



Factors Affecting Teacher Retention in Special Education: A Focus on Children with Neurodiversity and Intellectual Impairment

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ABSTRACT

Teacher retention has become a critical concern in special education, particularly for educators working with neurodivergent learners who require sustained and specialized support. The objective of this study was to examine the organizational, professional, and psychological factors influencing special education teachers' retention intentions. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from a sample of 275 special education teachers working across diverse institutional settings. A structured questionnaire assessed work environment and organizational support, professional development and training, job satisfaction and motivation, stress and burnout, and retention intentions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples *t*-tests, one-way ANOVA, and correlational analysis. The major findings revealed that organizational support and job satisfaction were positively associated with retention intentions, while stress and burnout were negatively related. Teaching experience has a significant influence on perceptions of work environment and organizational support, whereas gender, employment status, institute type, and school location showed no significant effects. The study suggests that improving working conditions, strengthening institutional support, and implementing strategies to reduce burnout are essential for retaining special education teachers and ensuring continuity of high-quality services for neurodivergent learners.

Introduction:

Teacher retention has become a persistent and systemic challenge in special education, with attrition rates remaining high despite growing demands for specialized and inclusive services. When special education teachers leave, schools often face disrupted continuity of individualized supports, increased caseloads for remaining staff, and greater reliance on underqualified or emergency-hired personnel. These conditions not only compromise the quality of instruction and IEP implementation but also reinforce a cycle of workload intensification and further turnover, making retention a central workforce concern rather than an individual career issue (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). This challenge is particularly acute for teachers serving learners with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment. Instruction in these contexts requires intensive individualization, proactive behavior and communication supports, sustained collaboration with families and multidisciplinary teams, and ongoing monitoring of student progress. At the same time, contemporary neurodiversity-oriented perspectives emphasize dignity-affirming, strengths-based practices, increasing professional expectations for teachers when resources, training, and organizational supports are limited. As a result, teachers may experience heightened emotional labor and role strain, especially when they are unable to deliver the level of support they believe is ethically and professionally necessary (Brunsting et al., 2023; Dawson, 2022). Research consistently demonstrates that special educators' intentions to remain in the profession are shaped primarily by working conditions rather than by lack of motivation or commitment. Organizational factors such as administrative support, manageable workload, planning time, access to instructional resources, and structured collaboration strongly influence teachers' job satisfaction, perceived effectiveness, and wellbeing. Even highly prepared and dedicated teachers may struggle to sustain their roles when organizational systems constrain their capacity to teach effectively (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Cumming et al., 2021). Within this framework, teacher self-efficacy and burnout have emerged as key mechanisms linking workplace conditions to retention. Teachers who feel capable of meeting disability-specific instructional demands such as behavior management, assistive technology use, and individualized planning are more likely to report satisfaction and commitment. Conversely, chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced feelings of professional accomplishment are strongly associated with turnover intentions. Importantly, meta-analytic and empirical evidence indicates that these outcomes are shaped by school-level supports and resources, underscoring that burnout is not merely an individual issue but a product of job design and organizational capacity (Park & Shin, 2020).

Despite a growing body of research on special education teacher attrition, important gaps remain. Much of the existing literature addresses special education broadly, without isolating factors specific to teachers working with neurodivergent learners and students with intellectual impairment, whose instructional and emotional demands may be particularly intensive. Moreover, relatively few studies integrate organizational support, professional development, job satisfaction, stress and burnout, and retention intentions into a single quantitative model that allows comparison of their relative influence within the same sample (Squillaci & Hofmann, 2021).

Addressing these gaps, the present study examines how work environment and organizational support, professional development and training, job satisfaction and motivation, challenges and burnout, and perceived effectiveness collectively shape teachers' retention intentions. By identifying modifiable predictors of retention, this study aims to provide actionable evidence for school leaders, policymakers, and teacher preparation programs seeking to stabilize the special

education workforce and ensure consistent, high-quality support for learners whose educational progress depends heavily on sustained professional expertise.

Objectives of the Research Study

1. To assess the levels of work environment & organizational support, professional development & training, job satisfaction & motivation, challenges/stress/burnout, and retention intentions among special education teachers serving children with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment.
2. To compare subgroup patterns (e.g., by institute type, experience, or primary focus area) where data allow, to inform targeted retention strategies.

Research Design & Methodology:

The present study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the factors affecting teacher retention in special education, with particular focus on teachers working with children with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment. A descriptive correlational survey design was employed, as it enabled the systematic collection of numerical data to describe existing conditions and to analyze relationships among organizational support, professional development, job satisfaction, stress/burnout, and retention intentions.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised special education teachers working in public, private, and NGO-based institutions that served children with neurodiversity (such as autism and ADHD) and intellectual impairment. These teachers were actively engaged in instructional and support roles within special schools and inclusive education settings.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *Never (1)* to *Always (5)*.

Sample and Sampling of the Study

A sample of 275 special education teachers was drawn from the target population. The sample comprised teachers with different academic qualifications, professional training, years of experience, types of institution, and areas of primary focus. A convenience sampling technique was employed as it was the most accessible and feasible option, thus it allowed the data to be collected from participants who met the inclusion criteria. The chosen sample size was sufficient for quantitative statistical analysis and for making meaningful generalizations to similar educational contexts.

Instrument Development:

To collect the data, a structured questionnaire was used, which was self-developed and tailored to the study. The questionnaire was divided into five main sections: (a) Work Environment and Organizational Support, (b) Professional Development and Training, (c) Job Satisfaction and Motivation, (d) Challenges, Stress, and Burnout, and (e) Retention Intentions

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument:

The developed instruments were reviewed by experts for construct validity. The experts' feedback served as a guide to make necessary changes so that the tool could sufficiently measure the study constructs. A pilot study was done before the main data collection, and internal consistency reliability was determined not only for each subscale but also for the entire instrument. The reliability coefficients obtained were consistent with standards (.80), which means that the instrument could be relied on for the collection of data.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission to conduct the research was first sought from the appropriate institutions, and only after that the researcher proceeded with the distribution of the questionnaires to the respondents. The participants were briefed about the study, and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. The questionnaires were administered and collected through physical

presence and controlled online methods. A total of 275 filled questionnaires, which were both valid and reliable to be used in the final data analysis were returned.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics that consisted of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were utilized to present demographic details as well as study variables. Various inferential statistical methods, such as independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used, among other things, to identify, First, group differences, second, the relationships between variables, and third, major factors influencing teacher retention intentions. All statistical analyses were carried out at an appropriate level of significance.

Results of the Study:

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 275)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
Gender	Male	118	42.9
	Female	157	57.1
Age (years)	25–30	71	25.8
	31–35	83	30.2
	36–40	64	23.3
	41–50	44	16.0
	51–55	13	4.7
Institute Type	Public	132	48.0
	Private	97	35.3
	NGO-based	46	16.7
Location	Urban	156	56.7
	Semi-Urban	74	26.9
	Rural	45	16.4
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	82	29.8
	6–10 years	79	28.7
	11–15 years	54	19.6
	16–20 years	38	13.8
	21–25 years	22	8.0
Employment Status	Full-time	189	68.7
	Part-time	41	14.9
	Contractual	45	16.4
Primary Focus Area	Autism	104	37.8
	ADHD	49	17.8
	Intellectual Impairment	63	22.9

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
	Both	59	21.5

The table shows that the sample was predominantly female (57.1%), mostly from public institutions (48.0%), and primarily urban (56.7%), with the largest group reporting 1–10 years of experience (58.5%).

Work Environment & Organizational Support: Item-wise Frequency Distribution (N = 275)

Item	N (%)	R (%)	S (%)	O (%)	A (%)
My school provides a supportive environment for teaching students with neurodiversity.	18 (6.5)	28 (10.2)	72 (26.2)	97 (35.3)	60 (21.8)
I feel valued as a professional by my school administration.	16 (5.8)	31 (11.3)	70 (25.5)	99 (36.0)	59 (21.5)
The school administration addresses my concerns in a timely manner.	20 (7.3)	34 (12.4)	76 (27.6)	88 (32.0)	57 (20.7)
I receive adequate support from the special education department	19 (6.9)	33 (12.0)	74 (26.9)	92 (33.5)	57 (20.7)
My workload is manageable and reasonable.	24 (8.7)	39 (14.2)	79 (28.7)	86 (31.3)	47 (17.1)
I have access to the resources I need to teach effectively.	17 (6.2)	29 (10.5)	73 (26.5)	98 (35.6)	58 (21.1)
Collaboration among staff members is encouraged at my school.	16 (5.8)	30 (10.9)	71 (25.8)	100 (36.4)	58 (21.1)
The school environment promotes inclusion and respect.	15 (5.5)	27 (9.8)	68 (24.7)	103 (37.5)	62 (22.5)
Policies at my school support teachers working with students having neurodiversity and intellectual impairments.	21 (7.6)	35 (12.7)	78 (28.4)	86 (31.3)	55 (20.0)
I feel safe and comfortable working in my school environment.	14 (5.1)	26 (9.5)	66 (24.0)	104 (37.8)	65 (23.6)

Most responses fall in Sometimes/Often, indicating generally moderate organizational support, with fewer teachers selecting Never/Rarely.

Professional Development & Training: Item-wise Frequency Distribution (N = 275)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
I receive regular training on teaching students with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment.	28 (10.2)	42 (15.3)	86 (31.3)	74 (26.9)	45 (16.4)
Professional development programs at my school improve my teaching skills.	22 (8.0)	38 (13.8)	84 (30.5)	82 (29.8)	49 (17.8)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
I am provided with adequate opportunities to upgrade my skills.	25 (9.1)	40 (14.5)	83 (30.2)	78 (28.4)	49 (17.8)
Workshops and seminars offered by my institution are relevant to my teaching needs.	21 (7.6)	36 (13.1)	80 (29.1)	86 (31.3)	52 (18.9)
I feel confident in utilizing assistive technologies due to the training provided.	24 (8.7)	39 (14.2)	82 (29.8)	79 (28.7)	51 (18.5)
My institution invests in continuous professional learning for special education teachers.	20 (7.3)	35 (12.7)	79 (28.7)	88 (32.0)	53 (19.3)
I have access to mentorship or coaching when required.	27 (9.8)	43 (15.6)	88 (32.0)	72 (26.2)	45 (16.4)
Training programs help me manage challenging classroom behaviors.	23 (8.4)	37 (13.5)	82 (29.8)	82 (29.8)	51 (18.5)
My professional growth is encouraged by school leadership.	19 (6.9)	34 (12.4)	78 (28.4)	92 (33.5)	52 (18.9)
The school provides adequate refresher courses related to special education.	26 (9.5)	41 (14.9)	86 (31.3)	74 (26.9)	48 (17.5)

Professional development responses cluster in Sometimes, suggesting moderate availability/relevance of training, with a noticeable minority reporting Never/Rarely.

Job Satisfaction & Motivation: Item-wise Frequency Distribution (N = 275)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
I feel motivated to come to work every day.	16 (5.8)	28 (10.2)	74 (26.9)	99 (36.0)	58 (21.1)
My job makes me feel accomplished and fulfilled.	15 (5.5)	29 (10.5)	72 (26.2)	100 (36.4)	59 (21.5)
I am satisfied with my role as a special education teacher.	18 (6.5)	31 (11.3)	76 (27.6)	92 (33.5)	58 (21.1)
I feel appreciated by colleagues and students.	14 (5.1)	27 (9.8)	70 (25.5)	104 (37.8)	60 (21.8)
My salary reflects the effort required for my job.	32 (11.6)	48 (17.5)	86 (31.3)	66 (24.0)	43 (15.6)
I feel emotionally connected to my work.	16 (5.8)	28 (10.2)	73 (26.5)	98 (35.6)	60 (21.8)
I am proud to work in the field of special education.	12 (4.4)	24 (8.7)	66 (24.0)	105 (38.2)	68 (24.7)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
My job provides opportunities for career advancement.	26 (9.5)	41 (14.9)	85 (30.9)	76 (27.6)	47 (17.1)
I am satisfied with my current workload.	24 (8.7)	39 (14.2)	82 (29.8)	80 (29.1)	50 (18.2)
Overall, I am satisfied with my job in special education.	14 (5.1)	26 (9.5)	72 (26.2)	101 (36.7)	62 (22.5)

Job satisfaction is largely moderate-to-high, though salary fairness and career advancement show comparatively higher Never/Rarely responses.

Challenges, Stress & Burnout: Item-wise Frequency Distribution (N = 275)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
I often feel stressed due to work demands.	12 (4.4)	22 (8.0)	62 (22.5)	107 (38.9)	72 (26.2)
Teaching children with neurodiversity requires extensive emotional effort.	10 (3.6)	20 (7.3)	58 (21.1)	110 (40.0)	77 (28.0)
I experience burnout because of job-related pressures.	15 (5.5)	26 (9.5)	66 (24.0)	101 (36.7)	67 (24.4)
Behavioral challenges in the classroom increase my stress levels.	11 (4.0)	23 (8.4)	60 (21.8)	108 (39.3)	73 (26.5)
Classroom overcrowding affects my ability to teach effectively.	18 (6.5)	30 (10.9)	69 (25.1)	92 (33.5)	66 (24.0)
Lack of support staff contributes to my job stress.	17 (6.2)	29 (10.5)	68 (24.7)	95 (34.5)	66 (24.0)
Administrative tasks add unnecessary workload.	13 (4.7)	24 (8.7)	63 (22.9)	104 (37.8)	71 (25.8)
I struggle to maintain a work-life balance due to job demands.	14 (5.1)	25 (9.1)	64 (23.3)	102 (37.1)	70 (25.5)
I often feel overwhelmed during the school year.	12 (4.4)	23 (8.4)	61 (22.2)	106 (38.5)	73 (26.5)
Stress affects my long-term commitment to teaching.	16 (5.8)	28 (10.2)	67 (24.4)	97 (35.3)	67 (24.4)

Responses are strongly concentrated in Often/Always, indicating elevated stress and burnout experiences among many teachers.

Retention Intentions: Item-wise Frequency Distribution (N = 275)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
I intend to stay at my current school for the next academic year.	18 (6.5)	31 (11.3)	80 (29.1)	92 (33.5)	54 (19.6)
I see myself continuing in the field of	16 (5.8)	29 (10.5)	78 (28.4)	94 (34.2)	58 (21.1)

Item	N n (%)	R n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)
special education long-term.					
I would leave my job if a better opportunity arose.	30 (10.9)	45 (16.4)	82 (29.8)	70 (25.5)	48 (17.5)
I feel committed to serving students with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment.	14 (5.1)	25 (9.5)	73 (26.5)	103 (37.5)	60 (21.8)
My school provides reasons for me to stay rather than leave.	22 (8.0)	36 (13.1)	84 (30.5)	82 (29.8)	51 (18.5)
I would consider transferring due to workload or stress.	28 (10.2)	44 (16.0)	83 (30.2)	72 (26.2)	48 (17.5)
I plan to remain in the teaching profession in the field of special education overall.	15 (5.5)	27 (9.8)	76 (27.6)	96 (34.9)	61 (22.2)
Incentives and recognition at my school increase my desire to stay.	24 (8.7)	39 (14.2)	85 (30.9)	76 (27.6)	51 (18.5)
I am unlikely to leave my position in the next two years.	20 (7.3)	34 (12.4)	82 (29.8)	86 (31.3)	53 (19.3)
Overall, I feel confident continuing my career in special education at this institution.	16 (5.8)	30 (10.9)	79 (28.7)	92 (33.5)	58 (21.1)

Independent-Samples t-test by Gender (N = 275)

Section	Male (n=118) M±SD	Female (n=157) M±SD	T (273)	p	d
Work Environment	3.32±0.27	3.34±0.26	-0.58	.559	-0.07
Professional Development	3.27±0.27	3.28±0.26	-0.48	.628	-0.06
Job Satisfaction	3.28±0.26	3.28±0.26	-0.17	.864	-0.02
Stress & Burnout	3.59±0.27	3.59±0.27	0.10	.922	0.01
Retention Intentions	3.23±0.24	3.17±0.26	1.81	.071	0.22

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to examine gender differences across the five composite domains. Results indicated no statistically significant mean differences between male and female teachers on Work Environment ($t (273) = -0.58$, $p = .559$, $d = -0.07$), Professional

Development ($t(273) = -0.48, p = .628, d = -0.06$), Job Satisfaction ($t(273) = -0.17, p = .864, d = -0.02$), or Stress & Burnout ($t(273) = 0.10, p = .922, d = 0.01$). Retention Intentions showed a non-significant trend toward higher scores among males (3.23 ± 0.24) than females (3.17 ± 0.26), but this difference did not reach statistical significance ($t(273) = 1.81, p = .071, d = 0.22$). Overall, the effect sizes were negligible to small, suggesting that gender explained minimal variance in domain-level perceptions and retention intentions within this sample.

Independent-Samples t -test by Employment Status (Full-time vs Non-full-time) (N = 275)
(Non-full-time = Part-time + Contractual)

Section	Full-time (n=189) M \pm SD	Non-full-time (n=86) M \pm SD	T (273)	p	d
Work Environment	3.35 \pm 0.26	3.29 \pm 0.27	1.86	.065	0.24
Professional Development	3.27 \pm 0.26	3.29 \pm 0.27	-0.65	.517	-0.08
Job Satisfaction	3.27 \pm 0.27	3.30 \pm 0.25	-0.77	.443	-0.10
Stress & Burnout	3.60 \pm 0.26	3.57 \pm 0.29	0.66	.508	0.09
Retention Intentions	3.19 \pm 0.25	3.19 \pm 0.26	0.02	.985	0.00

An independent-samples t test was performed to compare full-time and non-full-time (part-time/contractual) teachers across the five composite domains. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the two employment groups on Professional Development ($t(273) = -0.65, p = .517, d = -0.08$), Job Satisfaction ($t(273) = -0.77, p = .443, d = -0.10$), Stress & Burnout ($t(273) = 0.66, p = .508, d = 0.09$), and Retention Intentions ($t(273) = 0.02, p = .985, d = 0.00$). For Work Environment & Organizational Support, full-time teachers reported slightly higher mean scores (3.35 ± 0.26) compared to non-full-time teachers (3.29 ± 0.27); however, this difference only approached statistical significance ($t(273) = 1.86, p = .065$) and was associated with a small effect size ($d = 0.24$). Overall, the findings suggest that employment status did not meaningfully influence teachers' perceptions across the study domains, and observed differences were small and of limited practical significance.

One-way ANOVA by Institute Type (Public/Private/NGO) (N = 275)

Section	F (2,272)	p	η^2
Work Environment	0.36	.695	0.003
Professional Development	0.45	.639	0.003
Job Satisfaction	1.14	.321	0.008
Stress & Burnout	0.49	.613	0.004
Retention Intentions	1.42	.244	0.010

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether teachers' domain scores differed by institute type (public, private, NGO). The results showed no statistically significant between-group differences across all five composite domains: Work Environment ($F(2, 272) = 0.36, p = .695, \eta^2 = .003$), Professional Development ($F(2, 272) = 0.45, p = .639, \eta^2 = .003$), Job Satisfaction ($F(2, 272) = 1.14, p = .321, \eta^2 = .008$), Stress & Burnout ($F(2, 272) = 0.49, p = .613, \eta^2 = .004$), and Retention Intentions ($F(2, 272) = 1.42, p = .244, \eta^2 = .010$).

Across domains, the eta-squared effect sizes were very small ($\eta^2 = .003–.010$), indicating that institute type accounted for a trivial proportion of variance in teachers' perceptions and retention intentions. Overall, these findings suggest that teachers' experiences related to organizational support, training, job satisfaction, stress/burnout, and retention intentions were statistically comparable across public, private, and NGO-based settings within the sampled population.

One-way ANOVA by Location (Urban/Semi-Urban/Rural) (N = 275)

Section	F (2,272)	p	η^2
Work Environment	1.94	.146	0.014
Professional Development	0.08	.923	0.001
Job Satisfaction	1.27	.282	0.009
Stress & Burnout	2.79	.063	0.020
Retention Intentions	0.26	.770	0.002

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in the five composite domains across school location (urban, semi-urban, and rural). The results indicated no statistically significant differences across locations for Work Environment ($F(2, 272) = 1.94, p = .146, \eta^2 = .014$), Professional Development ($F(2, 272) = 0.08, p = .923, \eta^2 = .001$), Job Satisfaction ($F(2, 272) = 1.27, p = .282, \eta^2 = .009$), and Retention Intentions ($F(2, 272) = 0.26, p = .770, \eta^2 = .002$).

For Stress & Burnout, the analysis revealed a near-significant effect of location ($F(2, 272) = 2.79, p = .063$) with a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .020$), indicating a potential trend toward location-based variation in stress levels that did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance. Overall, the small eta-squared values across domains suggest that school location accounted for only a minimal proportion of variance in teachers' perceptions and retention-related outcomes, though stress and burnout may merit further examination in future studies with larger or more balanced samples.

One-way ANOVA by Teaching Experience (N = 275)

Section	F (4,270)	p	η^2
Work Environment	2.45	.046*	0.035
Professional Development	0.68	.610	0.010

Section	F (4,270)	p	η^2
Job Satisfaction	0.40	.809	0.006
Stress & Burnout	1.79	.132	0.026
Retention Intentions	1.86	.118	0.027

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in the five composite domains across teaching experience groups (1–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16–20, and 21–25 years). The analysis revealed a statistically significant effect of teaching experience only for Work Environment & Organizational Support, $F (4, 270) = 2.45$, $p = .046$, with a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .035$). This finding indicates that teaching experience accounted for a small but meaningful proportion of variance in teachers' perceptions of their work environment and organizational support.

In contrast, no statistically significant differences were observed across experience groups for Professional Development ($F(4, 270) = 0.68$, $p = .610$, $\eta^2 = .010$), Job Satisfaction ($F(4, 270) = 0.40$, $p = .809$, $\eta^2 = .006$), Stress & Burnout ($F(4, 270) = 1.79$, $p = .132$, $\eta^2 = .026$), or Retention Intentions ($F(4, 270) = 1.86$, $p = .118$, $\eta^2 = .027$). The small eta-squared values across these domains suggest that teaching experience explained minimal variance in professional development perceptions, job satisfaction, stress levels, and retention intentions. Overall, the results indicate that career stage differences were limited, with experience-related variation evident only in perceptions of the work environment and organizational support.

Findings & Discussion:

The results of the current study showed that stress, challenges, and burnout were somewhat more intense among special education teachers than in other study domains, thus pointing to the demanding nature of teaching students with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment. This result is in line with earlier research showing that special education teachers undergo high levels of emotional exhaustion and work stress as a result of the heavy instructional demands, students' behavioral issues, and teachers' administrative roles (Park & Shin, 2020; Brunsting et al., 2023). Such stress, related outcomes have been extensively documented as key factors leading to lower retention intentions in special education settings.

The lack of statistically significant differences across gender and employment status indicates that retention, related perceptions are not primarily determined by these demographic variables. This outcome is consistent with previous research that underlines the fact that organizational and situational factors, rather than personal characteristics, mainly determine teachers' job satisfaction and their decisions to stay in the profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Cumming et al., 2021). These findings emphasize that retention interventions ought to focus on systemic changes rather than on demographic, specific measures.

Likewise, the absence of notable differences in institute type and school location implies that problems/issues related to organizational support, professional development, and stress are nearly identically shared by teachers working in different institutional settings. This piece of evidence matches a recent policy-oriented research, which points out that the problems of staff shortages and teacher retention in special education are widespread and not limited to any particular school sector or geographic area (EdResearch for Action, 2024; Bettini & Gilmour, 2024). Therefore, comprehensive system, level changes are likely to be more successful than individual school, level initiatives.

The difference in Work Environment and Organizational Support by teaching experience that was significant, albeit quite small, hints at the fact that different career stages may have different views on how much support they get from their workplace. Mid, career teachers have reported lower perceived levels of support which could mean that they are already overloaded with work, have more responsibilities and leadership expectations over time. Studies done earlier also agree that special educators in their mid, career phase may be under increased pressure due to conflicting demands of their roles which in turn may lead to lower job satisfaction and reduced professional commitment (Cumming et al., 2022; Scott et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the positive association between organizational support and job satisfaction with retention intentions, and the negative association between stress/burnout and retention, is strongly supported by existing empirical evidence. Research consistently demonstrates that supportive leadership, access to resources, and meaningful professional development enhance teachers' sense of efficacy and satisfaction, thereby strengthening their commitment to remain in special education (Billingsley et al., 2020; Cumming et al., 2021). Conversely, sustained stress and burnout undermine professional wellbeing and increase the likelihood of attrition (Park & Shin, 2020; McGrew et al., 2023).

Overall, the discussion of findings underscores that teacher retention in special education is primarily influenced by modifiable organizational conditions rather than fixed demographic characteristics. Addressing workload, enhancing professional support, and reducing burnout are therefore essential for stabilizing the special education workforce and ensuring continuity of quality services for students with neurodiversity and intellectual impairment (EdResearch for Action, 2024; Bettini & Gilmour, 2024).

Conclusion

This quantitative study revealed that special education teachers' retention intentions were most closely related to their perceptions of the organizational conditions and their psychological responses to their workload: those who felt more supported by their organization and were more satisfied with their job showed stronger intentions to stay, while those who felt more stressed/burned out showed weaker retention intentions. The demographic variables (gender, employment status, institute type, and location) did not significantly differentiate the domain scores, as the retention-related perceptions were mostly the same across these groups in the current sample.

Moreover, teaching experience had a minor but statistically significant correlation with perceived work environment/support, thus retention planning should consider the varying needs of teachers at different stages of their careers, besides the universal support strategies. In general, the findings strongly point towards improving working conditions, enhancing administrative responsiveness, and lowering the risk of burnout as the most effective ways to ensure a stable special education workforce that caters to neurodivergent learners and students with intellectual impairment.

Recommendations

1. Improve Working Conditions and Reduce Burnout: Universities and schools should lower the number of non-educational tasks for teachers, guarantee enough support staff, and simplify paperwork and administrative tasks. Giving teachers more time for planning and better access to materials will go a long way in reducing their stress and burnout. Ultimately, these kinds of interventions will help to improve teacher wellbeing and increase their retention in special education.

2. Strengthen Targeted Professional Development and Mentoring: Educational establishments ought to offer in-service training and continuous development focused on the needs of students with neurodiversity, behavior management, and the use of technology for aiding learning. Organized mentoring and coaching, especially for mid-career teachers, can bring about an improvement in vocational skills and, hence, job satisfaction. Such teacher support can be partly responsible for increased long-term special education staff retention.

3. Adopt System, Level, Data, Informed Retention Strategies: Policymakers and school leaders should employ data on staff turnover as a tool to decide on personnel, allocation of incentives, and distribution of workloads. Providing support and recognition that suit one's career stage can meet the differing needs of teachers depending on their experience. One can count on evidence-based retention planning for a steady special education workforce.

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