

Brooke Culclasure, Ph.D.
Research Director

Shekinah Lightner
Undergraduate Research Assistant

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Do more S.C. Montessori teachers report being satisfied with their job than the national teacher population?
2. What factors influence public Montessori teachers' job satisfaction and retention in S.C.?

BACKGROUND

Approximately 5,352 (7.4%) of South Carolina's public school teachers did not return to the classroom for the 2015-2016 school year, with first-year teachers accounting for 14% of non-returning teachers (Garret, 2016). Prior research has clearly demonstrated the positive relationship between teacher job satisfaction and retention (Stockard and Lehman, 2004), pointing to the importance of identifying factors that influence teacher job satisfaction. Several prior studies found that school management and principal effectiveness were key to teacher satisfaction (Stockard and Lehman, 2004; Grissom, 2011; Perie, Baker, and Whitener, 1997). Additionally, Hirsch (2005) found that, among S.C. teachers, a collegial school culture and strong principal leadership mattered most. Perie, Baker, and Whitener (1997) showed that while age and years of experience may contribute to job satisfaction, factors like administrative support, parental involvement, and teacher autonomy were more important in explaining job satisfaction. With more and more teachers leaving and teacher shortages looming, the question of what factors contribute to job satisfaction and, consequentially, retention have become more relevant. In addition, it becomes more important to study whether certain contexts or models, such as Montessori, appear to create conditions to support teacher satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODS

- In May 2016 a survey created by researchers and Montessori experts was emailed to all public Montessori teachers in S.C. (268)
- The survey garnered a 72% response rate (192 teachers)
- The survey measured attitudes towards job, future career plans, administrative support, Montessori implementation challenges and opportunities, and available resources
- Variables: *Retention*, *Job Satisfaction*, *Lack of Administrative Support*, *Resource Deficiency*, and *State Standards*
- *Lack Administrative Support* and *Resource Deficiency* had Cronbach's alpha scores of 0.7395 and 0.7377, respectively
- Univariate analyses performed for respondent demographics and satisfaction and retention rates
- Cross tabulations performed between *Job Satisfaction*, *Retention* and *State Standards*, with chi-square test for significance
- T-tests performed for *Lack of Administrative Support* and *Resource Deficiency*

FINDINGS

Respondent Demographics.

The majority (74%) taught either at the primary or lower elementary level. Only 26% of Montessori teachers taught Montessori for 10 or more years, with 4-6 years being the average number of years of experience in Montessori.

Job Satisfaction and Retention.

95% of teachers indicated they were satisfied with their job (*Job Satisfaction*), higher than the only 82% of satisfied teachers nationally (Markow et al., 2013). 84% of Montessorians planned to continue teaching (*Retention*). There was a significant relationship between these variables. The majority of those that reported they would remain in their job reported high job satisfaction.

Resource Deficiency		
	n	mean
Satisfied	155	-.0129872
Dissatisfied	8	.1612723
Difference		-.1742595
Return	137	-.0494632
Leave	26	.2328312
Difference		-.2822944

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Job Satisfaction by State Standards					
	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Total
Satisfied	4	13	75	63	155
Dissatisfied	0	3	4	1	8
Total	4	16	79	64	163

X² = 8.3139, p = 0.040

Retention by State Standards					
	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Total
Return	3	11	63	60	137
Leave	1	5	16	4	26
Total	4	16	79	64	163

X² = 8.6209, p = 0.035

Lack Administrative Support		
	n	mean
Satisfied	155	-.026483
Dissatisfied	8	.4792745
Difference		-.5057576*
Return	137	-.0361964
Leave	26	.1803166
Difference		-.216513

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Teacher Retention by Job Satisfaction			
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total
Return	136	1	137
Leave	19	7	26
Total	155	8	163

X² = 32.1244, p = 0.000

Resource Deficiency. Teachers who were satisfied with their jobs had lower *Resource Deficiency* scores than those who indicated dissatisfaction with their jobs, although this was not a significant result. Teachers who reported they would return had lower *Resource Deficiency* scores, with a marginally significant p-value of 0.1045.

Lack of Administrative Support. Teachers who reported satisfaction with their jobs had significantly lower *Lack Administrative Support* scores than dissatisfied teachers, indicating that the more a teacher felt supported by administration the more likely they were to be satisfied with their job. Similarly, teachers who reported having less administrative support, were less likely to say they planned to return to the classroom.

State Standards. Teachers who felt like they could implement Montessori while incorporating state standards were more likely to be satisfied with their job. The less a teacher felt they could implement Montessori and state standards the more likely they were to report they were going to leave their position.

DISCUSSION

Given the high satisfaction and retention rates within the sample and the relationship between these two variables, it may be that Montessori can provide teachers with a satisfying experience, thus leading to greater retention. With *Lack Administrative Support* and *State Standards* having a relationship with *Job Satisfaction*, administrative support and state standards aligned with Montessori may contribute to greater job satisfaction. The relationship between *Retention* and *State Standards* and the marginally significant relationship with *Resource Deficiency*, may indicate that adequate resources and the ability to implement both Montessori and state standards can influence teachers' decisions to stay in the profession. As S.C. currently struggles to retain teachers, and with even greater projected teacher shortages, these results can aid in understanding policies and models to pursue to ensure teachers are satisfied with their jobs and remain in classrooms. Future research should employ better measures of *Retention* and *Job Satisfaction* and explore more variables that may be impactful on teachers' experiences. Given S.C.'s level of first-year teacher attrition, it would also be useful to analyze job satisfaction and retention by years of experience.

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