have things changed in college? You just graduated.'" These work-related interactions with colleagues affirmed Anna's leadership role and the reciprocal benefit of working with and mentoring new teachers. Further, the ability to seek each other out for advice and fostering trusting relationships helped create "a sense of community" (Anna) that further strengthened teachers' attachment and commitment to the workplace.

Although most teachers described the positive influence of the school community (e.g., relationships with colleagues and the family atmosphere), four participants (Rue, Basma, Jamila, and Nadine) acknowledged the unpleasant side of working in a tight-knit community. While viewing her colleagues as "good company to be around… we have lunchtime together. We talk… we socialize… they make groups like they… encourage each other," Basma cautioned that "it's very easy to fall in… if someone is negative and always having this negative attitude... You have to be careful not to fall into this negativity with them." Jamila also echoed Basma's

point about the "negative" side of being "too close" to everyone, stating that in some cases, it breeds "a gossiping culture." She noted, "I try to like [move] away… move myself away from the gossiping culture. I try not to sit in the teachers' lounge and just try to stay away from all being too chummy with anyone," adding, "[as] far as my co-teachers… I will not say there's no back biting and there's no gossiping. That's always there, but that's among sisters also. Two sisters will sit and talk about their third sister." Jamila recognized negative interactions as a normal part of human behavior in the workplace. While Jamila's and Basma's views reflected their understanding of the undesirable effects of "a tight-knit community" (Jamila, Basma) where "everyone knows about everyone's dirty laundry" (Jamila), they still valued their relationships.

Relationships with Students and Parents

In addition to relationships with colleagues, participants recognized the importance of building meaningful relationships with their students and parents. Teachers described their links with students in their "motherly" or "counselor" roles. Five teachers attributed these connections to "being around [for] a long time." Many teachers witnessed students "grow up" and described maintaining these connections with students even after graduation. Rue stated that she had been in the community for "over 30 years," which resulted in establishing unique bonds with her students and their families:

My relationship with my students, the thing is being in the community for so long, right? There's families that I have taught all the kids. There's families that grew up with my kids, and when you sit in a class and you see a child that you perhaps change a diaper for, you know, that you perhaps gave them their first bath. I still remember what kid sat in my class, what parents, I went to go see the mother overwhelmed, and I bathed their kids,

changed their diapers, burped them, they threw up over me. You know, that's a different

feeling. You feel like a mother to them.

Rue's example demonstrated a deep-rooted bond with students and families, different from all

the other participants. Being a teacher meant much more to her than merely educating students.

The internal satisfaction she experienced directly stemmed from her motherly role, which she

emphasized throughout her interview.

In addition to their perceived parental roles, four participants described becoming

counselors in some cases when their students were in need. Jamila maintained that putting her

own children through college made her realize how much learning students needed to navigate

college requirements successfully. In addition to being their math teacher, Jamila added,

I became their counselor. I learned the ropes of high school, how the college application

process works, what is needed, and what makes [an] SAT application stand out… I would

give them all these pieces of advice that would take the subject SAT in this month, take

the ACT before SAT. So, these kinds of pieces of advice that I have collected or gathered

or acquired by my own struggles because I have to put my kids through college.

While Jamila's example illustrated her academic counseling role (i.e., guiding students in their

college readiness process), Rue and Basma perceived their counselor roles in the emotional

context of teaching. Basma noted,

I love it when a student comes to you, and they want you to listen, and they talk to you

about an issue or about something that comes, you know, going on in their life… You

feel like you help them.

Similarly, Rue described how she had helped many students through their "family struggles."

She said,

I remember one time I had one student… There was domestic abuse in the house, and he

was [not] doing well in school. And I knew he had the capability… Sometimes they feel

more comfortable talking to me than going to a counselor.

Because she could relate to these students through her experiences as a single mother, Rue saw

her counselor role to be equally pivotal as her teaching. These findings revealed that the

participants valued their relationships with students and perceived their professional and personal

interactions with them as a source of satisfaction.

Several participants described their connections with students when they talked about

ongoing relationships with SSA alums. For example, Farah, who had served in various roles in

her over 20 years of experience, acknowledged how maintaining connections with the alums

resulted in their long-term commitment to the school. She stated, "We are getting more and more

SSA alumni coming back to the school; it may [be] because, and this is what they also share with

us, they want to give back to their school. These are SSA products." Similarly, Nadine explained

that while the students "don't realize it when they are here, they realized how much the school

meant to them after they graduated." She talked about inviting former students to participate in

extracurricular activities (e.g., robotics club and health club). She added,

Majority of them, um, you know, they come back, and they love it… and they give back

to the school, too. Like, now we're having all these seminars where, you know, different

professionals, like they're mentoring our kids as well, and they're all alumni… I think, I

do have a good relationship with the students, and I think that's very important.

Nadine's point illustrates the importance of connecting with students beyond their school years.

Teachers saw the fruits of their investment in students when some alumni became involved in

school activities and helped other students.

Unlike Rue and Nadine, Nora expressed an opposite view regarding alumni involvement in the school, noting a change in students during her 12 years at SSA. She attributed this change to being distracted by "maybe lots of electronics, you know, they are just occupied with, you know, games and this gaming industry." She explained,

> Previously, we used to [see] graduates from SSA; I would say like 6, 7 years, you know, back, they always used to come back and… check on the teachers… Some of them, they would come back, [some] are married… I don't see this anymore. Once they graduate, they don't have this feeling that, oh, I have to come back and check on my school or my teachers.

The differences in teachers' perceptions about alum involvement could be due to their personal efforts to maintain those relationships. It was evident from Nadine's comments that she stayed in touch with her former students and encouraged their participation in school activities related to her department (e.g., club advisors, mentoring students, etc.). Regardless, connections with alumni played a key role in the wider school network.

In addition to their relationships with students, participants valued their relationships with parents. For example, Five participants (i.e., Jamila, Anna, Nora, Jasmine, and Nadine) described their appreciation for being respected professionally and personally in the community. They regarded the parents' recognition as a rewarding aspect of their job. Anna recalled an interaction with one of her elementary student's parents, "I thank you so much for what you did." She added, "I don't recall doing anything special… but she had tears, and like, I appreciated that." Nora noted that her "good reputation" among her parents helped establish meaningful relationships. Similarly, Jamila described parents' validation when she guided them through their

children's college application process and when they would visit her class during parent-teacher conferences "just to pick up my brain." She added,

> They would think that I'm the champion of their kids, which I was. There was a dad, I think he has three or four girls. Every year, he would come in to [ask]… what [his daughters] should be doing now, um, in this summer, what you advice she should be doing, should she volunteer? And where can she volunteer? So I felt that those parent trusted my advice… I fostered really good bonds with those parents.

These findings revealed that it was important for Jamila and the other veteran teachers to be accepted and valued. Jamila appreciated parents' recognition and appreciation of her professional expertise. Parents seeking her advice enhanced her feeling of belonging and affirmed her satisfaction in helping students. The examples about links with the students and parents demonstrated that the teachers understood their roles as part of the larger society and how they perceived forging these connections as an essential part of their integration.

Relationships with the Principal

In addition to teachers' connections with their team members and students, the participants in this study also elaborated on their relationships with the two principals, which represented another layer of linkage with school staff. Researchers found the perceived level of support from building principals was one of the critical components of teachers' commitments to the workplace (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Jones & Watson, 2017; Player et al., 2017; Thomas & Hammond, 2017). During the interviews, most participants described positive relationships with their principals; however, teachers' opinions differed regarding the two principals' leadership styles and perceived levels of support. Anna and Sara valued their relationships with their elementary principal, expressing that their lengthy service and expertise had earned them

special status. Anna noted, "I was blessed with all the principals I worked for. They really trusted my work. They saw what I did, and, you know, they saw the results." Similarly, while admitting that her relationship with the principal evolved over time, Sara connected more with the principal after assuming her own leadership role and spending more time with the principal (e.g., traveling and attending training together). Before that, Sara experienced barriers, noting, "If I need to talk to her, I maybe I have to choose my time. I have to count how many words… What shall I talk to her about, uh, what words I have to use." She described the change in their relationship over time:

> We stay in [a] different state… like when we went to Austin or we go to Florida, so when we have dinner together, we stay maybe in the same room in the hotel… It breaks the ice, and we become more… like closer to each other.

Sara's connection with the principal grew stronger with time as they had opportunities to work closely together and get to know one another.

While the two elementary teachers valued their relationships with the principal, they posited that other elementary teachers did not always find their leader approachable. Anna admitted it is not always easy to talk to the principal, stating, "If you have the guts to say it, maybe she'll try to change, or she'll justify it, or she'll tell you her perspective." Anna recognized,

> Our principal is really big on following the rules. If you follow the rules, she is behind you all a hundred percent. If you don't follow the guidelines for SSA that is listed in the handbook, then she, she will, she'll scold you, basically. So, um, so you have to, you have to be, especially the first semester, you have to be on your toes the whole time.

Anna recalled times when her colleagues would ask her to "talk with" the principal about a deadline extension on a specific project on their behalf: "'You go tell her?' I said, 'I'm not going.' They're like, 'You are the only one that [the principal] listens to.' And honestly, I had no idea like that was the [case]." Though Anna understood teachers' apprehensions, she also noted an opposite view of the principal "is really like a great leader. I mean… I'm not worried to share any concerns with her." She added, "like our principal keeps saying, it's about the children. It's not about you." This example shows Anna seemed to have a good understanding of the administrator's values and expectations, which contributed to establishing stronger links with the principal. It is also possible Anna's longevity as a trusted department head with extensive experience helped her forge stronger connections than other teachers who might not have been at the school long enough to establish these relationships.

The participants from the middle and high schools described their links with their principals, focusing on different types of support based on their needs. Four teachers talked about the principal's visibility. For instance, Jamila noted,

> Our current principal is very energetic… always like walking between the classrooms in the hallways… I sometimes wonder if she is like the three full clones that she's right now. I just saw her downstairs, and now she's upstairs.

Seeing an administrator out and about in the building fostered a better school climate and provided assurance that she was available to her staff and students. Nadine also described this principal's support, stating, "I've really seen the principals stand up for our teachers, um, you know, if there is a challenging parent if there is a challenging student." She concluded that dealing with behavioral issues was a contributing factor to the school's inability to retain new

teachers: "Our students are definitely challenging… because I have seen that over the years where teachers come and go, and they're not able to handle the students, unfortunately." These examples convey the teachers' appreciation of their principal's visibility and assistance with discipline issues, which were more prevalent in middle and high school. Nadine noted, "They [the students] are a handful. Um, I think, especially at that middle school age." The participants who worked in the middle and high school found the visibility of the administrator was a much-needed type of support as compared to the elementary.

In addition to her visibility, the middle and high school teachers highlighted some personal qualities of the principal that were important to them. For example, Jamila stated that "[the principal] is also flexible. So especially [she] came and was confronted with COVID," which involved "a lot of tailoring and day-to-day… adjusting" to meet the needs of teachers and students. She described the principal's support for teachers during the pandemic stating, "[the principal] really worked with teachers like [a teacher] was having her baby… it was a COVID year, so [she] accommodated her… The best part about [her] is that [she] is compassionate." Similarly, Nora echoed Jamila's point regarding her positive relationship with the principal, which was essential for her, especially in her role as "a new department head." She confessed that she had "a lot to learn." She also talked at length about the principal and her personal experience with her "compassion." For example, she allowed teachers to leave early if they had family needs, and other times she would take on the responsibility of arranging for substitute teachers. Nora said,

> Sometimes, she would sub herself, she would [stay] in a class… and that's a big deal… She said, "My teachers… my priority. If the teacher is happy, everyone is happy," … and she has this open-door policy.

Nora added:

> She is very, uh, fun… always joking around… Personally, I feel like… I'm home. Uh,
> she knows exactly what she's doing…Um, she supports the teachers; no matter what, she
> supports the teacher, and she's not just saying, you know… she says something, and she
> follows it with action. I like her as a principal. Um, I like her as a coach.

Nora had high regard for the principal. She appreciated her leadership style and how she prioritized teachers' needs. Her perception could reflect her unique needs as a new department head, who admitted to requiring a lot of support. To that end, she stated, "I'm still, you know, learning the position… and I need a lot of coaching." Nora's attitude about her ability and readiness to assume her new role differed from other veteran teachers who primarily emphasized the principal's supervision and disciplinarian roles.

Most secondary teachers expressed that they were supportive of their principal. For example, Rue noted, "I have a good relationship with her. She's always seeking advice because I am one of the people that has been there a long time, and I honestly give her feedback. I want her to succeed." Jamila recognized that their leader was confronted with "COVID [which] requires a lot of training and day-to-day adjusting." She added that "she is new… It took her one full year to learn the school's ropes… know us… She has a learning curve." Still, she acknowledged her positive qualities stating that "she is flexible… The best part about her is that she is compassionate." Jamila's sentiments reflected her support of the principal and the need to see more stability in the school, which became more evident in teachers' comments about the high principal turnover rate discussed later in this chapter.

While four participants from the secondary schools described positive connections with their principal, two teachers vented their frustration with her leadership style. Jasmine remarked

that she would like to be "heard more" and is often "pulled in different directions," having to answer to her direct department supervisor and the principal. Jasmine explained,

> Sometimes, when the leadership team is not on the same page, and everyone has a different point of view, it affects the staff… I would love for one thing… for the administration to truly trust the teacher because at the end of the day, the teacher in the class.

Basma described other challenges about the principal's leadership style:

> Not finishing things on time and throwing it at us is a very stressful, challenging thing to face. The second thing rushing into making decisions is a killer; rushing and making decisions is literally making everyone spin at the school. You know, when a leader changes their mind, rushing does not have a plan. Her quote is always, "We'll jump on the bridge when we get there." This sentence makes me very nervous.

Basma summed up the issue this way, "Honestly, I wish they [were] more experienced." She admitted to having a better relationship with her direct supervisor, who oversees the "AQI, which stands for Arabic, Quran, and Islamic studies." She noted that her immediate supervisor "is really, you know, approachable, and she's understanding. She gives us the trust that we will do what's, you know, what fits the [needs] of the school and students." Jasmine's and Basma's examples illustrate that it was important for them to have a clearer sense of direction. They both seemed to have less confidence in their leader's knowledge and decision-making, which influenced how they perceived her as an administrator and their ability to connect with her. Additionally, having two different supervisors may have contributed to this disconnect, creating more challenges.

The differences in teachers' perceptions of their principals' support could be because the veteran teachers have gone through many changes in the school, including in the administration. To illustrate: SSA has had four principals in the past ten years. While acknowledging that the current principal was "supportive of teachers" and recognizing her "open door" policy, "warm personality," and being "energetic and very visible," in a previous account, all middle and high school teachers talked about the challenges of high principal turnover. Jamila voiced her dissatisfaction:

> People come, people go, they stay for few years… So, whenever a new person comes, they don't know you, so they just ignore you. Either they ignore you, or they completely think that you are a nobody, and they have no perception of you. They don't know what you stand for. So that part, I find difficult that every time I have to prove myself to a person… Eventually, they do understand that… I'm here to stay, and I'm a hardworking, dependable, reliable person… Again, like I have been through everything, so I have, I have seen it all.

This example reveals Jamila's displeasure with the high principal turnover; it also demonstrates that her personal strengths and past experiences made her more resilient to change. Jamila's view aligned with Basma's in their perceived value of some qualities that help teachers persist, including patience, determination, self-motivation, and perseverance. Being a teacher, Basma explains, "needs patience. It needs you to be motivated and patient, determined, and not to be a quitter." These teachers' qualities enabled them to meet the profession's challenges even when they did not have strong ties with the principals.

Furthermore, the frequent change in administration allowed few opportunities to build lasting connections with their principal. Rue justified these feelings:

Every leader comes in with their own form of leadership skills and capabilities. If the door is a revolving door, then, personally speaking, I am waiting to see how long they will last in the position. My guard will be up, and I am hesitant to conform to the new leadership methodology.

This realization influenced how Rue and other participants might have become less invested in forging stronger ties with their principals.

In conclusion, these findings revealed how the school's social ties highly influenced the participants' attachment to their workplace. The interviewed teachers indicated stronger ties with their colleagues and students (i.e., on-the-job links), but they regarded off-the-job community connections to be just as valuable. Also, according to most participants, relations with the school leaders did not seem to be as significant as other types of links described in this section. The more tentative bond with the principals may be the result of high principal turnover, which the teachers identified as a critical challenge at the school.

<div align="center">**Sacrifice**</div>

This section explores the last dimension of job embeddedness, *sacrifice,* which explains other reasons for teachers' attachment and commitment despite encountering additional work challenges described ahead. Mitchell et al. (2001) postulated that the sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness illustrates the anticipated loss of material or psychological benefits individuals may encounter if they leave their organization or community. These losses could include forgoing established working patterns, longer commutes if relocating, and loss of organizational links, job perks, stability, and advancement opportunities. Findings related to the sacrifice dimension included three related subthemes: (a) current work challenges, (b) why teachers stay, and (c) anticipated departure challenges.

Current Work Challenges

While all the participants revealed their intention to stay at SSA, they still expressed the

desire to see a change in some areas. Their dissatisfaction focused on the school's inadequate

financial health resulting in low salaries, staff shortages, insufficient instructional resources, and

heavy workloads. Most participants recognized the reasons for financial struggles in private

religious schools and how those deficits sometimes affected decision-making. Jamila stated,

"Administration was influenced by decisions driven by finances and by the school's viability

because they don't have funding. So, they have to make the school run." Still, all but two

teachers perceived low salaries as the main reason for teacher attrition at SSA. Jamila described

the salary gaps between public and private Islamic schools, stating, "for some people… $10,000

is a huge difference." Similarly, Rue advised that the school must improve teachers' salaries to

retain qualified educators. She noted that while salaries may not be the most significant factor in

veteran teachers' retention decisions, for younger teachers, it is often a major contributing factor

in the type of school they choose to work in. She noted:

> My daughter, she's in her third year of teaching in public school. She out-earned me the
>
> first year. She's young, and she would not earn the same money [here]. So, a young,
>
> person's mentality… they're into the money… a person like me that saw the school
>
> grow. I have more of a personal attachment to the school.

Like Rue, Nadine and Jamila emphasized their intent to stay because of their emotional

attachments to the school. Still, they voiced concern about losing qualified young teachers who

often leave as soon as they can do so and the inability to "attract strong candidates" because of

low salaries. Jamila believed new teachers were entering the field at SSA, "Maybe they're

completing a degree or whatever… For some personal reason, they're hanging around, but they

have one foot out [the door] … the moment [they'll] find something better, they will be out of here." Jamila viewed the salary gap as the main reason for teachers' departure.

Basma was more explicit about her dissatisfaction with teachers' salaries at SSA, explaining how her perception of the money changed after a divorce left her with additional financial responsibilities. She noted her changing attitude about the importance of income:

I used to not to work for money, didn't care… I never negotiated… I needed a higher salary or not… Four years ago, my status changed, and now I started like, caring about this. No, you know what, this is not fair; what I'm getting paid is basically covering my bills and my food. So… what's going on? I am really underpaid… I started caring about, you know, improving my income.

Basma's examples illustrated that teachers' motivation might shift when their life circumstances change. While she and all other teachers shared being driven by their "love of teaching" and "making a difference," becoming a single parent made Basma reevaluate the importance of pay.

In addition to the financial challenges at SSA, all participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the heavy workload, which they correlated directly to the school's finances and perceived limited funds. Seven teachers shared that they currently assume dual roles as teachers and department heads without being compensated fairly for the amount of work. For instance, Nadine noted,

We're doing all this extra stuff, too, so, like for me as a department head, like it's crazy because… I'm also in the robotics club now. So, we spend a lot of hours on the club. We're here on the weekends.

Likewise, Basma noted that her work became "overwhelming" due to assuming additional responsibilities. She said,

They expect you to work a lot and put a lot of hours of work outside of the school day. So, if I am a department head, I am expected to teach. I'm expected to do the data. I'm expected to be the mentor for those teachers, expected to go over everything. And also, they expect you to teach as much as possible.

Basma added that the workload was related directly to being short-staffed. She explained,

I feel the challenges come from, um lack of employees… One or two teachers extra in the department will be very helpful… but again, they will come to you and say, "Can't afford it."

Basma felt overworked and under-compensated for her extra efforts and hoped for additional resources for the good of the school and its staff. She also added that because of her workload, she was not able to support new teachers in her department, explaining:

[New teachers] are lacking good mentors. They need those mentors… new teacher comes with no experience. They throw them in the class and yes…they say [go] observe other classes, but they don't understand. They don't have the time to observe other classes because… they're required to do a lot of things, planning, grading, tutoring, parents' meetings… So, it's overwhelming to those new teachers.

This example illustrated Basma's frustration that new teachers have little support due to their heavy demands. Further, her additional responsibilities made it unlikely she could provide the mentorship new teachers need. Her response implies that the school does not have a structured mentorship program, which might help explain new teachers' attrition.

Furthermore, participants shared that the pandemic added to the financial disincentives at SSA. Jamila noted that public school teachers were "given stipends for teaching online," whereas SSA teachers did not have this offered to them. SSA also lacked teachers' experience in online

delivery, but the school did not give bonuses to teachers adapting to the new format. At SSA, staff members who were expected to fill in for absent teachers did so without extra pay.

Additionally, four participants voiced their dissatisfaction with their workload and perceived little instructional support (e.g., curriculum writers, instructional coaches) to help with their courses. For example, Rue explained that she was teaching math across middle and high school and had to prepare for four different grade levels, compared to public school teachers who have a "curriculum creator… that does the lesson plan. She's given the quiz, she's given the test, what she does as a teacher. She puts her, what I say, fairy dust on the lesson plan." Such additional resources available to public school teachers, Rue felt, made their work less demanding. The elementary principal agreed, "It's about time to really think of an additional support system for the teachers and the administrators… The school is growing." She noted that supports need to be added to help teachers and staff manage the increasing demands.

Related to the lack of instructional support, two secondary teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the school's professional development offerings. Rue voiced her discontent with the current professional development, stating,

> Honestly, from my perspective, at least, Region 10 does not provide us with good, uh, professional development… Anything that they cover, I either already do, or already knew or can, could have figured it out myself… This is where I struggle.

Likewise, Basma added,

> If Region 10 does not cover this, uh, you know, uh, workshop or this training I went to, then they don't support it. Then I have to pay it out of my pocket, and it happened many times. I felt like there, the specific training I really need it, and it's really helpful, and it was not covered because it was not supported by Region 10 budget.

These examples demonstrated that while teachers sought to improve their skills, they felt limited because of the financial restrictions that trickled down to the types of professional development deemed beneficial for veteran teachers.

Three participants perceived misallocation of funding as one of the reasons for the financial challenge at the school. Jamila, Sara, and Rue suggested that school leaders need to prioritize spending on teaching and learning and allocate fewer funds to sports. Jamila said, "I think… somehow a restructuring is required… so there are fewer admins and fewer admin assistants. Somehow teachers should be compensated well." She criticized the motive behind how funding was prioritized: "Sometimes those decisions are driven by, they are not in the best interest of teachers, and they are driven by money, or they're driven by student retention or pleasing the customer" instead of improving conditions for teachers.

In addition to dissatisfaction with the financial aspect of their jobs, five participants shared that dealing with demanding parents was another challenge. While confirming that most SSA parents were mostly supportive of teachers, some participants still encountered parents with "a sense of entitlement," adding that those parents were hard to please. Wisam noted that "the parents' sense of entitlement because they pay tuition, have that mindset, mind-frame that you work for them." For example, Nora explained that because most parents were highly educated, they sometimes tended to have unreasonable expectations of teachers: "They don't let things go easily. They are always after the teacher," adding more stress as a result. Similarly, Sara noted that dealing with demanding parents becomes daunting at times. She expressed her frustration:

> We do have some picky parents who think that their child is the most genius person in this world while she's not like that. So, I have to, um, tell her in a nice way and support her… I have to be, uh, careful with them and choosing [my words].

Basma echoed the sentiments of Nora and Sara when she expressed the need for positive parent involvement (e.g., additional parent volunteers). She shared that often, the parents only show up when they have something negative to say about the school, or when "something happens, they will reach out to the leadership before they communicate with the teacher," which frustrated teachers and created a less desirable impression of these parents. Yet, despite the mentioned challenges, all the participants emphasized their intent to stay and described their unshakable attachment to the school.

Reasons Teachers Stay

Though the needs of the veteran teachers were not always met, all the participants expressed their desire to stay at SSA during their interviews. They described many reasons for remaining, including working in an Islamic school environment, shared culture and values, acquiring better work status (i.e., career advancement), involvement in decision-making, and investment in the school. For instance, five participants emphasized the importance of working where they can express and practice their faith freely. Wisam, one of the principals principal, noted:

> One of the biggest benefits and why I also am part of an Islamic school is because of who I am as a Muslim. It's really good working with other Muslim colleagues all day long, as well as other Muslim students. Ninety-nine percent of our faculty are Muslim… You get to pray together… Knowing that they get those 20 minutes break where… we're all praying together early afternoon prayer... that's really the benefit [of] the private institution itself.

In this example, Wisam concluded that freedom to express faith and work with people of similar beliefs as essential parts of the school environment, which was congruent with the responses of

most teacher participants. Jamila also highlighted the benefits of working in a place where "everyone is on the same page" and there is a common understanding of teachers' and students' spiritual needs:

> I know my principal understands that I'm fasting… what will be my accommodations or Eid [Muslim holiday] … requirement. So, my administration knows that my board knows that parents know that as teachers, we know our schools are fasting or they need time for prayer, or if Taraweeh [Ramadan prayer] makes them tired. They're staying late for the Taraweeh. So those are the things that make SSA environment more compassionate, and we have that sense of empathy for each other… We share the same values and… all the things that matter to us.

In this example, Jamila perceives the environment at SSA as a place where everyone has a shared understanding of teachers' and students' needs and experiences and a sense of belonging. It was vital for her, as with most participants, to practice her faith freely and work among people with similar beliefs and shared cultures. The participants conveyed a deep sense of belonging to SSA in these examples. The strong sense of community and shared values enhanced most participants' attachment to the school (e.g., Rue, Jasmine, Farah, Wisam).

In addition to the school environment, participants described their teaching journey at SSA and the time and effort they had invested in seeing the school advance. "We are moving in the right direction," one of them said. Six teachers described their early struggles due to lack of experience and not receiving sufficient early support. As Jamila noted, "I have no one to come to and ask for an answer. I have to look for that answer myself." Rue also described how she struggled in her first year of teaching, stating, "It was each man for himself. There was no such thing as; you know what, 'I have these resources, you know, it's open for you to use,' or 'I can

help you with this.'" Nadine and Nora confessed to lacking teaching skills in their early years and how they eventually experienced growth. Nadine said, "I was a terrible teacher, and you know… I feel like as a teacher, you know, when you are doing a good job and when you are not… Every year you improve." Nadine reflected on her self-efficacy growing over time, which may provide one reason why they were less willing to leave.

In fact, despite their early challenges, most participants described their investment in the school through the significant contributions they made over the years. For example, Nadine helped restructure the entire science curriculum and replaced the lower-level science course (integrated physics and chemistry-IPC) with advanced chemistry and physics for the upper grades. Jamila described her contribution to advancing the math department as well:

> [I] brought several programs to SSA. I brought the AP program, which has been running
>
> so successfully for so many years, no one was willing to touch AP calculus with a 24 feet
>
> pole. And I took it as a challenge and taught it… have been so successful in it.

Rue described her investment in creating a "teachers' manual" for the whole school to help new educators learn the school management system:

> Nobody was there to train them for Sycamore [school management system]. So, I took it
>
> upon myself… If I'm a new teacher and I have four different preps, four different books,
>
> I am going to be overwhelmed setting up a page. Never mind my news, never mind my
>
> calendar, never mind my 180 days, never mind my curriculum. How am I going to space?
>
> It it's very overwhelming.

These examples convey the sense of ownership these teachers experienced after investing time and effort to see the school grow. Empowering teachers to bring new programs and make needed changes was also crucial for the participants because it enhanced their sense of autonomy. They

focused on the school's needs rather than what was required of their own desires. These examples also reflected a collectivist culture that values the good of the group; in this case, the participants were concerned about improving the conditions of the school and helping other teachers so they could have better experiences.

In all interviews, participants described being highly involved in the teaching and learning decision-making process (e.g., curriculum, textbook selection, and lesson planning). For example, Anna stated, "Our principal is open, like whatever we say, whatever we vote on, she goes with." Similarly, Sara expressed that she is "highly involved" in selecting the curriculum for the Arabic department: "For me as an Arabic teacher for 14 years, as well as… the coordinator for Arabic and Islamic department, I am part of this committee where we create new lessons." Sara's perception of her involvement was also confirmed by the elementary principal, who would invite teachers to "decide which publishing company we're going to go with… and then [make] a collective decision. And my teachers have maybe, um, a bigger say than mine…" So, the teachers played central roles in curricular decisions.

Rue explained how the math department is highly involved in making decisions regarding "the books, the curriculum, uh, how we're going to spread out the content, uh, the TEKS that we're gonna cover. We discuss all this ahead of time." She added that teachers have a big say about essential decisions, such as the choice to participate in state assessments.

> We discuss all this ahead of time. Do we want to be, uh, assessed in STAAR? You know, we have the choice as a private school, not to have to take it… Um, last year, you know, it was done away with, and then this year they were thinking we're not gonna do it. But then, we decided no, as a math department, we'd like to have STAAR. We wanna be assessed. We wanna know if our kids still have it.

In her comment about participating in-state exams, Rue explained that "due to the educational gaps" during the pandemic and "not being able to provide appropriate test administration, spacing/accommodation" and the fact that " 70% of the students' population was doing online learning," the school decided to "pause" the STAAR in 2020 school year and use " MAP testing" in its place. MAP testing is an internal benchmark assessment that focuses on students' growth throughout the year. However, after noticing regression in students' performance, the math department suggested to the school administration to bring back the STAAR assessment as another way to gauge students learning progress and to get a better sense of how students compared to their public-school counterparts. They ended up changing back to STAAR partially as a result of this discussion. This case illustrates that these teachers were highly involved in making decisions about the teaching and learning processes, indicating the administration's trust and value for their expertise.

Anticipated Challenges

Although teachers' investments in the school and participation in the decision-making process played a significant role in their retention decisions and satisfaction, their perceptions of what they would forfeit if they left their jobs were perhaps the most critical finding explaining why these veteran teachers stayed. The teachers in this study perceived emotional stress that may result from uprooting themselves from SSA. Four participants (i.e., Anna, Nadine, Jamila, and Basma) expressed their fear of "starting over" in a different environment. For instance, Anna shared,

> Starting in a new place, you have to figure out the system, and you start from not
> necessarily scratch, but you have to learn all the system, all the things, all the

expectations. You have to, to learn how to be in that environment. You know, different places have different people to establish those relationships and, and to create that trust.

Nadine echoed Anna's point, expressing her fear of having to "prove herself" in a new school. She noted, "If I were to go, I think my biggest thing would be like, it would take me time to adjust and time to, um, you know, just get established."

Other teachers anticipated dealing with student challenges if they changed schools. For example, Jamila, Sara, Nadine, and Jasmine feared dealing with different student populations (e.g., students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds). Jamila admitted that after her student-teaching experience in a public school, she realized that she would not be able to handle some of the issues she witnessed there, remarking, "Students are coming from homes where parents beat them, where parents abuse them. They don't have enough to eat. They deal with poverty and malnourishment. They deal with all those kinds of issues." Similarly, Nadine voiced her concern about classroom management in a public-school setting versus SSA:

> Over here, I don't really deal with them as I said, just because like I've been here, and I'm teaching the older kids…I don't have a very firm personality, so I feel like, I don't know if I could handle students elsewhere. Yeah, I think that would be my biggest challenge.

Of course, experience over time with the same set of parents and kids did help with this challenge.

Unlike other participants and because of her background as Muslim American Latina, Rue identified with public school students from disadvantaged backgrounds. She expressed a unique view:

I would choose to teach at a low, uh, economic level school, public school, you know, to me, I know where I came from… I did come from a poor community, and I see what my daughter does now as well. She works in a public school, and she works with a lot of Hispanic kids, and she gets the same joy as myself… I would want to teach. I would not want to teach at another private school… That doesn't mean [a SSA student's] life is perfect, but they have better resources and better access to an education than a student that would be in public school. Sometimes many of these kids don't end up graduating high school.

Rue's example illustrates her desire to help students and make a difference regardless of the type of school or students' backgrounds. Her own upbringing and belief in her ability to connect with a different student population made her perceive less fear about working with these students in any environment. Still, she emphasized throughout the interview, "unless I am pushed out," she does not plan to leave SSA.

In addition to dealing with the different student populations, severing established ties at SSA was a concern two participants described. Sara shared, "I feel like I am part of that like, it's just like a fabric… You cannot, I cannot leave it. Like when you just take stitch from like the whole fabric, it's… ruined." Nora also expressed her fear about not being able to connect with people in a new environment, stating,

Maybe the principal is not, uh, accommodating… She's not helpful; maybe she's demanding. Um, because really, if the principal is a good principal… maybe the teachers are not friendly... Maybe, you know, you can't get really along with the teachers. I see [at] SSA we are getting really along. We feel like, you know, are family.

These examples illustrate teachers' fears of leaving well-liked teams with similar goals and values, a consideration that was essential to most participants in the study, who identified relationships with colleagues as one of the reasons they remained at the school.

Additionally, some teachers expressed their concerns about working in a secular environment and not being able to express their faith freely. For example, Jasmine shared, "I'd like to do Salah on time, and in public school, it's a challenge because you have to always, you know, like find a way, find a room." Wisam, the secondary school principal, confirmed, "We get to start off our day, every morning… with our assemblies and where reading [morning supplications], so you have that sense of community within your school, which is really a benefit." One of the perks of a smaller religious school is being able to accommodate for everyone's spiritual needs.

Other teachers feared the idea of changing established patterns for their households and encountering longer "commute[s]." Anna expressed this concern when she stated, "we're gonna have to figure out who drops off my kids" if she worked in another school. The lack of a commute was one of the job's perks she and other participants enjoyed, and she would have to give up if she left SSA.

Nadine and Sara expressed concerns about starting over after advancing their careers. Sara noted, "After I took my certification, I was like, this is my last year in here… and then I thought of it, uh… if I am now a better-quality teacher, why should I go out of this school? I should stay." Similarly, Nadine emphasized how she had time to grow and prove herself as an effective teacher "I don't know if I wanna go through that where I need to like, prove myself that, Hey, I, I'm okay." These examples illustrated the participants' satisfaction with the status they earned over the years (i.e., becoming effective) and fear of losing this benefit if they moved.

According to the job embeddedness framework, "Leaving a community that is attractive, safe, and where one is liked or respected can be hard" (Holtom & O'Neil, 2004, p 10). The above findings indicate that while teachers encountered many challenges in their jobs, fear of facing new challenges (e.g., different environments, leaving friends behind, inability to practice faith, etc.) presented a problematic scenario if they were to leave their current school.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present findings and analysis from the interviews with eight veteran teachers and two current principals from SSA. The participants shared how their retention decisions were attributed to their sense of fit with the school, the community mission and vision, and perceptions of how well they were suited for their positions. They also described connections (links) with the faculty and staff and the perceived disruptions they would encounter if they left the school, indicating that it was important for these veteran teachers to be accepted and valued. The examples about links with the local community demonstrated that the participants understood their roles as a part of the larger society and how they perceived forging these connections as an essential part of their incorporation, and the sense of belonging gained from social group memberships resonated across participant stories. Finally, fear of disruptions (sacrifice) also strengthened the participants' attachments to the school and decisions to remain, aligning the findings of this study with the theory of job embeddedness.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, I utilized the *Job Embeddedness (JE)* framework (Mitchel et al., 2001) to understand the deep motivations of eight veteran teachers who chose to work and remain at one private Islamic school in North Texas and the two current principals who were interviewed as a secondary data source. This study provides insights into teachers' reasons for staying at their schools despite the well-known challenge of salary inequities in private, parochial schools. The following are the three dimensions of job embeddedness that framed this study: a) level of comfort and compatibility with the school and the community *(Fit)*; b) connections with school and community members *(Links),* and c) level of disruptions teachers perceive they would encounter if they left the school (*Sacrifice*). The research questions are closely linked to these dimensions:

RQ 1: How do veteran teachers describe their experiences while teaching in a private Islamic school? (Reasons for teaching at a private Islamic school)?

RQ 2: How do veteran teachers describe their reasons for remaining at a private Islamic school? How do veteran teachers describe their roles, responsibilities, and relationships in the workplace and the community? (i.e., fit, links)

RQ 3: Do veteran teachers perceive they will encounter disruptions (i.e., sacrifice) if they leave their current school? If so, what are they, and how will these obstacles affect their retention decision?

This chapter includes four sections: 1) a summary of key findings and discussion, 2) implications for practice and theory, 3) recommendations for future research, and 4) a conclusion.

Summary of Key Findings and Discussion

Mitchel et al.' (2001) Job Embeddedness framework provided a lens to explore the experiences of the veteran teachers at SSA to understand why they chose to work and remain in their jobs. The following section summarizes the key findings by research question and links those findings to previous research.

RQ 1: How do veteran teachers describe their experiences while teaching in a private Islamic school? (Reasons for teaching at a private Islamic school)?

In all interviews, the participants offered a range of reasons why they chose to be teachers. They shared that their career choices were mainly influenced by intrinsic factors such as a love of children, enjoying teaching, and a desire to make a difference. These were some of the same reasons that attracted teachers to enter the field in other types of schools (e.g., public, other private schools) as cited in the literature (Baroudi et al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Fuller, 2016, IWU et al., 2018). In addition to their inherent interest in teaching, all of the participants indicated that they chose to work at SSA because they felt comfortable working with people who shared their culture and values. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) noted that teachers are "most comfortable when they can teach in congruence with their own beliefs and values" (p. 3), which was especially true for SSA teachers and principals, who indicated that the school served as an extension to students' homes since they all came from Muslim families with similar backgrounds.

While internal factors are often considered when examining teachers' satisfaction and motivation to enter or stay in the field, researchers also highlighted many extrinsic factors that impact teachers' career choices, including prior teaching experience and family influences. For example, Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) and Hennessy and Lynch (2017) found that the quality of teachers' education preparation programs and experiences during their training greatly impacted

their decisions to pursue a teaching career path. In this study, participants attributed their career choices to prior exposure to the teaching environment (e.g., volunteer work). Only one participant spoke about her student teaching experience, indicating that she got to see the challenges of teaching but also experienced the many rewards of working with children that inspired her to teach.

While the participants' background influenced their career choices, the majority (e.g., Basma, Nora, Jamila, Rue, Sara, and Nadine) also indicated they chose teaching because of the perceived job convenience. For example, being on similar schedules as their children, the number of school holidays, and having the summer off were essential considerations. These findings were in line with current and previous research that attributed teachers' career choices to the perceived flexibility of the job (Convey, 2014; Przygocki, 2004). For example, teachers enjoyed "the number of vacations and holidays associated with teaching, weekends, summer vacations, and extended holiday breaks" (Przygocki, 2004, p. 533), among other job perks. However, being able to celebrate the religious holidays (e.g., the two Eid holidays Muslims celebrate are associated with the month of fast and pilgrimage to Mecca) were important considerations for the participants when they were asked why they chose to teach at an Islamic school.

In addition to the rewarding aspects of their jobs, participants also described some of the previous and current challenges at the school. Most of the participants expressed their desire to see an improvement in the financial health of the school (e.g., salary gaps, lack of resources, and support staff). These same challenges were also a source of dissatisfaction for teachers in other parochial schools (Convey, 2014; Hibbert, 2020; Przygocki, 2004; Tamir, 2014). For example, Tamir (2014) noted that Jewish day schools find it difficult to "compete with suburban public

schools" when it comes to teachers' wages and resources (e.g., professional development) (p. 6).

Likewise, when examining motivations and satisfaction among Catholic teachers, the results

from Convey's (2014) study indicated that of the 716 teachers in Catholic schools in three

dioceses (i.e., Atlanta, Georgia, Biloxi, Mississippi, and Cheyenne, Wyoming), 21% of the

surveyed teachers identified low salaries at these school as "a serious threat" (p. 8) for teachers'

longevity at these schools. However, except for one participant, the majority of participants in

this study did not directly speak of their dissatisfaction with their own salaries; they expressed it

as a concern for the school. Several participants conveyed concern about the school's ability to

recruit and retain new, qualified teachers, which indicates their deep concern about the future of

the school in which they were very invested. This finding is reflective of the general culture of

the school, where people share similar values and goals as well as investments in the future

vision of the school.

In addition to the school's financial challenges, teachers spoke about other challenges.

For example, several participants confessed that they did not anticipate the intensity of their job

demands and the stress related to school working conditions (e.g., scarcity of teaching resources,

lack of mentoring support, and not having systems and procedures in place). After 16 years of

teaching, Jamila still remembered the hurdles she endured (e.g., dealing with discipline problems

and parents' demands), noting not having mentoring support in place. She stated that "it was like

fly by the seat of your pants kind of situation," where teachers had to figure out things

independently. Still, perhaps those challenges could have been the same reasons that prompted

these veteran teachers to look for solutions to improve the teaching and learning process at the

school. It was clear from the participants' responses that they were invested in the school from

the start despite the lack of early support. Researchers such as Ingersoll and Strong (2011) and

Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) suggested that the help of a mentor teacher is crucial for novice educators during their early years on the job and can promote retention. However, in this study, the veteran teachers were committed to improving the school despite the absence of a mentor. These findings could be explained by the fit dimension of job embeddedness that may have contributed to teachers' sense of ownership that led them to invest their time and efforts in school improvement. They might also indicate the cultural differences (e.g., collectivist mentality) and how people in different cultures view their roles and responsibilities toward others.

RQ 2: How do veteran teachers describe their reasons for remaining at a private Islamic school? How do veteran teachers describe their roles, responsibilities, and relationships in the workplace and the community? (i.e., fit, links)

These questions explore both the fit and link aspects of the theory. I will discuss each of them separately, although the concepts do have some overlap.

The job embeddedness theory states that individuals are a better fit when their personal values, career goals, knowledge, and skills match those of their organization and the larger community (Mitchel et al., 2001). This view was reflected by the veteran teachers of this study, who attributed their decisions to teach at an Islamic school to their perceived compatibility and comfort with their workplace and the surrounding environment (e.g., community culture). Previous researchers similarly found that employees' personal and professional attachment was highly related to their sense of fit with their organizations (Holmes et al., 2013; Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Mitchel et al., 2001). Moreover, skills, abilities, and "initial job choice and socialization" with that of the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 9) were included as the main aspects of the fit dimension. However, the religious element in the current study added another

depth to the dimension, which had not been explored in the previous research on job embeddedness.

Consistent with the previous research on teacher retention in private, parochial schools, the participants in this study shared similar reasons for working in their current school (e.g., ability to help students, sense of responsibility, and accomplishment), which were also described and cited in previous research on Catholic schools (e.g., Cimino, 2001; Convey, 2014) and Jewish day schools (Tamir, 2014). For example, Convey (2014) concluded that religious motivators were among the main contributors to teaching satisfaction in Catholic schools. O'Keefe (2003) explained Catholic school teachers "described a setting in which they could be forthright and explicit about their faith… they talked about the importance of praying together, of being a faith community" (p. 2)**.** Similarly, the participants in this study valued working in a school environment where they could express their faith freely, pray together, and observe religious rituals (Jasmine, Wisam, Farah, Jamila). Moreover, they highlighted their alignment with the school's religious mission and teachers' impact on shaping students' Muslim identities, which further affirmed their attachment to the school. Moreover, some of the teachers described their religious commitment toward students, indicating their moral obligation to help them grow spiritually, which echoed Convey's (2014) and O'Keefe's (2003) findings. Thus, the teacher participants at this Islamic school felt a similar commitment to the school's religious mission as the previous studies on other religious schools (e.g., Catholic schools), extending the previous work on parochial schools.

In addition to the religious mission of the school, several participants also described their fit with the school's academic mission, which also aligned with the findings from Convey's (2014) study on Catholic schools. Several participants prided themselves on the fact that SSA

was a well-established school that caters to the needs of a large "well-educated" Muslim community. These considerations were important for teachers' retention decisions as they considered the school's unique culture and belief system that aligned with their own.

Also, these veteran teachers described several intrinsic motivating factors, which are also relevant in previous studies, including personal rewards (Chiong et al., 2017), respect, and recognition (Baroudi et al., 2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Tamir, 2014), passion and enjoyment for teaching (Chiong et al., 2017), and autonomy and self-efficacy (Baroudi et al., 2020). Several participants (Rue, Jamila, Nadine, Jasmine, Anna, and Basma) expressed their "fulfillment" when their alumni recognized them as effective teachers and acknowledged being provided with a strong foundation that helped them navigate their college courses. Moreover, the majority of the participants indicated that they became more effective as they acquired more experience and skills, thus gaining confidence in their craft.

Another critical factor for teachers' commitment to teaching at SSA was the personal reward and a sense of responsibility toward students' learning outcomes. Several participants indicated that they felt responsible for helping students. For example, Jamila described how she would try different math strategies to ensure that students learned difficult concepts. Other participants expressed that the most fulfilling aspect of their job was when they were able to help struggling students, which reflects their personal values (e.g., finding meaning in what they do).

Feeling responsible for the outcomes of their teaching was a theme shared in previous studies that examined why teachers enter or stay in the field. For example, Aliakbari and Babanezhad Kafshgar (2013) and Lauermann and Karabenick (2013) found that teachers' satisfaction was directly linked to students' performance (e.g., success). Similarly, participants in

the current study communicated their obligation to reach "struggling" students and perceived their teaching roles as a "duty" to make a difference in the school and the community.

In addition to personal rewards, respect and recognition, and passion for teaching, several teachers indicated a high level of involvement in some decision-making. For example, all but one participant said they had a say in curriculum choices, textbook selection, assessment practices, and spearheading extra-curricular activities, which may have indirectly influenced their retention decisions and perceived fit with the school goals. As Podolsky et al. (2016) concluded, teachers' career decisions were closely related to "shared decision making" (p. 24) regarding the teaching and learning processes and what they deemed to be best practices. Ingersoll et al. (2016) and Zavelevsky and Lishchinsky (2020) posited that when teachers have influence over classroom decisions (e.g., how and what to teach) and are able to express and implement ideas, they are more likely to experience ownership and develop their professional competencies, which all contribute to their commitment (De Neve et al., 2015), and attachment to their workplace as suggested in the job embeddedness framework (Mitchell et al., 2001). Thus, it is likely the veteran teachers in the study perceived a better fit with the school goals because they were engaged in making curricular decisions.

The participants in this study appreciated the fact that they were highly involved in the school's curriculum and assessment practices, which gave them a greater sense of autonomy and ownership. One participant compared her experience with her public-school colleagues, stating that "[we] are not restricted to certain curriculum… certain teachings," which reflected exercising more freedom in teaching and learning. Another participant shared that after doing a way with the state STAAR assessment and noticing regression in students' performance, the teachers at SSA suggested to the administration to bring back STAAR in the 2022 school year to

gauge students' progress compared to other students in Texas. Researchers (e.g., Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2016) found that while accountability pressures profoundly affected teacher retention, giving teachers greater classroom autonomy and trusting their professional judgment could lessen the negative effect of accountability demands on them, thus influencing their decisions to remain at their schools. For example, Glazer (2018) noted that teachers left their school when they perceived a loss of authority after having to teach "scripted lesson plans" or when they were told by their new administrators that "they could no longer teach using novels" (p. 9). These examples demonstrated teachers' lack of autonomy over the teaching and learning process, which contributed to their decisions to leave their employment. In the current study, the participants experienced the opposite situation. Promoting authority and autonomy encouraged a greater sense of responsibility for students' success and their sense of commitment to the school.

The second domain of the job embeddedness framework described the participants' relationships with the different school members and their involvement in the community (Links). The subthemes include relationships with colleagues and principals, relationships with students and parents, and participation in community activities (e.g., Mosques and projects). Most of the teachers in this study described peer relationships as a critical component of their professional and emotional support. For example, teachers collaborated in lesson planning and shared resources and school responsibilities. Teachers drew emotional and professional support from each other, which enhanced their sense of belonging, attachment, and commitment to their school. This finding was supported by the body of research that examined the effect of the school environment (e.g., collegial support) on teachers' satisfaction (Buchanan et al., 2013; Shah, 2012; Thomas et al., 2021; Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020).

Responses regarding relationships with parents and students varied among participants. While some participants confessed to dealing with demanding parents who sometimes exhibited a "sense of entitlement," the majority perceived positive relationships with parents. Several participants (i.e., Jamila, Rue, Nora, Jasmine, Farah, and Nadine) have been lifelong community members who came to appreciate the recognition and respect that stemmed from their embeddedness in the community, thus leveraging their social standing when they were at the school. For example, six participants indicated that their children were born and raised in the same community and were products of SSA. Jamila described how she was able to build trust with her parents, who respected her professional expertise and constantly sought her advice. The few studies that examined job embeddedness in the educational context discussed links within the school context (e.g., Miller et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Watson, 2018). While community ties seemed to have a significant effect on teachers' satisfaction and attachment in the current study, the off-the-job link dimension is an area that still needs further exploration to gain more insights into how it affects retention decisions in other schools.

Aside from their relationships with community members, the veteran teachers in this study described unique connections with their students due to their longevity at the school and witnessing students grow. These established relationships allowed most participants to connect with students even after graduating (Rue, Jasmine, Jamila, Nadine, and Anna). The participants felt proud and validated when discussing their alums' relationships. In fact, one of the interviewed principals noted that some of her current teachers were "products of SSA" who wanted to "give back" to the school in different ways (e.g., teaching, mentoring other students, leading extra-curricular science activities, etc.). Most of the participants echoed the principal's view on alumni involvement, which confirmed that intrinsic motivators (i.e., sense of obligation,

making a difference) had the most influence on their decisions to stay. This finding confirmed

current and previous research that included a sense of responsibility as one of the intrinsic factors

that motivate teachers. For example, Parker (2018) concluded that teachers' commitment and

persistence are related to their impact on students learning outcomes. Other researchers (e.g.,

Aliakbari & Babanezhad Kafshgar, 2013; Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013; Matteucci et al.,

2017) concluded that teachers' sense of responsibility relates to their perceptions of student's

achievement, motivation, and ability to foster positive relationships with students, which were all

important considerations for the participants in this study and the most fulfilling aspects of their

work. However, the participants in this study conveyed a unique obligation toward the students

and the community, which could be explained by the fact that they have known many of these

students and their parents because of their longstanding in the community.

The participants in this study also described their relationships with their principals as

important to their positive experiences at SSA. They appreciated the principals' help in dealing

with students' discipline issues and standing up for and accommodating the needs of the

teachers. Other researchers concluded that school leaders played a pivotal role in teachers'

satisfaction and had a direct effect on teachers' retention decisions (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020;

Hughes et al., 2015; Jones & Harris, 2014; Jones & Watson, 2017; Player et al., 2017; Thomas &

Hammond, 2017). However, in the current study, principals seemed to affect teachers' retention

decisions indirectly. Due to the high principal turnover, the veteran teachers in this study relied

on their own support systems through linkage with colleagues and community members.

Moreover, several participants described cultivating connections with community

members through their involvement in neighboring mosques and community projects (e.g.,

weekend religious circles, blood drives, and relief projects). For example, Nora explained how

teachers' involvement in the various activities in a local Islamic center (MAS) enhanced their

social connections, which contributed to their integration and sense of belonging. This finding

aligned with the literature about community cohesion and its effect on people's attachment to

their workplace. As an example, after surveying teachers in Michigan and Indiana to analyze the

relationship between their perceptions of the collegial environment and retention, Pogodzinski

and colleagues (2013) found teachers' relationships with their colleagues influenced their

perceptions of the school environment as a whole, the "socialization" (p. 47) of new teachers,

and decisions to stay or leave.

As previously mentioned, the religious aspect was unique in this study. For example,

teachers spoke of enjoying the feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood that results from sharing the

same faith. Nadine gave an example of how much she valued the support of her colleagues when

she was going through health problems.

However, while the current job embeddedness framework may explain the positive effect

of building meaningful relationships with community members, it does not fully explain how

links influence teachers' retention decisions. Yet, according to the findings, relationships with

their colleagues and the respect and recognition they received from the community seemed to

affect their satisfaction and attachment to the school substantially. Further, links with students

(e.g., alumni) and teachers' perceived impact on student learning was cited as the most

"fulfilling" part of their job.

RQ 3: Do veteran teachers perceive they will encounter disruptions (i.e., sacrifice) if they leave

their current school? If so, what are they, and how will these obstacles affect their retention

decision?

The last dimension of job embeddedness described what individuals would have to give up if they left their workplace (Mitchell et al., 2001). Despite highlighting many challenges of working at SSA that caused some participants to contemplate leaving (i.e., Jasmine, Rue, and Basma), all participants confirmed their intentions to stay due to their fear of forfeiting some of the benefits of their current job. The participants considered Fit and Links when they explained the difficulties they anticipated encountering if they left SSA. Perhaps one of the teachers' most significant concerns was starting over in a new environment and dealing with people who may not share the same norms and values. This idea is reflected in the literature as well. O'Keefe (2003) emphasized that teachers' abilities to express their faith were among the leading, motivating factors that contributed to Catholic school teacher commitments. He added that public school teachers "can never share the religious dimension of their lives with students" even if they "have the same convictions" (p. 2). O'Keefe (2003) showed that teachers who remained in their employment were usually driven by the Catholic mission with values directly tied to their religion.

The SSA participants reported that they recognized they would likely have to forgo the freedom to the expression of their faith (e.g., the ability to pray and fast with the group) if they taught elsewhere. They valued how the school culture allowed them to pray on time and accommodated their religious needs (e.g., observing Islamic holidays and flexible schedules during Ramadan when everyone is fasting for an entire month). According to Judi et al. (2018), "organizations have their unique work culture, and if employees feel that their personal values are in line with the company culture, the employees are very likely to stay" (p.129). Although the extent of that feeling may vary by school type, this sentiment aligns with the participant's responses in this study and perceived fit with the school goals and values.

On top of the school's unique environment and culture, several participants described their emotional connection to their colleagues and students, indicating fear of losing these connections that took many years to build and the support for their religious practice. Other participants expressed that they are limited by the subjects they teach (e.g., Arabic, Islamic studies, and Quran); hence they did not consider moving because of fear of not finding schools that offered these subjects. This finding denotes a negative side of job embeddedness (Marasi et al., 2016; Shah et al., 2020) when "embeddedness is interpreted as having no freedom to leave and is associated with loss of control" (Shah et al., 2020, p.11), consequently creating "obstacles for employees who desire to leave their current job but are restrained from doing so" (Marasi et al., 2016, p. 5) out fear of not finding jobs that match their qualifications. While the participants' responses in this study were more indicative of the positive side of job embeddedness (e.g., helping students, emotional attachment, investment in the community), some may also have perceived limited alternative options to teaching SSA as well.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study provided valuable insights into teacher retention by understanding the reasons that kept the participating veteran teachers at SSA. It was clear from the responses of all participants that they perceived high levels of comfort and compatibility with the school's unique culture, goals, values, and mission, which played a pivotal role in their decisions to work and remain at SSA. While the participants indicated that their credentials and skills allowed them to work in other schools, they all expressed that they had no desire to leave the school. This finding has implications for school leaders to recruit and hire teachers whose career goals and values align with the missions and values of their schools.

Schools should foster a sense of belonging among teachers. Most participants indicated their strong ties were mostly with teachers in their departments, which suggests that school leaders should create more opportunities for collaboration among teachers in the entire school to help foster stronger connections and knowledge sharing. One way to accomplish this goal is by designing and implementing effective learning communities that reflect the school's vision and promote students' academic success and character building. Furthermore, school leaders can enhance teachers' connections and professional growth by establishing well-structured professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers can work and learn from teachers with various experiences.

School leaders should pay close attention to the needs of veteran teachers and invest in relevant professional development that reflects their needs and promotes their professional growth. One way to address this goal is by surveying teachers regularly to determine the types of professional development (PD) they deem innovative and conducive to their professional growth and by doing away with one-size-fits-all PDs. Some teachers in this study bemoaned the limited training opportunities offered to them. School leaders can leverage the strengths of longtime teachers and their extensive experiences in designing and conducting school-wide PDs. This practice will help foster a culture of collaboration among teachers and celebrate the value these veteran teachers bring to the school. Another way to foster relationships beyond individual departments is by incorporating school-wide team-building activities, picnics, and off-sight retreats during preservice days and throughout the year to help teachers connect with others in the school, thus creating more links.

The decision-makers should put effort into improving the financial health of the school including teachers' compensation packages. While the teachers in this study indicated their

strong commitment to the school, one of the challenges that most participants communicated was the school's inability to recruit and keep younger teachers (i.e., the school as a revolving door). The participants attributed this problem to the insufficient salary and benefits packages. Although salary gaps did not significantly influence the participating teachers' career decisions, they still perceived low compensation as the leading factor for the high turnover among new teachers at the school.

Because of SSA's high principal turnover rate, the school board must invest time and money to retain quality principals. One way to improve new principals' retention is by connecting them with internal mentors who are non-evaluators, such as experienced administrators in the school or external mentors from other schools or professors who have previously served as district leaders. The school can also network with the Council of Islamic Schools of America (CISNA) to pair up new principals with successful peers from other Islamic schools who can provide guidance and support.

Three participants communicated that they contemplated leaving the school because of the constant change and instability (i.e., SSA went through four principals in the past ten years). Others expressed they often have to prove themselves to the new principals making it hard to establish meaningful connections with those leaders. This has additional implications for the decision-makers at the school, including 1) a need to find out the cause of turnover among principals to provide them with the needed support, 2) principals must engage in continuous professional development that targets different areas based on the campus needs, and 3) the leadership should establish a clear reporting structure and make sure they are clear messages to the teachers. Moreover, new principals may not always be familiar with the school's culture and

history; it is pivotal that the school board invests time in guiding them, socializing them into the new environment, and providing the needed support.

Much of the frustration communicated by all the veteran teachers in this study is that they are stretched too thin. Whereas these teachers managed to create curriculums and build their own resources over the years, they still observed how new teachers were thrown into the mix without adequate support. For example, several teachers indicated that they are required to teach and prepare lessons for up to four grade levels and have no instructional coaches or curriculum writers at the school. This task is put on the shoulders of department heads who have their own classes to teach and do not have enough time to mentor and develop new teachers. Some participants revealed they were assigned extra duties (e.g., substituting for leading and coaching after-school activities) without compensation. There is a great need to invest in hiring support staff (e.g., substitute teachers, instructional coaches, and curriculum writers) so teachers feel appreciated and have the time to grow as well. Since most of these challenges are directly impacted by the financial health of the school, the school board should find alternative ways to provide more funding to support teachers' instructional needs, such as one-time stipends or hourly compensation.

School leaders must be cognizant of the intrinsic factors that motivate teachers and leverage the strengths and wisdom of veteran teachers to improve retention among new teachers. The participants in the study indicated that recognition and social status (e.g., positive relationships with parents), passion, and the calling for the profession, were key motivators for their decisions to remain. Involving veteran teachers in the various decision-making for the school, including campus improvement planning targeting academic and non-academic areas (e.g., improvement of school culture and environment) could afirm and validate teachers' value.

Due to the high cost of teacher attrition in private and public schools, this study has implications for public schools working on teacher retention. This study showed that job embeddedness was related to veteran teachers' retention at SSA. By applying this framework to public school education, district leaders can attend to the on and off-the-job factors that may influence teachers' decisions to stay in their jobs, thus increasing novice and veteran teacher retention rates. For example, like private schools, public school teachers leave for various reasons, including poor work conditions, inadequate salaries, lack of induction and mentoring support, and accountability pressures. School leaders can apply beneficial practices, including a) providing attractive work benefits packages and adequate salaries, b) designing master schedules and professional learning communities (PLCs) that maximize collegial interactions, c) proving highly effective mentoring structures, and d) creating a family atmosphere. Moreover, this study has shown that teachers were highly invested in SSA and had a big say in curriculum choices and assessment practices which enhanced their sense of ownership and responsibility toward students' success. Efforts to improve public school teachers' involvement in the decision-making regarding different aspects of the teaching and learning process (e.g., curriculum, the assessment that allows more creativity) may improve teachers' embeddedness.

Lastly, public school leaders can apply job embeddedness to enhance teachers' off-the-job connections to increase their sense of belonging. This goal can be accomplished through intentional efforts to engage teachers in community projects and expanding schools' outreach (e.g., partnership with neighboring schools, community projects, and civic engagement). By attending to factors contributing to teacher retention, school leaders can provide the optimal conditions and create school environments that make it difficult for teachers to leave.

Implication for Theory

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Although most existing studies on teacher retention focus on the reasons for turnover and attrition (e.g., job satisfaction and motivation), the JE retention model from Mitchell et al. (2001), which originated in the business and management field, examined the reasons that keep people in their employment. Moreover, the research that used job embeddedness theory in education is very scarce, and no known studies applied this theory to private, parochial schools. Thus, utilizing this theory to examine teacher retention in private Islamic schools helped shed fresh light on the experience of the veteran teachers in this study, revealing the many factors that contributed to their persistence, including ties with the people and activities in the community. This section provides implications for applying Mitchell et al. (2001) theoretical framework in the future.

Although fit and links are ideas that have been discussed in education research before, "sacrifice" was new and was a particularly important concept, particularly looking at a religious private school. All the participants communicated their fear of facing many challenges if they were to change their current schools. Anticipated challenges included the inability to practice and express their faith if they were to move to a non-Muslim environment, among other issues. This finding was perhaps the strongest indicator of teachers' decisions to remain at SSA. However, the current job embeddedness model does not explain the extent of teacher sacrifice concerning their belief systems when religious practice is a key consideration.

While the JE framework revealed how the participants valued their relationships with some of their colleagues and community members, it did not explain the difference in their attitude about the value of these links. The current JE model does not explore the long-term interests of people who may be highly embedded but not necessarily satisfied, as was the case with several participants who expressed their dissatisfaction with some work conditions (salary,

workload, lack of instructional support). Further, some participants indicated that the tight-knit community causes its own challenges and may breed a culture of gossip in some cases. Lee et al. (2013) suggest that "a better understanding of the links component of embeddedness, both on and off the job, will substantially enhance our collective understanding of how it influences staying or leaving" (p. 213). Considering the quality of these links may expand our understanding of teachers' decisions to stay.

Recommendation for Future Research

The current study provided an in-depth exploration of the experiences of 10 participants in one Islamic private school, including eight teachers and the current two principals at the school. It focused on the experiences of veteran teachers with five or more years of experience teaching at an Islamic school currently experiencing a high turnover among new teachers. Additionally, the current research concentrated on the reasons that motivated these teachers to remain despite experiencing challenges. There are several recommendations for future research, which include qualitative and quantitative approaches to furthering our understanding of teacher retention.

- The current study represented the views of eight teachers and two principals in one research site in a specific geographical area- an Islamic private school in Texas. Future qualitative research can replicate this study using the job embeddedness framework in other parochial schools, such as Catholic and Jewish Day Schools, and public schools to draw comparisons among teachers' experiences in these schools since the culture in each school varies.
- The current study focused on the experiences of veteran teachers with five or more years of experience; future research could investigate the experiences of teachers with less than

five years to understand their perspectives and intentions to stay or leave the school. Because research in public schools shows that teachers are more likely to leave in those first five years, the JE theory may help expose how fit, links, and sacrifice play a role in the retention/attrition decisions of newer teachers. In addition, a quantitative method that involves a larger sample size may provide additional insights not revealed in this research.

- While this study focused on teacher retention, it also revealed that principal turnover is a significant issue at the school, therefore future research can examine turnover among Islamic schools to find out why are they leaving. How does JE help explain their situations?

- While the subject of job fit and its effect on teacher retention is well-researched, a separate examination of each dimension (fit, links, and sacrifice) can provide important insights. Lee et al. (2013) suggest that "much can be learned from studying these components, especially given that researchers often find different relationships across these dimensions and across samples" (p. 212), which suggests future quantitative research is needed to understand the relationships between the three job embeddedness components.

- Since most of the available research on job embeddedness concentrates on on-the-job factors that keep people in their jobs, more research should be done to explore the effect of off-the-job connections on retention.

Conclusion

The inability to retain quality teachers is a problem that persists in the education field in public and private schools (Broughman et al., 2017; Thomas & Hammond, 2019; Sutcher et al.,

2019). While considerable research examined teacher retention in public schools and mainly focused on why teachers leave (e.g., teacher dissatisfaction), little is known about teacher retention in private, parochial schools such as Islamic schools. Thus, by employing a qualitative methodological approach, this research explored the experiences of eight veteran teachers and two current principals in an Islamic school in North Texas. The participants' perceptions about their experiences and reasons for remaining at their current school provided a deeper understanding of the reasons contributing to their retention despite encountering challenges. Applying the job embeddedness framework in this study provided insights into these teachers' views and has implications for policymakers in all types of schools. The findings of this current study showed that teachers' decisions to stay were influenced by factors such as their comfort and compatibility with the school and their relationships with colleagues. However, the most significant finding was the participants' perceptions about the disruptions they would encounter if they left their current employment. Thus, examining teachers' retention through the job embeddedness lens may inform future research and policymakers in other private and public schools to continue exploring this topic and improve retention strategies.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Veteran Teachers

1) Why did you decide to become a teacher?

2) What did you expect being a teacher would be like?

3) Tell me about your experience teaching in a private Islamic school?

4) Why did you choose to teach in an Islamic school?

5) How would you describe this school to a neighbor that doesn't know about Islamic schools?

6) How would you describe your Muslim community (e.g., involvement in activities) to a new teacher?

7) What do you like the most about this job? What challenges, if any, do you face?

8) Describe your level of involvement in decision-making concerning:

   a) Teaching and learning process (textbooks, curriculum, lesson planning)

   b) Professional development

9) What is your relationship with other teachers, principals, students, parents?

10) Does the leader at your school support teachers? Provide some examples of what they do or you wished they did.

11) What would you like to change at this school if given a chance? Why?

12) If you did not teach at an Islamic school, what other types of school would you consider? Why?

13) What challenges do you anticipate facing if you were to move to another school?

14) Is there anything you would like to add about your experience teaching at this Islamic school that we did not discuss?

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for SSA Elementary and Secondary Principals

1) Tell me about your experience as a principal at SSA?

2) What is your perception about the benefits and challenges, if any, for teachers working in Islamic schools?

3) How would you describe this school to a neighbor that doesn't know about Islamic schools?

4) Describe teachers level of involvement in decision-making concerning (Provide examples):

   a. Teaching and learning process (textbooks, curriculum, lesson planning)

   b. Professional development

   c. Master Schedule

   d. Hiring new teachers

   e. Schoolwide goal setting

5) How would you describe your leadership style? Can you share examples?

6) Can you describe the onboarding process of new teachers at SSA? (Induction, mentoring).

7) What would you like to change at this school if given a chance? Why?

8) What do you perceive as the reasons for teachers' commitment to continue working at SSA?

9) What challenges do you anticipate teachers facing if they were to move to another school?

10) Is there anything you would like to add about your experience working at this Islamic school that we did not discuss?

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Letter to Teachers

Date:

Dear (Participant's Name)

      I am writing to invite you to participate in the study I will be conducting on private Islamic schools as part of my dissertation research at the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program here at the University of Texas at Arlington.

      The purpose of this research is to examine teacher retention in Islamic schools through the lived experiences of veteran teachers who choose to continue working at (school name). I plan to interview teachers who have been working at (school name) for five or more years. By understanding teachers' experiences and reasons for staying, administrators may be better informed about creating and maintaining environments conducive to retaining teachers. Furthermore, learning about the motivations for teachers' commitment and the challenges they face, if any, could guide private school administrators toward implementing policies that may improve teacher retention.

      Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. It will involve one 60-90 minutes by phone, Zoom, or face-to-face interviews at time(s) and place(s) that are convenient for you. You have the option to decline to answer any of the questions. You also have the option to withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. With your permission, interviews will be recorded and transcribed as part of the data collection and analysis process. I will share with you a copy of the transcript to confirm accuracy and to add or clarify any information, shortly after the interviews.

Please know that the information you share will be confidential and will only be used for the sake of my study. Your name will not appear in the dissertation and will be replaced with a pseudonym of your choice. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information, please contact me at (214) 695-2642 or by email at hanan.almasri@mavs.uta.edu. Please email me by (date) to notify me if you are interested in participating. If you are interested, an electronic questionnaire via Survey Monkey will be emailed to you to gather demographic data and informed consent. The questionnaire should not take more than five minutes to complete.

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Arlington. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. Your input is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Hanan Almasri
Doctoral Student
Education Leadership and Policy Studies
The University of Texas at Arlington

APPENDIX D

Recruitment Letter to the School Principals

Date:

Dear (Principal's Name)

      I am writing to invite you to participate in the study I will be conducting on private Islamic schools as part of my dissertation research at the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program here at the University of Texas at Arlington.

      The purpose of this research is to examine teacher retention in Islamic schools through the lived experiences of veteran teachers who choose to continue working at (school name). I plan to interview teachers who have been working at (school name) for five or more years. By understanding teachers' experiences and reasons for staying, administrators may be better informed about creating and maintaining environments conducive to retaining teachers. Furthermore, learning about the motivations for teachers' commitment and the challenges they face, if any, could guide private school administrators toward implementing policies that may improve teacher retention.

      However, the reason I am contacting you is to get a different perspective and gain more understanding about teachers' experiences while working at (SSA), and to hear your thoughts about the reasons for teachers' retention and attrition.

      Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. It will involve one 60-90 minutes by phone, Zoom, or face-to-face interviews at time(s) and place(s) that are convenient for you. You have the option to decline to answer any of the questions. You also have the option to withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. With your permission, interviews will be recorded and transcribed as part of the data collection and analysis process. I will share with

you a copy of the transcript to confirm accuracy and to add or clarify any information, shortly after the interviews.

Please know that the information you share will be confidential and will only be used for the sake of my study. Your name will not appear in the dissertation and will be replaced with a pseudonym. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information, please contact me at (214) 695-2642 or by email at hanan.almasri@mavs.uta.edu. Please email me by (date) to notify me if you are interested in participating. If you are interested, an electronic questionnaire via Survey Monkey will be emailed to you to gather demographic data and informed consent. The questionnaire should not take more than five minutes to complete.

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Arlington. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. Your input is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Hanan Almasri
Doctoral Student
Education Leadership and Policy Studies
The University of Texas at Arlington

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Invitation Email

Date
Dear Colleagues,
       Thank you for volunteering to participate in the teacher retention in Islamic schools interview. The information you provide will help me learn about your experience while working at your current school. In order for me to further my research, I will need to gather some details about you and ask for consent. Please note that this information will be kept confidential and no connections will be made directly to you and the information you provide in the written study. The questionnaire should take you about 5 minutes or less to complete.

APPENDIX F

Consent Form

HOW VETERAN TEACHERS EXPERIENCE WORKING IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Hanan Almasri, Doctoral Student
The University of Texas at Arlington

Principal Investigator
Hanan Almasri, and I am a doctoral student at The University of Texas at Arlington.

Faculty Advisor
Barbara Tobolowsky, PhD, Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Introduction
You are being asked to participate in a study I am conducting for my dissertation research. The

purpose of this study is to examine teacher retention in Islamic schools through the lived

experiences of veteran teachers and their reasons for remaining at the current school. You were

sent this email because you were identified as a full-time teacher with five or more years of

experience. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinue your

participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise

entitled. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to examine teacher retention in Islamic schools through the
experiences of veteran teachers who remained at their current school for five or more years.

DURATION
The first part of the study involves completing a pre-screening background questionnaire. It will
take about 5 minutes of your time. For the second part of the study, I will conduct individual
interviews lasting between 60-90 minutes in person, via Zoom, or by phone, based on the
participant's preferences and availability.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Individual interviews will be conducted with the 10 – 20 individuals who completed the
questionnaire and agreed to participate in the individual interview.

PROCEDURES

You are requested to:
1. Provide your consent to participate in this questionnaire by clicking the "yes" button below.
2. Answer the questions in the survey. (You are not obligated to answer every question.)
3. Provide your consent to participate in an individual interview by clicking the "yes" button below.
4. Participate in an individual interview. (You are not obligated to answer every question.)

POSSIBLE BENEFITS
As educators, you are the most valuable resource for Islamic schools and an integral part of the growth and success of our future generation, the students. Findings from this study will inform Islamic school policymakers and possibly other private and public schools leaders about practices that motivate teachers, such as yourself, to find satisfaction in their job and remain working with their schools.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS
There are no perceived risks or discomforts for participating in this research study. Should you experience any discomfort, please inform the researcher. You have the right to discontinue the study procedures at any time at no consequence.

COMPENSATION
No compensation will be offered for participation in this questionnaire or interview.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES
There are no alternative procedures offered for this questionnaire. You have the right to decline participation in any or all study procedures or quit at any time at no consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. All data collected from this study will be stored in office 104B of Trimble Hall on the UT Arlington on campus for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Additional research studies could evolve from the information you have provided, but your information will not be linked to you in anyway; it will be anonymous. Although you rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this study and the information within this consent form. If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review your research records, The University of Texas at Arlington will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS
Questions about this research study may be directed to Hanan Almasri, doctoral student at UT Arlington, hanan.almasri@mavs.uta.edu. I can be reached at 217-695-2642. You can also reach Dr. Barbara Tobolowsky, Faculty Advisor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy

Studies, UT Arlington. She can be reached at tobolow@uta.edu. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration, Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

CONSENT
By clicking "Yes" below, you confirm that you are 18 years of age or older and have read or had this document read to you. You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time.

You voluntarily agree to participate in this questionnaire and to participate in the interview portion if selected to do so by the researcher. By clicking "Yes" you are not waiving any of your legal rights. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

- o   Yes, I give my consent to participate in the questionnaire and interview.
- o   No, I do not want to participate.

APPENDIX G

Teachers' Demographic Questionnaire

Name:_____

Contact Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Best time of day to reach you: _____

Interview preference: ___Zoom ___Face-to-face ___Phone

If follow-up communication is needed, your preferred communication: (Check all that apply):

__Phone   __Text   _Email   __Other: _____

Gender: __Male   __Female

What is your highest level of education?

- o   Associate degree

- o   Master's Degree

- o   Doctoral Degree

- o   Other, please specify _____

How many years of experience in education do you have, in total?

- o   5-10

- o   11-15

- o   16-20

- o   20+

What type of school did you teach in before your current job? (Check all that apply.)

- o   Public school

- Private- Nonsectarian school

- Faith-based school

- None. I have only taught at X.

- Other

- Specify (If no option applies)

How many years have you been teaching at your current school?

- 5-10

- 11-15

- 16-20

- 20+

What subject/s do you currently teach?

Did you go through a teacher preparation/ certification program?

- Yes

- No

- If yes, please specify

What grade level/s do you currently teach?

How much is your gross annual salary earned from teaching at this school?

- Below $30

- $30,000 - $35,000

- $35,001 - $45,000

- $45,001 - $55,000

- $55,001 - $65,000

- More than $65,000

o   Prefer not to answer.

Principals' Demographic Questionnaire

Name:_____

Contact Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Best time of day to reach you: _____

Interview preference: ___Zoom ___Face-to-face ___Phone

If follow-up communication is needed, your preferred communication: (Check all that apply):

__Phone   __Text   _Email   __Other: _____

Gender: __Male   __Female

What is your highest level of education?

- o   Master's Degree

- o   Doctoral Degree

- o   Other, please specify _____

How many years of experience in education do you have, in total?

- o   5-10

- o   11-15

- o   16-20

- o   20+

How many years of experience working as a principal do you have?

- o   1-5

- o   6-10

- 10-15

- 16-20

- 20+

How many years have you been working as a principal at your current school?

- 1-4

- 5-10

- 11-15

- 16-20

- 20+

What type of school did you work in before your current job? (Check all that apply.)

- Public school

- Private- Nonsectarian school

- Faith-based school

- None. I have only worked at X.

- Other

- Specify (If no option applies)

APPENDIX I

Formal Invitation to Participant

Date

Dear (Participant's Name):

Thank you for participating in the first phase of this study through completing the introductory questionnaire. I would like to invite you to participate in the second part of the study by participating in an individual interview. You have been purposefully selected to participate in an interview because of your current employment and years of experience working in (name of school).

The purpose of this research is to explore teacher retention in Islamic schools through the lived experiences of veteran teachers who choose to continue working at (school name). I plan to interview teachers who have been working at SSA for five or more years.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. It will involve one 60-90 minutes phone, Zoom, or face-to-face interviews at time(s) and place(s) that are convenient for you. You have the option to decline to answer any of the questions. You also have the option to withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. With your permission, interviews will be recorded and transcribed as part of the data collection and analysis process. I will share with you a copy of the transcript to confirm accuracy and to add or clarify any information, shortly after the interview.

Please know that the information you share will be confidential and will only be used for the sake of my study. Your name will not appear in the dissertation and will be replaced with a pseudonym of your choice. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information, please contact me at (214) 695-2642 or by email at hanan.almasri@mavs.uta.edu. Please email me by (date) to notify me if you are still interested in participating. If you are still interested, an

electronic questionnaire via Survey Monkey will be emailed to you to gather demographic data and informed consent. The questionnaire should not take more than five minutes to complete.

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Arlington**.** However, the final decision about participation is yours.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. Your input is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Hanan Almasri
Doctoral Student
Education Leadership and Policy Studies
The University of Texas at Arlington

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hanan Almasri is a lifelong learner and an educator who constantly strives to make a difference in the lives of her students and staff through positive, professional leadership. With over 25 years of experience in the education field, Hanan has served in various roles, including an elementary school teacher, a middle and high school teacher, a high school academic counselor, a secondary dean of academics, and a middle and high school principal. Hanan Almasri graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington Summa Cum Laude after completing a Bachelor's Degree of Science and Interdisciplinary Studies in PK-6 education in 2011. She completed her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in 2014.

After working as a high school administrator in Islamic schools for four years, she joined the University of Texas at Arlington in 2019 and completed her doctoral studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in August 2022. Her dissertation title is *The High Cost of Leaving: Veteran Teacher Retention In Islamic Schools*. Her research interest focuses on

improving the retention of highly qualified teachers in Islamic schools, thus improving the

quality of education for the student population in Islamic schools.