Turnover Intention, Emotional Exhaustion, Perceived Social Support, and Professional Isolation among Special Educators and Regular Teachers

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Abstract: *This study investigates the relationship between turnover intentions, emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation among special and regular educators in India using a quantitative approach. A sample of 173 teachers (special and regular educators) was assessed using validated scales, including the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support, UCLA Loneliness Scale, and Turnover Intention Scale. Findings indicate that special educators experience significantly higher emotional exhaustion, professional isolation, and turnover intentions, whereas regular educators report greater social support. Addressing these challenges is crucial for reducing turnover rates and enhancing teacher well - being.*

Keywords: Turnover intentions, Emotional exhaustion, social support, Professional isolation, Teacher retention.

1. Introduction

Teachers, as architects of young minds and shapers of the future, play a role beyond merely imparting knowledge. Teacher turnover is a serious problem for the education sector, school stability and student learning are hampered by educators quitting their jobs. Understanding the factors affecting teacher retention is crucial for developing effective policies and support systems. In India, where the need for teachers to meet the educational demands of an expanding population is paramount, this study focuses on this perspective. The researcher's goal is to compare the experiences of emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation among special educators and regular educators, and to determine how these elements relate to the special educators' intentions to leave the field. Teacher turnover significantly lowers student achievement and breaks up the continuity of education. According to studies, students who experience frequent teacher changes may become less motivated, perform worse academically, and exhibit more behavioral issues. Moreover, schools bear the financial burden of high turnover rates due to the expenses incurred in hiring, training, and replacing departing personnel. A variety of factors must be examined to fully comprehend the causes of teacher turnover. This research will be looking into some important factors that might affect teacher turnover.

1.1 Emotional Exhaustion

Significant emotional demands are placed on teachers, especially those who work with students with various needs. A feeling of low emotional reserves, typified by feelings of cynicism, diminished sense of accomplishment, and depersonalization, is referred to as the emotional exhaustion related to teaching.

1.2 Social Support

Social support networks are essential for reducing the negative effects of emotional exhaustion and enhancing the well - being of educators. These networks can be informal and formal, such as those offered by professional development programs or school administration, as well as include family, friends, and coworkers.

1.3 Professional Isolation

The term "professional isolation" describes the sensation of being cut off from co - workers and the larger educational community. Feelings that one's work is not appreciated or understood by others.

1.4 Turnover Intention

A high level of emotional exhaustion, a dearth of social support, and a high degree of professional isolation make educators more likely to think about quitting. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between these variables and the intentions of special educators and regular educators to leave their positions.

Examining teacher turnover and well - being in the context of the Indian education system is a unique opportunity. Despite the increased emphasis on inclusive education, compared to Western nations, special education services are still in their infancy. Examining special educators' individual experiences in this setting can shed important light on their requirements and difficulties.

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of this study titled "A Quantitative Study on Turnover Intentions among Special Educators and Regular Teachers" lies in its exploration of key factors contributing to the high turnover rates among educators, specifically focusing on special educators. The research addresses important variables such as emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation, which have been identified as major contributors to teachers' turnover intentions. By employing validated tools, this study offers crucial insights into the unique experiences of special educators in contrast to regular teachers.

2. Review of Literature

The following articles cover some of the previous studies conducted on the following variables: emotional exhaustion, professional isolation, social support, and turnover intentions. This review of the literature will bring out the studies that have been done in these research areas and the feasibility of the study. These studies would help in this research.

2.1 Emotional Exhaustion

Weber et. al (2023) Teaching can be a demanding job, and teachers are often prone to emotional exhaustion and low job satisfaction. The school environment, including various elements of the educational environment, has been shown to play an important role in these experiences. This study examines the existing literature on the relationship between teachers' emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and the impact of school climate. Several studies have shown a strong negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among teachers (Maslach et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Cognitive exhaustion, characterized by decreased sensory resources is associated with decreased motivation, performance, and commitment to learning (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Conversely, higher levels of job satisfaction, coupled with positive attitudes toward work and satisfaction, are associated with increased engagement, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement (Hancock et al., 2006).2011). There is significant variation in the methodological approaches utilized in various studies, making it challenging to reach definitive conclusions about the influence of contextual factors. Moreover, most research places a strong emphasis on individual - level variables, neglecting to fully explore the complex interplay between contextual factors and teacher characteristics. This further highlights the need for more comprehensive investigations into the mediating and moderating mechanisms that connect context and teacher well - being, to develop targeted and impactful interventions effectively.

Langher et. al (2017) Although there is a growing body of research on burnout among special education instructors, little is known about the precise function that perceived support plays in reducing burnout symptoms in this population. Although research conducted in general education environments has demonstrated the advantageous impacts of perceived support in mitigating burnout, it remains uncertain if analogous trends are present among special education educators. Teachers in special education confront particular difficulties, like heavier caseloads, more administrative duties, and higher emotional demands; these factors may have an impact on how burnout and perceived support are related. Furthermore, not much study has been done on how different sources of support—such as administrators, supervisors, and colleagues—affect special education teachers' burnout about their perceived level of support. By knowing which forms of support are most helpful in lowering burnout, specialized treatments that are suited to the particular requirements of special education workers can be developed. Moreover, there is also a dearth of research in the special education literature regarding the influence of individual variables, such as personality traits and coping mechanisms, in modulating the relationship between burnout and perceived support. A more comprehensive knowledge of the mechanisms underlying the association between special education teachers' burnout and perceived support can be obtained by looking into these issues.

Lawrenson and McKinnon's (1982) study expands on previous research examining the difficulties faced by educators in this specialized sector by examining the factors that contribute to attrition and burnout among emotionally disturbed classroom teachers. Prior studies have brought attention to the high rates of burnout and turnover that occur when educators engage with emotionally disturbed adolescents. These high rates are frequently ascribed to stress, lack of support, and student - demanding behaviors (Baker et al., 2019; Sutherland & Oswald, 2005). Furthermore, research has shown how critical it is to address teacher well - being and support networks to reduce burnout and raise retention rates in this taxing field (Gray et al., 2019; Van Acker et al., 2003). Despite these realizations, there is still a dearth of studies on the precise causes of burnout and attrition among emotionally disturbed teachers, as well as practical methods for promoting their retention. By examining the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers in this demographic, Lawrenson and McKinnon's study seeks to close this gap by illuminating the particular difficulties these educators encounter and pinpointing possible areas for assistance and intervention.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Bakker and Demerouti (2017) have shown how work involvement is a buffer against burnout. Moreover, a noteworthy consequence of burnout among educators has been recognized as turnover intention, which is characterized as the desire to quit one's employment (Brouwers and Tomic, 2000; Hakanen et al., 2006). There is a research deficit in understanding the intricate interactions between job characteristics, work engagement, and turnover intention specifically among U. S. educators, despite the wealth of literature on burnout and its correlates among educators. Studies that have already been done have frequently concentrated on only one or two of these factors, ignoring any potential synergistic effects and complex interactions between them. Also, not much study has been done on these links in the particular setting of the American educational system, which may have different organizational structures, regulations, and cultural norms. Thus, to guide focused interventions meant to reduce burnout and raise retention rates in the education sector, thorough studies that concurrently take into account job characteristics, work engagement, and turnover intention among American educators are required.

Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2012) investigated the connection between Chinese teachers' intentions to leave their jobs and work - related stress. By concentrating on the Chinese setting, where rapid educational reforms and rising expectations on teachers have prompted worries about retention, their work contributes to the body of material already available on teacher turnover. In a variety of cultural and educational contexts, prior studies have demonstrated the substantial influence that work stress has on teachers' job satisfaction, burnout, and plans to leave the profession. The appearance and repercussions of work - related stress among teachers may be influenced by the distinct cultural, organizational, and

societal elements that exist in China. By examining how work stress affects Chinese teachers' inclinations to quit, Liu and Onwuegbuzie's study helps close this research gap. Through comprehension of the elements influencing turnover intention within the Chinese setting, decision - makers and educational leaders can create focused plans to help keep teachers in the classroom and raise student achievement. Nevertheless, in light of the insightful information this study offered, more investigation is still required to fully understand the intricate interactions among work stress, organizational variables, and personal traits that influence Chinese teachers' intentions to leave their jobs. Longitudinal research might also look into how these relationships change over time, offering a more comprehensive picture of the variables affecting teacher turnover in China's changing educational environment.

2.2 Professional isolation

Schlichte et. al (2005) Multiple studies have consistently identified isolation as a major contributor to teacher burnout. Physical isolation is a prevalent factor, stemming from heavy workloads and limited opportunities for collaboration (Beavers & Ross, 2010). Teachers often find themselves grappling with a multitude of tasks, such as individual lesson planning and administrative duties, which can leave them feeling overwhelmed and disconnected (Zembylas, 2005). Moreover, emotional isolation can also be a prominent issue as teachers may feel disconnected from their colleagues and administrators, resulting in a lack of support and understanding (Borkowski & Hlebowitsh, 1988). This feeling of isolation is amplified when there is a lack of meaningful professional dialogue and shared decision - making (Spillane & Birchmeier, 2000). Declining societal respect and inadequate compensation can contribute to feelings of alienation and undervaluation (Darling - Hammond, 2012). This review highlights the crucial importance of recognizing and addressing teacher isolation and alienation in the prevention of burnout. By proactively addressing these interconnected factors and implementing effective strategies to foster collaboration and support within schools, we can work towards a healthier and more sustainable work environment for educators.

Shireen Pavri (2004) This exploratory study is to determine what kind of pre - service and in - service training general and special educators in elementary schools have received to help students with and without disabilities behave socially. Limitations point to important directions for further study on the connection between teachers' burnout and perceived social support. First, to achieve a more representative and diverse sample, resolving issues of voluntary participation may involve using random sampling procedures or offering incentives for involvement. Second, by triangulating findings, using a mixed - methods strategy that combines quantitative surveys with observational methods or interviews could improve the validity and reliability of the results. Thirdly, understanding differences in the association between social support and burnout requires investigating the generalizability of findings across broad populations of teachers, including those from different grade levels, school settings, and geographic regions. Fourthly, a more objective assessment of this relationship would be possible if observational methods were used to evaluate instructors' real behaviors and practices in the classroom. Finally, examining how perceived social support and burnout relate to one another at various career stages while considering elements like work tenure and professional development opportunities may provide information for developing interventions specifically designed to enhance the well - being of teachers.

2.3 Social Support

Finman (1985) According to this theory the field of special education has unique challenges that can increase the stress on teachers. This stress can be related to many factors, but social support can play a critical role in mitigating its effects. The concept of social support suggests that strong bonds with co - workers, supervisors, family, and friends can buffer the negative effects of stress. (eg Burke et al., 1979; Dewe and Guest, 1990). Research conducted in various occupations indicates that social support can be an important factor in reducing work - related stress (Cohen and Wills, 1985). The work of Fimian (1986) emphasizes the need for further research on specific types of social support. Most useful for special educators. Research shows that social support can reduce stress in several ways. It may directly address stressors (primary effect), reduce the negative impact of stressors (buffering effect), or simply provide emotional comfort and reinforcement (main effect) (Beehr, 1985; House, 1981). Further research may examine how different types of social support sources (supervisors, colleagues, family, friends) influence work stress and burnout of special educators. This information can inform interventions and support systems tailored to the specific needs of this population.

2.4 Need for Study

Special educators are essential in advocating for inclusive education and providing support for students with disabilities. The need for this study is because of the high rates of educator turnover that have been seen especially in the special education field. During her internship at a special school, the researcher saw first - hand the difficulties special educators confront in coping with emotional weariness, negotiating professional isolation, and finding appropriate social support. This experience piqued her interest in the topic. It is critical to comprehend the elements influencing special educators' intent to leave their jobs because of the critical role that educators play in promoting inclusive education and serving kids with a range of learning needs. This study intends to identify specific challenges experienced by special educators and investigate potential solutions to enhance retention and promote teacher well - being by comparing the experiences of special educators and regular teachers.

2.5 Research question

1) Whether there is a relationship between emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and turnover intention among special educators?
2) Whether there is a relationship between emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and turnover intention among regular teachers?
3) There is a difference in emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and turnover intentions between special educators and regular educators.

3. Method

3.1 Aim

This study aims to examine the relationships between emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation with turnover intentions, as well as to explore potential differences in both the predictors and levels of turnover intentions between special educators and regular teachers.

3.2 Objectives

1) To investigate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers.
2) To investigate the relationship between social support and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers.
3) To investigate the relationship between professional isolation and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers.
4) To investigate potential differences in the predictors of turnover intentions between special educators and regular teachers.
5) To investigate the potential difference in turnover intention between special educators and regular teachers.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine turnover intentions, emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation among special educators and regular teachers. The quantitative comparative research and the correlational study provide insightful information. The collection of quantitative data from special educators and regular teachers will be accomplished using a survey questionnaire. Finding disparities between the two groups' turnover intentions and associated variables is the goal of the comparative study. Coordination analysis will be used with the correlational study within each group to clarify the connections among social support, professional isolation, and emotional exhaustion. Using these methods together, the study seeks to illuminate both group differences and internal dynamics within the educator community by offering a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing turnover intentions within the distinct context of education.

3.4 Hypothesis

HO 1: There is a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers.
HO 2: There is a significant relationship between social support and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers.
HO 3: There is a significant relationship between professional isolation and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers.
HO 4: There is a significant difference turnover intentions between special educators and regular teachers.

HO 5: There is a significant difference in emotional exhaustion, perceived social support and professional isolation between special educators and regular teachers.

3.5 Operational Defining

3.5.1 Emotional Exhaustion
This study defines emotional exhaustion as the individual's score in the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educator Survey (MBI - ES).

3.5.2 Social support
In this study, social support can be defined as the individual's score on a multidimensional scale for perceived social support (Zimitt et. al, 1988) which will be used for evaluating the individual's perceived level of social support across three dimensions - family, friends, and significant others.

3.5.3 Professional isolation
In this study, professional isolation can be defined as the individual's score in the revised UCLA loneliness scale - Russell, D (1978).

3.5.4. Turnover intention
In this study turnover intention can be defined as the individual score in the Turnover intention scale – g Roodt (2004).

3.6 Participant

A sample of (n=173) 86 special educators and 87 regular school teachers who work in special schools and regular schools will be taken for the study. Purposive sampling was selected to ensure that participants had relevant teaching experience and met the study's inclusion criteria, making them suitable for analyzing turnover intentions.

3.7 Inclusion criteria

1) Special Educators: Individuals actively engaged in teaching and providing specialized education services to students with disabilities and having B ed. in Special education.
2) Regular Teachers: Educators involved in general education, teaching students without specialized needs and having B ed.
3) Special Educators and Regular Teachers working at various educational levels, such as primary, secondary, or higher education.
4) Participants who are proficient in the language of the survey instrument to ensure accurate responses.
5) Individuals are willing to voluntarily participate in the study by providing informed consent.

3.8 Exclusion criteria

1) Non - teaching staff or administrators are not directly involved in classroom instruction.
2) Teachers who don't have a bachelor's degree in education regular teachers and a bachelor's degree in education specialized in special education will be excluded from the study.

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3) Surveys with missing or incomplete responses may be excluded from the analysis to maintain data integrity
4) Individuals who have retired from active teaching duties at the time of the study.
5) Participants with insufficient language proficiency to comprehend and respond to the survey questions accurately.
6) Individuals are unwilling to provide informed consent for participation.

3.9 Tools

3.9.1 Socio - demographic details
The specific sheet collects information about the participant's occupations and specializations of special educators.

3.9.2 Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educator Survey (MBI - ES, 2016)
The emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – ES was developed by Maslach. et al were modified into a 22 - item scale to measure the burnout of teachers. In this study, the researcher uses the subscale of MBI - ES which is emotional exhaustion to study the variable emotional exhaustion. This is a 9 - item scale that has a 7 - point Likert scale which ranges from never (0) to always (6). The scale demonstrated robust reliability and validity in assessing burnout among educators. The scale has shown high internal consistency with each subscale. Test - retest reliability has also supported the stability of this scale. The MBI's reliability coefficients fall into two ranges: one - month test - retest =.60 to 80 and Cronbach Alpha =.71 to.90. By comparing MBI scores with peer rating scores for various samples, it shows convergent validity coefficients ranging from.20 to.56. A high score in emotional exhaustion indicated there is emotional exhaustion in that individual.

3.9.3 Multidimensional scale for perceived social support – zimet. et al (1988)
The Multidimensional scale for perceived social support was developed by zimet. et al in the year 1988 as a tool to measure an individual's perceived level of support across the dimensions of family friends and significant others. This tool has been widely used in research and clinical settings. The MPSS scale consists of 12 items, with four items measuring each dimension of support that is family, friends, and significant others. Each item is rated on a 7 Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). The total score ranges from 12 - 48 where the high score indicates a high level of perceived stress. MPSS has a good score for reliability and validity, this scale has a high internal consistency, with Cronbach Alpha coefficients ranging from.85 - .94 for the total scale and.81 - .93 for the respective subscales. The test - retest reliability score has also been found high, ranging from.75 - .85. This scale has good construct and discriminant validity.

3.9.4 Revised UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) loneliness scale - Russell, D (1978)
The Revised UCLA loneliness scale was developed by Russell, d in the year 1978. This scale has 20 items designed to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. It is a 4 Likert scale tool ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often). This scale is highly reliable, both in terms of internal consistency (coefficient ranging from.89 to.94) and test - retest reliability over 1 year (r =.73). Convergent validity for the scale was indicated by significant correlations with other measures of loneliness. Construct validity was supported by significant relations with measures of the adequacy of the individual's interpersonal relationships, and by correlations between loneliness and measures of health and well - being.

3.9.5 Turnover intention scale – g Roodt (2004)
The turnover intention scale was developed by g Roodt in 2004. This is a tool that is used to assess an employee's intention to leave their current job. This is a 15 - item scale that measures various aspects of turnover intention, such as thoughts about leaving, job search activities, and intention to resign. It is on a 5 Likert scale ranging from 1 - 5. A high score on this scale indicates a high turnover intention. Items 10, 11, and 14 are reverse scoring. Studies have reported good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.7, indicating reliable measurement. The scale has been shown to correlate with other constructs related to turnover, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and stress, supporting its convergent validity. Additionally, studies have found that higher scores on the TIS predict actual employee turnover, demonstrating its predictive validity.

3.10 Procedure

The sample for the research consists of 86 special educators and 87 regular teachers who work in special schools and regular schools in south India. They were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion Criteria. The participants are currently working as teachers. Responses of participants will be considered in the investigation. Purposive sampling is used for collecting the sample. The questionnaire is prepared by using 4 scales which include the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educator Survey (MBI - ES), a Multidimensional scale for perceived social support – zimet. et al (1988), Revised UCLA loneliness scale - Russell, D (1978) and Turnover intention scale – g Roodt (2004). The questionnaire would be given to participants physically. Informed consent is collected from the respondents before collecting the data. The consent from the schools is also considered. Finally, the analysis of the data is done using appropriate statistical tools whenever needed.

3.11 Data Analysis

The gathered data is analyzed using quantitative data analysis methods. The degrees of emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and turnover intentions within each group will be summed up using descriptive statistics. The Correlation between the variables will be done using Pearson's or Spearman based on the normality test. The study also employs inferential statistics, such as t - tests to compare certain variables between special educators and regular teachers.

3.12 Ethical consideration

1) The participants are assured that all the information they are sharing would be kept confidential and given proper

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knowledge regarding the purpose of the study they are going to do.
2) A consent is obtained from the institutions.
3) The participants have the freedom to quit the questionnaire they doing at any point in time if they want to.

The responses from the participants is used only for research purposes

3.13 Transparency and Openness

Ensuring transparency and openness in research is critical for enhancing the credibility, reproducibility, and impact of the study. This research implements several key practices to adhere to these principles. First, the research design, hypotheses, and analysis plan will be pre - registered on a platform like the Open Science Framework (OSF), ensuring that the research follows a predetermined plan and prevents selective reporting of results. After de - identification to protect participant confidentiality, the dataset used in this study is made available to the research community through a public repository. This allows for verification, replication, or secondary analysis by other researchers. All tools and materials used, including the survey questionnaires and scales, will be accessible, enabling others to replicate the study or use these tools in their research.

4. Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which aimed to investigate turnover intentions, emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation among special educators and regular teachers. The analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between these variables, assess group differences, and examine the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in the study. Descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and comparative tests are presented to address the research objectives. The results are organized into five sections: descriptive statistics (Table 1), correlations between variables (Table 2), comparison of turnover intentions between special educators and regular teachers (Table 3), and comparison of key variables between the two groups (Table 4). Each section provides detailed insights into the data, highlighting significant patterns and relationships that contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing turnover intentions and well - being among educators.

4.1 Table1

Table 1 shows the Mean, standard deviation, reliability and p value of the variables

Variables	Mean	SD	No. of items	Cronbach alpha	Shapiro - Wilk	
					W	P
Emotional exhaustion	53.6	21.4	22	0.835	0.925	<.001
Social support	66.6	16.8	12	0.963	0.843	<.001
Professional isolation	45.2	11.0	20	0.862	0.971	0.001
Turnover intention	16.0	5.27	6	0.736	0.968	<.001

The data presented include descriptive statistics for four variables: Emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and Turnover intention, each with a sample size of 173 and no missing values. Emotional exhaustion has a mean of 53.6, a median of 48, and a standard deviation of 21.4, ranging from 17 to 106. Social support shows a mean of 66.6, a median of 72, and a standard deviation of 16.8, with values ranging from 22 to 84. Professional Isolation has a mean of 45.2, a median of 47, and a standard deviation of 11.0, ranging from 23 to 70. Lastly, Turnover intention has a mean of 16.0, a median of 16, and a standard deviation of 5.27, with values ranging from 6 to 29. The Shapiro - Wilk test of normality for all variables yielded p - values below 0.001, indicating that the data significantly deviated from a normal distribution.

In terms of reliability analysis, the four scales were assessed. The first reliability analysis showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.835, indicating good internal consistency for the emotional exhaustion scale. The second reliability analysis produced a higher Cronbach's alpha of 0.963, suggesting excellent internal consistency for the social support scale. The reliability of the professional isolation scale showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.862 indicating good internal consistency and the Cronbach's alpha of turnover intention scale is 0.736, indicating a good internal consistency. Overall, despite the data's non - normal distribution, the scales' reliability is strong, with high Cronbach's alpha values reflecting solid internal consistency across the measures.

4.2 Table 2

Table 2 shows the relationship between the variables

Variable	Emotional exhaustion	Social support	Professional isolation	Turnover intention
Emotional exhaustion	-			
Social support	- 0.725***	-		
Professional isolation	0.503***	- 0.444***	-	
Turnover intention	0.519***	- 0.616***	0.420***	-

Note. (***) indicate that the correlations are statistically significant at the p < 0.001 level, meaning there is a less than 0.1% chance that these relationships occurred by random chance, signifying strong statistical significance.

The table presents the correlation matrix between four variables: Emotional Exhaustion, Social Support, Professional Isolation, and Turnover Intention. The values represent Pearson correlation coefficients, which indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between these variables. A significant negative correlation (- 0.725***) exists between Emotional Exhaustion and Social Support,

indicating that greater social support is associated with lower emotional exhaustion.

Emotional Exhaustion is positively correlated with Professional Isolation (r = 0.503***) and Turnover Intention (r = 0.519***), indicating that higher emotional exhaustion is associated with greater feelings of isolation and an increased intention to leave one's job.

Social Support is negatively correlated with Professional Isolation (r = - 0.444***) and Turnover Intention (r = - 0.616***), meaning that higher social support reduces feelings of isolation and decreases the likelihood of turnover intention.

Finally, there is a significant positive relationship between Professional Isolation and Turnover Intention (r = 0.420***), indicating that individuals who feel more isolated in their professional life are more likely to consider leaving their job.

These correlations highlight the protective role of social support against emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, while professional isolation exacerbates these negative outcomes. The three asterisks denote the high level of significance in these relationships, reinforcing the robustness of the findings.

4.3 Table 3

Table 3 shows the significant difference in turnover intention between special educators and regular teachers

Variables	Group				P Value
	1		2		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Turnover intention	18.3	4.64	13.6	4.82	<.001

The table shows a statistically significant difference in turnover intention between the two groups (Special educators and regular teachers). The mean turnover intention for Group 1 (18.3) is significantly higher than that of Group 2 (13.6). This difference is statistically significant, as indicated by the p - value of <.001. This suggests that there is a strong likelihood that the observed difference is not due to chance and is a true reflection of a difference in turnover intention between the two groups.

4.4 Table 4

Table 4 shows the significant difference in variables between special educators and regular teachers

Variables	Group				P Value
	1		2		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Emotional exhaustion	64.3	22.1	42.9	14.14	<.001
Social support	59.4	18.2	73.9	11.53	<.001
Professional isolation	48.4	11.9	42.1	8.95	<.001

Emotional Exhaustion: Special educators reported significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion (mean = 64.3) compared to regular teachers (mean = 42.9). This difference is statistically significant (p - value <.001), suggesting that members of Special educators are experiencing more emotional strain than those into regular teaching, when coming to social support: regular teachers reported significantly higher levels of social support (mean = 73.9) compared to Special educators (mean = 59.4). This difference is also statistically significant (p - value <.001), indicating that members of regular teachers are receiving more support from their social networks than those in Special educators. When coming to professional Isolation: Special educators reported slightly higher levels of professional isolation (mean = 48.4) compared to regular teachers (mean = 42.1). This difference is statistically significant (p - value <.001), suggesting that members of Special educators may feel more disconnected from their colleagues or profession than regular teachers.

5. Discussion

The study investigates the relationship between emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers. The results, grounded in both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, provide critical insights into the differing experiences of special and regular educators.

A significant gap highlighted in the research is the lack of focus on contextual factors, specifically how social support and emotional exhaustion interact with professional isolation to influence turnover intentions in the distinct Indian educational system. While previous studies have focused on burnout among teachers (Schaufeli et al., 2002), this research adds a new layer by exploring these interactions among special and regular educators in India, an underexplored context.

The study also uncovers the limited exploration of how different sources of support (e. g., administrators vs. colleagues) contribute to mitigating burnout in special educators. Additionally, the data reveal that professional isolation continues to be a significant problem among special educators, as noted by high levels of emotional exhaustion linked to poor support systems. This study highlights a need for further research into systemic interventions that address the unique professional isolation of special educators working with students with disabilities.

5.1 Emotional Exhaustion

The results show that emotional exhaustion is significantly higher in special educators than in regular teachers (Mean = 64.3 vs.42.9, p <.001). This finding is consistent with the nature of their work, as special educators face unique challenges, including managing complex behavior problems and developing individualized education plans (IEPs) . These stressors likely contribute to their higher emotional burnout, as also suggested by the literature, where special education teachers are more vulnerable to burnout due to the emotional demands of their profession.

Moreover, the positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention (r = 0.519, p < 0.001) suggests that those who experience higher emotional exhaustion are more likely to consider leaving their jobs. This reinforces previous studies that link burnout to higher turnover intentions in educational settings. The significant differences in emotional exhaustion also highlight the need

for targeted interventions, such as stress management programs and mental health support, particularly for special educators.

5.2 Social Support

The findings also reveal that regular teachers report significantly higher levels of social support compared to special educators (Mean = 73.9 vs.59.4, p <.001) . Social support has been found to act as a protective factor against burnout, and in this study, a strong negative correlation between social support and emotional exhaustion (r = - 0.725, p < 0.001) was observed. This aligns with existing research suggesting that social support reduces the negative effects of emotional exhaustion. Special educators, however, may not have access to the same level of social networks, possibly due to their specialized work environments and lack of professional collaboration opportunities.

The lower levels of social support among special educators are concerning, given that a robust social network is crucial for emotional well - being. The findings imply that schools should foster a more inclusive support environment for special educators by encouraging professional collaboration and peer support systems.

5.3 Professional Isolation

Professional isolation is another critical factor examined in the study. Special educators reported significantly higher levels of professional isolation compared to regular teachers (Mean = 48.4 vs.42.1, p <.001) . This isolation, which stems from the specialized nature of their work, can exacerbate feelings of detachment and decrease job satisfaction. The correlation between professional isolation and turnover intention (r = 0.420, p < 0.001) further supports the idea that teachers who feel disconnected from their colleagues are more likely to consider leaving the profession.

Given that professional isolation has a negative impact on both emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions, it is essential to promote opportunities for collaboration between special and regular educators. School administrators should also consider developing professional development programs that facilitate shared learning experiences among all educators to mitigate professional isolation.

5.4 Turnover Intention

Turnover intention, the study's primary outcome, was found to be higher in special educators than in regular teachers (Mean = 18.3 vs.13.6, p <.001) . The higher turnover intentions among special educators can be attributed to the combination of emotional exhaustion, lower social support, and greater professional isolation. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that special educators face unique challenges that increase their likelihood of leaving the profession.

5.5 Implications

The study highlights the urgent need for interventions that address special educators' emotional, social, and professional

challenges. Schools and policymakers should prioritize creating support systems that reduce burnout, promote social support, and combat professional isolation. In addition, targeted strategies such as peer mentoring, professional learning communities, and mental health resources could significantly reduce turnover intentions and enhance teacher retention.

5.6 Limitation

Several limitations in the study methodology need to be addressed in future research. First, the sample size and diversity are restricted, as the study's sample (n=172) was region - specific to South India, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Future studies should consider increasing the sample size and including participants from different regions and educational levels to provide a more representative view. Second, the study relies on self - reported measures for emotional exhaustion, social support, and turnover intention, which could introduce bias, as participants may not always provide accurate assessments of their mental states. To mitigate this, future research could benefit from triangulating data with qualitative methods such as interviews or observational data, ensuring a more holistic understanding of these variables. Lastly, the cross - sectional design of the study restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationships between emotional exhaustion, social support, professional isolation, and turnover intention. A longitudinal approach in future research would allow for a more dynamic and temporal understanding of how these factors evolve.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the identified gaps and limitations, several recommendations can be made for future research. First, future studies should expand the scope by exploring longitudinal designs to track changes in emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. Additionally, research should evaluate the efficacy of targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs or peer - support groups, aimed at increasing social support for special educators, and assess their impact on reducing turnover intentions. It is also essential to investigate the differential impacts of turnover intentions on various sub - groups of educators, particularly those in special education fields, where specific challenges related to managing students with severe disabilities may require tailored interventions. Finally, more in - depth analysis is needed to explore how cultural norms and organizational structures in the Indian education system influence teacher well - being and retention. The role of organizational climate in mediating the effects of professional isolation on burnout and turnover intentions should be further examined to guide effective interventions. Future research should explore intervention strategies to reduce teacher burnout and professional isolation, ensuring sustainable retention policies for educators.

5.8 Conclusion

This study underscores the significant impact of emotional exhaustion, social support, and professional isolation on

turnover intentions among special educators and regular teachers. The findings reveal that special educators are more prone to emotional exhaustion and professional isolation, contributing to their higher turnover intentions than regular educators. Conversely, regular educators benefit from stronger social support networks, which buffer the effects of emotional exhaustion and reduce the likelihood of turnover.

To mitigate these issues, educational institutions must implement targeted interventions such as stress management programs, peer support systems, and professional development opportunities that encourage collaboration among educators. Special attention should be given to addressing the professional isolation experienced by special educators, as this may help reduce turnover and improve job satisfaction.

Future research should explore intervention strategies to reduce teacher burnout and professional isolation, ensuring sustainable retention policies for educators. By focusing on the well - being of educators, schools can create a more stable and supportive environment for both teachers and students.

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Appendix

Appendix - A - informed consent form

Dear Reader,
You are invited to take part in the study "A Quantitative Study on Turnover Intentions among Special Educators and Regular Teachers", conducted by Gauri M Krishna under the guidance of Dr. Rashmi Rangaswamy, Christ University Bangalore. I kindly request you to participate in this survey which would only take less than 10 minutes to complete. This study intends to identify specific challenges experienced by special educators and investigate potential solutions to enhance retention and promote teacher well - being by comparing the experiences of special educators and regular teachers. The study is conducted among Special educators and regular teachers. You are not expected to share any personal information apart from certain social demographic data obtained for determining the social demographic factors that are of concern in this study. Kindly answer all the items as honestly as possible. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. All questions are only a reflection of your opinions. The survey is anonymous and confidential. The data will be used only for Research and publication purposes. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to stop the survey if you feel uncomfortable.
Thanking you
Gauri M Krishna
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MSc Clinical Psychology
Christ University Bangalore

Appendix – B - Socio - Demographic scale

Occupation
- Special educators
- Regular Teachers

Years of experience

Educational Qualification
- B Ed in special education for special educators
- B Ed for regular teachers

Specialization of Special Educators
- Intellectual Disability
- Autism

Appendix C - Questionnaire

Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educator Survey (MBI - ES)
The purpose of this survey is to discover how educators view their jobs and the people with whom they work closely. There are 22 statements of job - related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, write a "0" (zero) in the space provided for options right after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by writing the number (from 1 - 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

1. I feel emotionally drained.
2. I feel used up at the end of the day.
3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. I can easily understand how my recipients feel about things.

5. I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal "objects".
6. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. I deal very efficiently with the problems of my recipients.
8. I feel burned out from my work.
9. I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. I have become more callous towards people since I took this job.
11. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. I feel very energetic.
13. I feel frustrated by my job.
14. I feel I am working too hard on my job.
15. I don't really care what happens to some recipients.
16. Working directly with people puts too much stress on me.
17. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my recipients.
18. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my recipients.
19. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. I feel like I am at the end of my rope.
21. In my work I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. I feel recipients blame me for some of their problems.

Multidimensional scale for perceived social support – zimet. et al (1988)
The items tended to be divided into factor groups relating to the source of the social support, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri), or significant other (SO). Indicate how you feel about each statement. The responses are 1 - 7 (Very Strongly Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Mildly, Disagree, Neutral, Mildly Agree, Strongly Agree, Very Strongly Agree)
1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
3. My family really tries to help me.
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.
6. My friends really try to help me.
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.

Revised UCLA loneliness scale - Russell, D (1978)
A 20 - item scale designed to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. Participants rate each item on a scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often).
1. I feel in tune with the people around me
2. I lack companionship
3. There is no one I can turn to
4. I do not feel alone
5. I feel part of a group of friends
6. I have a lot in common with the people around me
7. I am no longer close to anyone
8. My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me
9. I am an outgoing person
10. There are people I feel close to
11. I feel left out
12. My social relationships are superficial
13. No one really knows me well
14. I feel isolated from others
15. I can find companionship when I want it
16. There are people who really understand me
17. I am unhappy being so withdrawn
18. People are around me but not with me
19. There are people I can talk to
20. There are people I can turn to

Turnover intention scale – g Roodt (2004)
The following section aims to ascertain the extent to which you intend to stay at the organization. Please read each question and indicate your response using the scale provided for each question: During the past 9 months

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1. How often have you considered leaving your job?
2. How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs
3. How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work - related goals
4. How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?
5. How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?
6. How often do you look forward to another day at work?

roodtg8@gmail.com
to me

Dear Gauri

You are welcome to use the TIS for your research (please accept this e-mail as the formal permission letter). For this purpose please find the TIS-15 attached for your convenience. The TIS-6 (version 4) consists of the first six items high-lighted in yellow. You may use any one of these two versions. The TIS is based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

 The only two conditions for using the TIS are that it may not be used for commercial purposes (only for post graduate research) and second that it should be properly referenced as (Roodt, 2004) as in the article by Bothma & Roodt (2013) in the SA Journal of Human Resource Management (open access).

 It is easy to score the TIS-6. Merely add the item scores to get a total score. The midpoint of the scale is 18 (3 x 6). If the total score is below 18 then the it indicates a desire to stay. If the scores are above 18 it indicates a desire to leave the organisation. The minimum a person can get is 6 (6 x 1) and the maximum is 30 (5 x 6). No item scores need to be reflected (reverse scored) for the TIS-6. Please note that there are items that need to be reverse scored for the TIS-15 (indicated by an R before the item number).

 It is recommended that you conduct a CFA on the item scores to assess the dimensionality of the scale. We found that respondents with a matric (grade12) tertiary school qualification tend to understand the items better and consequently an uni-dimensional factor structure is obtained.

 If you wish to translate the TIS in a local language, you are welcome to do so. It is recommended that a language expert is used in the translate - back translate method. I wish you all the best with your research!

Best regards

Gert

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