Motivational Factors and The Early Childhood Educator

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Research Problem
It has been shown that there is a link between professional commitment, motivation, and turnover in the Early Education field. (Wagner & French, 2010)

Research Question and Hypothesis
“What motivates Early Childhood Educators to stay in the field of Early Childhood Education?"" What motivates Early Childhood Educators to stay in the field based on intrinsic motivation alone.

Hypothesis
• That Early Childhood Educators are not staying in the field beyond the family unit.
• Several factors such as obtaining benefits as well as pay performance are key components in increasing motivation.

Purposes
• To examine the perspectives of Early Childhood Educators on what motivates them to stay in the field.
• To develop a reliable survey instrument to measure the perspectives of the participants.
• To increase awareness and knowledge among Early Childhood educators and administrators to take into account the needs and perspectives of the teachers to reduce turnover and ensure quality center-based programs.

Literature Review
• Firestone discussed how the economic factors tie to intrinsic incentives to motivate teachers. He also looked at the intrinsic incentives and found there needs to be a balance between the two.

Wagner & French focused on the self-determination theory as a basis for understanding how interactions between the children and organization in which the teachers are involved impacts the internal motivations teachers have to update their teaching methods and or grow professionally.

Hulleman & Barron stated that performance pay research is new to the Early Childhood Education field but found that research from other areas of work could initiate research in Education in the areas of pay, performance of teachers, and quality of work done in the classroom.

Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, Yannetta & Amsden explored personal factors such as age, experience, and available benefits that come with the job contribute to keeping Early Childhood Education staff in the field.

Leana, Applebaum & Shevchuk examined the degree to which Early Childhood Educators crafted their jobs and how this impacted classroom quality. The study found that interdependence, discretion, support from administrators, and relationships with coworkers all were positively correlated with job crafting; however, work as a calling and not a career was not.

Theoretical Framework
Family Systems Theory
Within this system family members need to interact with each other, exhibit coherent behaviors, and share some kind of interdependency. There are several key concepts that are incorporated in the family systems theory that help it function, such as: rules, boundaries, change, feedback mechanisms, and having a hierarchy of systems that exist in the system and beyond the family unit.

As applied to our study Family Systems theory would predict that when motivation from Early Childhood teachers decreases so does the Early Childhood Classroom climate. (Chibucos, Leite & Weis, 2005)

Scale Variables
PPC (personal passion for children motivates me to continue working in the Early Education field)
SIB (I would be more likely to stay in my job if I had better benefits such as health care)
EBI (I have better work in this field compared to some of my coworkers)
SMI (the support from my supervisor motivates me to do better at my job)
PFS (I receive positive feedback from my supervisor)
PRC (I have positive relationships with most of my coworkers)

Results
• No support found for our first hypothesis with 100% of our participants agreeing that personal passion motivates them to continue working in the field (PPC) and 83% of our participants agreeing that they have the freedom to be creative and challenge themselves (FCC).
• Support was found for our second hypothesis with 83% agreeing that they would be more likely to stay in their job if they had better benefits (SIB) and with 75% of our participants agreeing that pay performance would greatly motivate them (PPM).

• A negative correlation was found between (PFS) receiving positive feedback from supervisor and (SFF) staying in the field for up to five years from now (-.652).

Demographic Variables
GEN (gender) AGE (age) EDU (highest level of education) ECE (specific Early Childhood Education) ECS (# of years experience in Early Childhood Settings REL (relationship status) NOC (# of children)

Conclusion
In agreement with literature the study demonstrated that there is a significant relationship with Early Childhood Educators wanting to stay in the Early Childhood Education field if better benefits were offered. Also in accordance with literature the study showed that Early Childhood Educators believe that pay performance would greatly motivate them. Those in the Early Childhood Education field have much insight on what motivating factors could reduce the turnover rate and keep teacher’s in the field.

Future Research: A larger and wider sample for richer information. Qualitative interviews in addition to surveys may also offer more insight from the lived experience of Early Childhood Educators. Offering more statements about what specific types of paid professional growth would motivate teachers.

Methods
Participants: 12 Female Early Childhood Educators from a rural Wisconsin Child Care Center
Research Design: Non-random pilot study, snowball, purposive sampling, cross-sectional.
Data Collection Instrument: IRB approved, informed by literature & theory, implied consent. 7 Demographic information questions and 11 survey statements on a 1-6 Likert scale.
Procedure: Surveys were administered to Early Childhood Educators’ by researchers. Confidentially and implied consent read aloud. Researchers left the room and participants were instructed to place finished surveys in envelope and seal when finished.
Data Analysis Plan: “self-cleaned” and coded by researchers. Data analyzed using SPSS: frequencies, mean-comparisons, and a reliability analysis: Cronbach’s Alpha.
Implications
Practitioners: The negative correlation between supervisor feedback and staying in the field shows needed positive supervisor interaction, communication, and feedback to reduce turnover rates. Paid professional growth such as seminars, retreats, and classes as well as offering benefits also reduces the turnover rate and keeps teacher’s motivated to stay in the Early Childhood Field.

Staying in the Field: Paid professional growth such as seminars, retreats, and classes as well as offering benefits play a role in keeping teacher’s in the Early Childhood Field.