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Editorial: Leadership, organizational stressors, and employee work attitudes in educational organizations

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Leadership, organizational stressors, and employee work attitudes in educational organizations

Teacher attrition is one of the top agenda items of policymakers and practicing educational leaders around the world. In a worldwide analysis of the teaching profession, Viac and Fraser (2020) concluded that today's teaching profession suffers from record-high teacher attrition rates and shortages globally. To make things worse, recruiting new teachers has become a challenge due to the diminished value of the teaching profession. Consequently, the supply of the needed teaching workforce has fallen short of meeting the demand in almost all different subject areas. In this respect, Skilbeck et al. (2003) acknowledged the teaching profession as a career of "in and out," and the "out" is a permanent departure from teaching. Teachers, particularly novice teachers, tend to exit the profession in unprecedented numbers and percentages (Gallant and Riley, 2014; Craig, 2017). Studies in the United States have shown that about one-third of novice teachers change careers in their first several years, and the teacher attrition rates reach 50% in high-poverty areas (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Policymakers in many countries have adopted national initiatives to address high educator attrition rates and combat teacher shortages. To secure a sustained teaching force in the foreseeable future, most states in the United States have created scholarship programs for students in teacher education programs (Guiden and Patel, 2021). While all these different initiatives may help to recruit new teachers or keep the existing teaching force a bit longer, most of these initiatives may fall short, as they are designed to respond to the symptom of teacher attrition rather than targeting the retention of teachers in the profession.

An annual survey of employee work attitudes showed that more than 40% of the global workforce was planning to exit their work in 2021 due to poor work conditions (Microsoft, 2021). Studies show that poor work conditions, lack of administrative support, increased workloads, and high levels of organizational stressors lead to employee burnout and poor well-being (Ashforth et al., 2008). According to the 2021 *Work and Well-being Survey* by the American Psychological Association. (2022), more than two-thirds of employees are affected by workplace stress, and they present an array of counterproductive work attitudes such as emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and lack of motivation.

Studies in education have further showed that working conditions are even worse in low-socioeconomic and high-failure schools, where teacher attrition rates are drastically higher compared to schools in affluent communities (National Academies of Sciences Engineering Medicine., 2020). The recent pandemic further adversely affected workplace conditions in educational settings and introduced new organizational stressors (Biddle, 2021). The pandemic required schools and educators to respond to new ways of delivering instruction without proper preparation. In a study that examined the influence of the pandemic on teacher work attitudes in nine states, Kraft et al. (2020) concluded that "… emergency remote teaching resulted in a sudden, large drop in teachers' sense of success" (p. 1). The authors also pointed out that the working conditions during the pandemic further increased inequalities among schools and educators of low-socioeconomic and non-privileged status.

There is a need for studies to identify the root causes of the mass departure of teachers from the profession. Policies to retain teachers should aim at eradicating the contributing systematic factors, such as poor working conditions, that generate poor work behaviors and attitudes among teachers. While studies on the effects of the pandemic on workplace conditions in schools emerge every day, practicing educational leaders, policymakers, and the scholarly community are still struggling to fully understand what it would take to succeed under the new crisis.

This current Research Topic was an attempt to contribute to the knowledge gaps on the key issues and practices to respond to these issues under the circumstances. More specifically, this collection of studies examined the working conditions in educational settings, the contributing factors of organizational stressors in these settings, and the strategies and practices that both educational organizations and the teaching and administrative workforce adopt in different country contexts.

The first article in this collection, *Linking supportive school leadership and teacher resilience: The mediating role of job resource*, was authored by Dalia et al. (2022). The purpose of this study was to examine the direct relationships between supportive leadership, job resources, and teacher resilience in the Lithuanian context. The findings showed that both supportive leadership and job resources significantly influenced teacher resilience and its four dimensions (Bagdžiūnienė et al.). The authors concluded that policymakers should support school leadership and job characteristics when they plan for interventions to promote teacher resilience.

The second paper, *Influence of perceived equity, job enrichment, and burnout among educators in Indian private universities on job satisfaction and the desire to quit*, was authored by Sumathi Annamalai. This study examined the direct and indirect influences of perceived equity and job enrichment on faculty members' feelings of burnout, job satisfaction, and intent to exit a private college in the Indian context. The findings demonstrated that perceived equity, job enrichment, and burnout significantly influenced faculty members' job satisfaction; in turn, job satisfaction significantly influenced faculty members' intent to exit (Annamalai). The author also reported the mediating influence of all three independent variables on the relationship between faculty members' perceptions of job enrichment and the desire to leave. This study concluded that policymakers and top administrators in private colleges should promote perceived

equity and job enrichment opportunities and produce initiatives to prevent feelings of employee burnout in order to maintain the teaching workforce.

The third paper, *Psychological detachment as a mediator between successive days' job stress and negative affect of teachers*, was authored by Aulén et al. This study examined the mediating role of teachers' psychological detachment between job stress on successive days and negative affect in the Finnish context. The findings of the study showed that teachers' job stress hinders their psychological detachment. Consequently, this increases teachers' negative affect and job stress on a subsequent day (Aulén et al.). The authors suggested that policymakers should promote occupational health interventions to support teachers' psychological detachment from work and reduce their stress in schools. They also suggested the development of robust work–home segmentation norms within schools.

The fourth paper, *Differences in teacher burnout between schools: Exploring the effect of proactive strategies on burnout trajectories*, was authored by Tikkanen et al. This paper examined the differences within and between schools with respect to teachers' burnout predictors in the Finish context. The findings of this study showed that cynicism and emotional exhaustion are the two main differences in teacher burnout between schools. Moreover, it was further shown that organizational factors were not strong predictors of differences in teacher burnout (Tikkanen et al.). The authors suggested that policymakers and educational leaders should promote proactive co-regulation strategies toward lowering levels of cynicism about professional communities in schools.

The fifth paper, *Satisfying the need for relatedness among teachers: Benefits of Searching for social support*, was authored by Maas et al. The purpose of this study was to investigate the direct and indirect relationship between social support, job satisfaction, and the need for support. The authors made a distinction between support from peers and support from administrators. The study adopted the job crafting theory (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001) as the guiding theory. The results showed that searching for social support from their colleagues has a significant direct influence on teachers' satisfaction and the need for relatedness (Maas et al.). The authors concluded that policymakers and practicing educational leaders should acknowledge the significance of promoting strong and supportive relationships for teachers within schools. Strategies for this purpose would help teachers to meet their desires for relatedness, which, in turn, would improve their well-being.

The sixth paper, *Virtual professional development on conflict management for school leaders*, was authored by Irby et al. This study examined whether participation in a synchronous virtual professional development (VPD) in instructional leadership webinar with facilitators increased principals' knowledge and skills in conflict management in the context of the United States. The findings of the study suggested a positive influence of VPD on participants' conflict management skills (Irby et al.). The authors also reported the development of a positive attitude toward conflict management, which can guide policymakers and practicing educational leaders in formulating future professional development initiatives in conflict management.

The last paper of the collection, *The tug-of-war over truth: A Foucauldian case study on the interplay of competing discourses*

in education, was authored by Rose. The paper examined the competing discourses on the role of technology in education in the context of the United States. A Foucauldian case study research design was employed in a public high school for the examination of administrator and teacher retellings to identify possible new ways of acknowledging the advantages of technology. The Foucauldian method provided the study with a deductive design for the interpretation of data. The findings of this study suggested that technology can be instrumental in both delivering and designing new discourses and also in the critical analysis of competing discourses (Rose).

In this Research Topic, the authors from different countries around the world discussed cases where organizational stressors plague educators' work performance and work behaviors and offered evidence on how and why organizational stressors in schools also present challenges for educational leaders and policymakers. Collectively, they highlighted the areas of local and global concern and offered policymakers and educational leaders strategies for eradicating the adverse effects of organizational stressors. This collection of studies also provided suggestions on areas that require future studies.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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