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Social Emotional Competence and Teacher Stress

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SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND TEACHER STRESS

by

LESLIE CAROLE FORCINA

(Under the Direction of James Green)

ABSTRACT

Teacher stress and continuing high attrition rates for the teaching profession have significant multiple impacts, although arguably the most important is student achievement. Research indicates that as teacher stress increases to high levels, teacher effectiveness decreases. Attempts to reduce stress have historically focused on organizational or systemic change with minimal success. There remains a clear and distinct call to pursue individual factors that may influence teachers' abilities to moderate stress. Social emotional competence (SEC) is a set of skills that allows individuals to understand themselves, their emotions, the social context as well as relationships and decision making. Existing research has focused on students' levels of SEC. The SEC components of self-awareness and responsible decision making directly impact the appraisal or judgment phase of stress. Therefore, this study examined the individual characteristic of SEC and its relationships with teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. Data were also gathered regarding exposure to the five dimensions of SEC during pre-service training and professional development programs. The researcher developed five instruments to be used in an online survey. This study found that teachers continue to experience a significant degree of stress due to working as a teacher. A very weak negative relationship was found between level of SEC and teacher stress. Multiple

regression analysis identified a moderate negative relationship between the SEC component of self-regulation and teacher stress. A weak negative relationship was also found between relationship management and teacher stress. SEC did not moderate the effects of stress on a teacher's intention to leave. A significant relationship was identified between stress and teacher intention to leave. Teachers reported some exposure to social awareness skills, responsible decision making and relationship management during pre-service and professional learning opportunities. The majority of teachers reported no exposure to self-awareness activities or emotional self-regulation strategies.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher stress, Social emotional competence, Self-awareness, Social awareness, Relationship Management, Self-regulation, Responsible decision making, Teacher intention to leave, Teacher attrition, Teacher preparation, Teacher pre-service, Professional learning

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND TEACHER STRESS

by

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Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

In recognition of their unfailing patience and understanding, this work is dedicated to my husband, Dr. Mario Forcina and my children, Ty and Talia. Your support, in all kinds of ways, made my life's goal and dream of completing my doctorate come to fruition.

This work is also dedicated to my parents, Tom and Mary Lou Dondero, who were my first and best teachers. Your passion for learning, education, high achievement, and social justice in your own personal and professional lives provided a model for my own life. Thank you both for the many sacrifices and tremendous love.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own.

-- Nikos Kazantzakis

Kazantzakis, an early twentieth century Greek writer, extolled the essence of teaching: an offering of oneself to stimulate another's learning. While this definition may seem limited, or even existential, it remains true that the vast majority of educational experiences in K-12 today are face-to-face interactions with classroom teachers. Therefore, traditional education can be deemed a highly social environment. Historically, teacher preparation programs have emphasized content knowledge and instructional strategies as a foundation for pedagogy with little or no attention to the social and emotional skill sets required to be an effective teacher. Thus, educator programs have assumed that candidates already possess the requisite interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to work in such environments or they grossly underestimated the importance of the teachers themselves. This neglect, combined with the day-to-day pressures of accountability, difficult student behavior, and general work overload, results in teaching as a highly challenging career. The daily demands in education rarely result in the "joyful collapse" that Kazantzakis suggests, but more likely, high levels of stress.

The negative impact of high levels of stress on workers' overall health and performance is well documented. Teacher stress, specifically, continues to demand

attention from the global education community due to direct links to teacher attrition. Teacher attrition, particularly for novice teachers and special education teachers, continues at alarming rates (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Keigher, 2010; Plash & Piotrowsky, 2006). Teacher stress also depresses teacher effectiveness and, therefore, the *raison d'être* of education: student achievement (Kauts & Saroj, 2010).

Attempts to reduce stress have historically focused on organizational or systemic change. In education, both state and federal mandates, as well as a myriad of additional external forces, make this an ineffective method of managing stress (Billehoj, 2007). Recently, researchers have turned to specific characteristics of individuals that promote healthier stress management (Chan, 2002; Dickerson, 2008; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

The construct of social emotional competence (SEC) presents an opportunity to influence stress levels of individual teachers. SEC is a skill set with roots in emotional intelligence (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). According to Zins et al. (2004), SEC remains a broader concept and encompasses five dimensions: self-awareness, social awareness, relationship management, responsible decision making, and self-management. Higher levels of SEC may act as a stress moderator for teachers and, thereby, offer hope to reduce stress and attrition while enhancing teacher effectiveness. These social and emotional micro skills can be incorporated into both teacher preparation programs as well as professional learning.

This study seeks to understand the relationship between teachers' levels of SEC, concurrent levels of stress, and teachers' intentions to leave their position or the profession. A survey of actively working teachers will be conducted in the Southeast

Georgia region. This research will also assess the degree of exposure to social emotional competencies through coursework or professional development.

Background of the Study

Several fundamental tenets or assumptions are present throughout the framework of this research. First is the belief that traditional education occurs within a social context and that the social skills of the teacher and student create a reciprocal dynamic of interaction within the classroom. There is also a core belief that humans have the capacity to grow and develop throughout their lifetime. Finally, there is a focus on competencies and skills, rather than traits or specific intelligences.

Social Learning Theory

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework developed by Albert Bandura in the 1970's deemed *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura, 1977). He proposed a new understanding for learning that blended cognitive and behavioral psychology within a social milieu. Bandura sought to explain behavior as an interaction between an individual, the environment, and the individual's psychological or mental processes. His social learning theory also examined how people learn from each other with a focus on observation and modeling. Modern social learning theory has expanded to include the concepts of self efficacy and self-regulation as important in learning new behaviors. Self-efficacy is the belief that one is capable of achieving a task. Self-regulation involves the meta-cognitive process of observing oneself, evaluating choices and judging outcomes (Grusec, 1982).

Social learning theory is applicable for both teachers and students within the traditional context of K-12 classrooms. Today's best instructional practices demand a

high degree of social interaction between not only teachers and students, but among peers as well. Teaching and learning, whether geared toward academics skills or socialization, rests firmly in the cognitive aspects social learning theory promotes: gaining or maintaining attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). While these core components were originally designed for behavioral learning, it is obvious that they can be translated for academic skills as well. Teachers also use observation, modeling, reinforcement and self-regulation as core components of classroom management systems (Jennings & Greenberg, 2008).

The construct of social emotional competency (SEC) has both broad and obvious overlays within this theoretical framework. In fact, all five dimensions of SEC are clearly relevant. Self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making all connect to Bandura's idea of self-regulation. Social awareness and relationship management relate to his belief in the social context. Social learning theory offers a scaffold for understanding how teachers can teach these competencies in their individual classroom. More importantly, it also suggests how a teacher might acquire new mental processes or behaviors to help her cope with stress.

Teacher Stress

The construct of teacher stress is often distinguished in educational literature by a simple definition offered by Kyriacou (2001): "the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher" (p. 28). Teacher stress has been well established as a significant problem (Hansen & Sullivan, 2003; Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Klassen et al., 2010; McCarthy et al., 2009). There has been a primary focus in

stress research on specific stressors or teacher demographics. Evidence on teachers' highest stress factors has demonstrated consistent results. Work load, student behavior and motivation, low salaries, and state/federal mandates repeatedly appear as themes throughout the literature (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005; Johannsen, 2011; Kyriacou, 2001). However, examination of stress according to demographics, such as age, gender, grade level taught, performance level of school, and years of experience, has produced conflicting results.

Knowledge of what causes stress, as well as understanding of which teachers experience higher levels of stress, is important. However, this information does not necessarily allow for stress moderation. Most of the stress factors consistently reported are not within an individual teacher's immediate control. Therefore, some educational research has begun to explore characteristics of teachers and how these attributes might mediate stress. Individual, group, as well as cultural characteristics, have all gained notice.

Governments around the globe have begun to recognize the need to help teachers cope with stress. This is not the first time that governments have expressed concern for workers. In the United States, the history of concern for employees, in general, was spawned in the 1960's with physical safety as the primary motivator (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; OSHA, 1970). Known as the Occupational Health Movement, businesses and engineers sought to identify and minimize health hazards. The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970 brought formal regulation of organizations and was soon followed by the Quality of Work Life Movement. This movement represented a shift from a focus on the physical demands of work to

psychosocial stressors and worker satisfaction (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Solutions, during the next several decades, focused on task redesign, organizational and systemic change, as well as the treatment of symptoms for stress. Despite these attempts to help workers, stress persists as a concern in many occupations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999, 2008). However, teacher stress must be considered of paramount importance. Its ramifications are pervasive and serious.

The definition of stress offered by Hansen (2003) is comprised of three distinct parts: the stressor, the strain and the appraisal phase. The appraisal of the stressor combines an individual's perceptions, thoughts and beliefs which in turn generates feelings about the stressor. Clearly, this phase presents an opportunity to regulate stress through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision making which are all skills contained within social emotional competence.

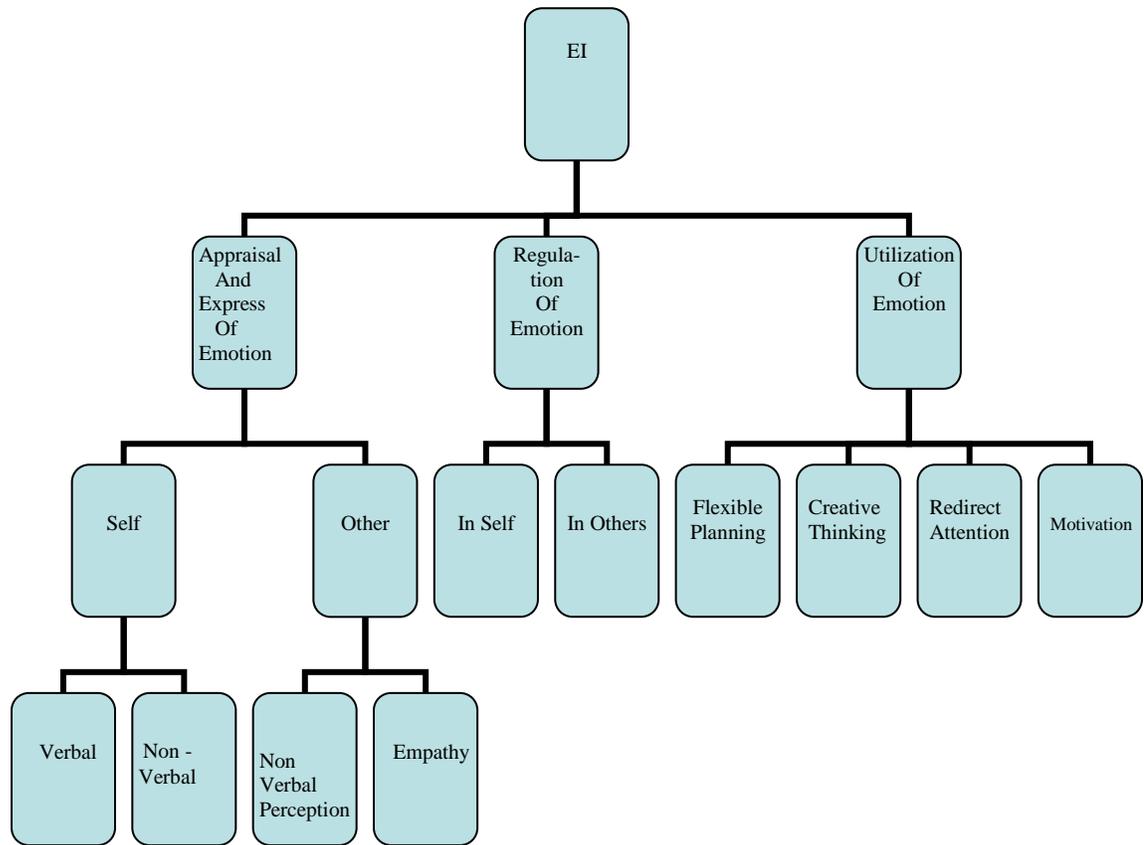
Social Emotional Competence

Hope for stress moderation lies within the individual teachers and their ability to manage the social and emotional demands of the profession. Personality theorists, psychologists, sociologists, and educators all have sought to understand the emotional realm and its impact on learning, work performance and overall well being (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Historically, emotions were often viewed as random, disorganized or as a loss of control (Young, 1936). More modern theorists believe that emotions are primary directive forces that inspire action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The last two decades have born witness to a more rapid evolution of theory and research on the role of emotions. In 1990, Salovey and Mayer proposed a new model of intelligence called emotional intelligence (EI). They viewed emotions as adaptive forces

which arise as a response to an event. Emotions would transfer among many of the human systems from physiological to psychological. Inherently, Salovey and Mayer viewed emotions from a positivistic and cognitive perspective as they believed emotions could be transformational opportunities for human beings. Their seminal work is still considered the most significant contribution to the development of the theory of EI.

Emotional intelligence has been defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189). This definition has connections to an earlier defined construct by Thorndike called social intelligence from the 1930’s. However, emotional intelligence differs from social intelligence, which focuses more on relationships with others as well as the ability to manipulate others. Links to Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences are obvious as well. Gardner proposed both an interpersonal and an intrapersonal form of intelligence. Salovey and Mayer viewed emotional intelligence as a more narrow set of abilities than these personal types of intelligence. “Emotional intelligence does not include the general sense of self or the appraisal of others. It focuses, rather, on the processes described specifically above, that is, the recognition and use of one’s own and other’s emotional states to solve problems and regulate behavior” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Figure 1 depicts the model proposed by Salovey and Mayer.

Figure 1. A simple conceptual framework based on Salovey and Mayer's 1990 Emotional Intelligence work.



Adapted from Salovey and Mayer's construct of emotional intelligence and used by permission of authors.

Other important theorists in the emotional intelligence realm include Reuven Bar-On (2005) and Daniel Goleman (2001). Bar-On developed his theory within a personality context that emphasized coping and well-being. He was the first to attempt to quantify an emotional quotient. Bar-On's construct contained five domains of emotional intelligence: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood (Bar-On 2005, Goleman, 2001). Goleman has developed his model of emotional intelligence from the perspective of work performance. He named four major

domains within emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. He proposed that his framework has direct applicability to organizational and leadership effectiveness, employee performance and may also act as a predictor for individual work success (Goleman, 2001). Goleman's theory of EI has been embraced by the worldwide business community and organizations use EI based instruments to assess employees within the workplace (Wolff, 2005). Despite variations in frameworks of emotional intelligence, Goleman summarized the common and fundamental tenets: "the abilities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others" (p. 2).

In 1997, Mayer and Salovey revisited their original EI model and expanded their definition to include the cognitive process of thinking about feelings. They also maintained the importance of perceiving and regulating emotions. In addition, they spoke to the cultural context of emotional intelligence. In their book, *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence*, they considered the idea of teaching skills or competencies related to emotional intelligence. Competencies can be defined as a level of achievement when compared to a standard. This perspective reflects a more educational perspective and one obviously less focused on aptitudes and abilities (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Social emotional competence (SEC) has emerged as a construct within teaching and learning to describe a set of skills that allows for sufficient awareness of self and others, the ability to manage relationships with self and others, as well as the ability to manage emotions. The similarities are obvious to the basics of emotional intelligence although decision making tends to be included in SEC. Moreover, many educators have

come to believe that SEC can and should be taught (Goleman, 2001). Research in this area has generally focused on the benefits of assessing and teaching SEC to students as part of classroom instruction. An analysis of the educational literature on SEC reveals a recent and subtle shift from a focus on teaching students SEC to an examination of teachers' levels of SEC. However, there remains a paucity of research regarding the impact of teacher's levels of SEC.

Teacher Preparation and Development

There is little doubt that well-prepared teachers are essential to the school reform movement (Thompson, 2009). Indeed, many argue that they are the key. Regardless, the more important question remains how best to develop and train teachers. This quandary rages among researchers, university professors, state certification officers, and governments with vast differences in philosophies. An examination of the history of teacher education reveals that this is not a new debate (Melton & McCrink, 2009).

In the United States, teacher quality emerged as an issue in the mid to late 19th century. This timeframe saw the growth of urban versus rural communities. A concurrent development was a new belief that all teachers should receive formal education. Not all citizens embraced this idea, particularly in rural communities where the prevailing belief was that "good teachers were born rather than made and that they needed only a little bit of formal pedagogical training" (Angus, 2001, p. 6). The early 20th century saw the emergence of professional educators as a group, who would determine the requisite knowledge and training to be a teacher. University programs also grew with standard educational requirements to promote quality teachers. These programs replaced the previous training programs called "normal schools" which focused

on practical education for teachers (Levine, 2011, Melton & McCrink, 2009). Later, World War II and the launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 would prompt a new crisis in education. Entry requirements for teacher candidates, graduation standards, theory-based teacher preparation and the relationship between teacher training and outcomes were all under fire (Angus, 2001). Criticism of schools and teacher education became a hallmark of the “Space Race” and for the ensuing years that brought the 20th century to a close.

Current trends in teacher preparation include alternative routes to certification, involvement of private organizations (i.e., Teach for America) to recruit and train teachers, a return to a focus on practical experience, as well as examination of teacher dispositions (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007; Levine, 2011). These trends are a targeted response to address teacher shortages in high need areas, general teacher attrition, teacher quality, as well as readiness for challenges of teaching. Rifts continue to exist in the philosophy of teacher education with differing views on teaching subject knowledge versus instructional practices. So, too are there wide gaps in the beliefs to broadly educate teachers in a more liberal arts fashion versus an emphasis on practicum based learning as in a medical model approach.

Previous educational research has focused primarily on student levels of SEC. It is equally important, however, to consider the other half of the teacher-student dyad: the teacher. Teachers’ level of SEC, like students, impacts their ability to plan for, instruct, motivate, and manage their students. It promotes self-monitoring of emotions and the use social skills at a high level. SEC has the potential to moderate a significant limiting factor for effectiveness: teacher stress.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher stress hovers at a critical level around the world. High attrition rates, which have direct links to stress, continue despite the economic downturn (Hutchings, 2011). Teacher effectiveness, too, is clearly diminished when high levels of stress are reported. Although there is understanding of stress factors for teachers, most appear systemic and not easily changed (Billehoj, 2007). Individual characteristics of teachers that might moderate stress are important to continue researching.

Social emotional competence is a set of skills that allow an individual to understand and regulate emotions. It encompasses both self-awareness and decision making which can directly impact the appraisal or judgment phase of stress. There is extremely limited research, particularly in the United States, which examines the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' levels of SEC. Therefore, further investigation into teachers' levels of SEC and its relationship to teacher stress is important.

There is voluminous dialogue in many countries regarding teacher preparation and professional learning. However, reforms in this area are just beginning to address the social and emotional demands placed on teachers. This research offers an opportunity to learn if teachers' levels of SEC can moderate stress, thereby improving classroom relationships, management and instruction. It may offer guidance for a fresh emphasis during teacher training, teacher induction programs or throughout professional learning.

Research Questions

Stress remains an important factor in teacher attrition, teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Factors that might influence stress and stress moderation, like

social emotional competence, must continue to be researched. The foremost focus of this study will be on the following research question: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of social emotional competence (SEC) and reported level of stress?

In addition, the following questions will be addressed:

1. Does SEC moderate the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave?
2. Do teachers' levels of SEC vary by demographic descriptors (i.e. gender, years of experience, grade level taught)?
3. What pre-service or in-service training do teachers report regarding social emotional competencies?

Significance of the Study

Despite the appropriate and high level of concern about teacher stress, concrete ideas to reduce it are few. Thus, there is still a clear and distinct call to pursue individual factors that may influence teachers' abilities to moderate stress. This research will expand the knowledge and understanding of the individual characteristic termed social emotional competence (SEC). SEC is a construct which is widely used in the corporate world to evaluate and develop workers for success. Educators have also recognized the importance of SEC, but within the system subset of students. It is important to this researcher to shift the focus to the primary tool of student achievement, the teacher.

This study also offers an inroad into a largely ignored dynamic between SEC, teacher stress and teachers' intention to leave. It realizes that the social environment of traditional classrooms creates certain emotional demands and knows that specific factors related to teaching cause significant stress as well as desire to leave the profession. This

research has the potential to generate new coursework for teacher preparation programs, a focus for induction programs as well as for professional development. Ultimately, every teacher who experiences stress related to their position may benefit from this study.

Procedures

Research Design

As there is limited information about the relationship between social emotional competence, teacher stress, and teachers' intention to leave, the primary goal of this research was to establish if relationships exist between the constructs. Therefore, a quantitative approach using survey data was used as the design for this study. A quantitative study allowed for a breadth of information to be collected. Survey data offered a structured and systematic way to compare respondents (de Vaus, 2002). Correlational and regression analysis provided evidence of whether or not statistically significant relationships existed.

Participants

This study surveyed teachers who are currently employed in the Southeast region of the State of Georgia. Three separate school districts were included in this study. All of the participating districts were drawn from Georgia's First District Regional Educational Services Agency.

Instrumentation

After a thorough review of the literature, five instruments were created by this researcher. The first instrument was designed to measure teacher stress. The second instrument was designed to measure SEC with five subscales: self-awareness, social awareness, relationship management, responsible decision making, and self-management.

A third instrument was created to measure teachers' intentions to leave. A fourth instrument was designed to learn what pre-service or professional learning experiences teachers have had regarding social and emotional competencies. Finally, a fifth instrument was made to collect relevant demographic variables and allowed the researcher to answer the research sub-questions.

A panel of experts reviewed the items included in the instruments for content, wording and understandability. Revisions were made based on their recommendations. After approval from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University, a pilot study was conducted to establish internal consistency. The following Cronbach's alphas were established for the individual instruments: teacher stress = .862, SEC total = .898, teacher intention to leave = .797, pre-service = .904, professional learning = .864. Accordingly, the instruments were deemed suitable for use in this investigation.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using an anonymous, online survey which contained the five instruments. Results of the survey were analyzed the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20. For the overarching research question, a bivariate correlational analysis determined if a relationship existed between levels of teacher stress and reported levels of social emotional competence. Additional regression analysis was conducted to determine if levels of SEC moderated the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave the profession. Data analysis also examined if teachers' levels of SEC varied by demographics. Finally, descriptive data regarding teacher pre-service and professional learning experiences regarding SEC were reported.

Limitations, Delimitations and Assumptions

The primary limitation of this research remains the generalizability of the results considering the small geographical region from where the sample was drawn and the lack of diversity within this region. Another limitation of this study exists in the use of self-report measures and five researcher designed instruments as the sources of data. There is an assumption that these new instruments measured what they were designed to measure. The delimitations of this study included the restricted geographical setting in Southeast Georgia and the fact that all of the school districts in the study are largely rural in nature.

Definition of Terms

Social Emotional Competence

Social emotional competence is a skill set which encompasses self-awareness, social awareness, relationship management, responsible decision making and self-management (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Teacher Stress

Teacher stress is defined as the experience of negative emotions which result from work as a teacher (Kyriacou, 2001).

Summary

Teacher stress has extensive and daily ramifications for each and every teacher and each and every student. The inverse relationship between teacher stress and effectiveness has been well established as have the links to teacher attrition rates. Educational researchers have identified consistent stress factors for teachers, but individual characteristics that moderate stress have received significantly less attention. Social emotional competence (SEC) has been minimally examined in educational

literature as an individual characteristic of teachers. The literature that does exist has primarily focused on the impact of teachers' levels of SEC on students. Negligible research has been conducted in the last decade that attempted to understand the relationships between level of SEC, teacher stress and teacher attrition. In addition, while teacher stress has emerged as a global concern, reform efforts, with regard to teacher preparation programs, have continued to largely ignore this issue.

This study examined the relationships between teachers' stress, levels of SEC, and teachers' intention to leave. Demographic information, including gender, race, years of experience, and grade level taught, was also collected. Differences between demographic categories and levels of SEC were analyzed and reported. Finally, this study asked participants about instruction and exposure to the construct of SEC through teacher preparation and professional learning experiences.

A quantitative research design was employed through the use of an online survey of teachers using five instruments created by this researcher. The instruments were piloted, revised and analyzed for acceptable internal consistency. Results from this study may have implications for teacher preparation reform and professional learning activities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The evolution of educational research on teacher stress has demonstrated progress in hopes of reducing stress, from identifying prominent stressors to an examination of organizational structures. Despite the knowledge gained from these studies, teachers have continued to report significant levels of stress with the resultant losses of both teacher effectiveness and teacher retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kauts & Saroj, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Plash & Piotrowsky, 2006). Recent and minor shifts in the literature, however, have documented new channels to better understand stress with a focus on individual and group characteristics of teachers.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been recognized by corporate trainers and educational researchers as an important construct. Studies exist which have examined the impact of teachers' levels of EI on the students as well as themselves. Social emotional competence (SEC), on the other hand, has been established through research as an important skill set for students to perform within the classroom environment. The transition to an emphasis on teachers' levels of SEC has just begun.

Teacher Stress

Evidence of concern for teacher stress is well represented in educational literature. The last decade has revealed consistent results in regard to specific stressors for teachers. Work load, student behavior and motivation, low salaries, and state/federal mandates have repeatedly appeared as themes throughout the literature (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005; Johannsen, 2011; Kyriacou, 2001).

Of particular concern are the stressors experienced by novice teachers and special education teachers due to higher attrition rates (Keigher, 2010). Reig, Paquette and Chen (2007) studied pre-service and novice teachers in rural, western Pennsylvania. This research used a mixed methods approach with 39 pre-service teachers responding to web based surveys and reflections. Five novice teachers participated in interviews. Pre-service teachers reported concerns in four general areas: students, parents, mentor teachers, and themselves. More specifically, teachers reported being worried about building relationships with a diverse group of learners, bullying and violence, as well as respect for teachers. Major concerns with mentor teachers centered on having a mentor who would be cooperative and teach them effective instructional strategies. Additional findings were apprehensions regarding adequate content knowledge and pedagogical skills, general workload, classroom management and discipline. While this study examined pre-service and novice teachers, the experiences of regular and special education teachers have been reported as well.

Dickerson (2008) examined general and special education teachers stress levels following student internship. Pre and post test surveys were administered to research the progression of stress from pre-service coursework to the student teaching experience. Both general and special education teachers reported significantly more stress at the post survey. The stressor most consistently identified for both groups was lack of student motivation. However, time management, particularly for paperwork, concerns regarding discipline and worry about over-commitment were also strongly represented. Dickerson suggested that this study inform teacher preparation programs of the beginnings of teacher stress.

Contrary to research on teacher stressors, examination of stress according to demographics, such as age, gender, grade level taught, performance level of school, and years of experience, has produced conflicting results. Fisher (2011), in a study of 400 secondary teachers in the Southeastern United States, researched the relationships among stress, job satisfaction, and job burnout. She reported statistically significant differences between novice teachers versus experienced teachers in relationship to job burnout. Novice teachers had higher levels of burnout. However, a statistically significant relationship was not found for stress levels based on years of experience, although more experienced teachers generally reported lower levels of stress. Using multiple regression analysis, Fisher stated that years of experience was a statistically significant predictor of job stress for secondary school teachers. Other recent research partially supported these findings.

Johannsen (2011) studied teachers from elementary, middle and secondary levels in Georgia and also found that there was no significant difference in stress levels based on years of experience. In addition, there was no difference based on gender. However, Johannsen reported that there are differences based on grade level taught. Her study found that elementary school teachers have significantly higher stress than their middle or high school counterparts. Of particular worry is that this pool of elementary teachers also reported higher levels of empowerment, involvement with decision making as well as overall support. These factors did not appear to moderate stress levels. It should be noted, though, that teachers from all educational levels in this study reported experiencing moderate levels of stress. In addition, this research found that student

behavior and student motivation produced the highest stress ratings for teachers, which supported earlier literature for teacher stressors.

Both of these studies have limitations for their geographic regions in the United States. Teacher stress, however, certainly remains a global concern. In 2007, six European nations agreed, through the European Trade Union Commission on Education (ETUCE), to substantially increase knowledge about teacher stress and to implement programs in an effort to reduce it (Billehoj, 2007). In Bulgaria, stress is named on the list of occupational diseases and all workers, including teachers, are mandated to have regular health checks. England has implemented teacher hot lines and websites in an outreach effort. Finland, through the Finish Institute of Occupational Health, organized teacher wellness workshops. Estonia has chosen to focus on a work stressor analysis. In his report to the ETUCE, Billehoj stated that work overload, student behavior and increased class size all contribute to an increase in worker related illness. Furthermore, Billehoj recommended that prevention strategies focus on individual workers rather than organizations due to the difficulty of systemic change.

These global concerns have been translated into research from not only Europe but from Asia and Africa as well. Santiago, Otero-Lopez, Castro, and Villardefrancos (2008) researched occupational stress in a large sample of secondary school teachers in Europe. Over 1300 teachers participated in the study focused on student disruptive behavior and managing conflicts in the school setting. They reported that female teachers experienced greater stress from both student disruptive behavior and conflict management compared to their male counterparts. In addition, novice and well-tenured teachers experienced the least stress managing student behavior and conflicts. Those

teachers considered to be in the middle of their career reported the highest levels of stress in this area. An additional European study supported several of these findings and expanded the knowledge base by including job burnout in its variables.

Antoniou and Polychroni (2006) used a cross-sectional design in their research of almost 500 primary and secondary school teachers in Greece. The focus of this study was a comparison of age and gender with two related variables: occupational stress and job burnout. The most highly rated items from the participants involved questions regarding managing student behavior, motivation, poor student performance and interactions with students. Antoniou and Polychroni found that female teachers reported higher levels of stress and experienced more stress in dealing with student behavior problems. Both of these results concurred with Santiago et al (2008). In addition, Antoniou and Polychroni stated that younger teachers reported higher levels of burnout while older teachers reported higher levels of stress due to lack of support from the government.

Kauts and Saroj (2011) offered another international perspective with their large study of 600 secondary teachers in India. Their results on teacher stress contradicted Johannsen (2011), Santiago et al. (2008) and Antoniou and Polychroni's (2006) results for gender. They found that male secondary teachers experienced significantly higher levels of stress. Pei and Guoli (2007) studied 500 elementary and secondary school teachers in China with a focus on the negative effects of stress. They reported considerable stress for teachers at all grade levels, with elementary teachers having the lowest levels of stress. In addition, there was no difference in regard to stress according to gender. These findings support Johannsen's (2011) research for stress levels according

to gender. Further, Pei and Guoli found a moderate impact of stress on teachers' physical health as well as a somewhat smaller impact on teachers' performance. Stress differences based on years of experience also were also examined, with two phases of teaching reported as the most stressful: novice teachers with less than six years of experience and those teachers in the middle of their career with 16-20 years of experience.

In a smaller study of 75 South African teachers, Milner and Khoza (2008) compared teacher's stress levels from both high performing and low performing schools. The high performing schools were defined as having a 100% success rate and the low performing as a 25% success rate. They found that all teachers reported high levels of stress regardless of the performance level of a school. In fact, all of the stressors offered in the survey were consistently rated as highly stressful by the teachers in this study. Therefore, there were no differences in stressors at high versus low performing schools. Even a strict item analysis did not reveal patterns of reported stress; differences in specific items were found to be idiosyncratic.

It is also important to recognize Wright and Ballesteros' (2011) assertion that principals believe that teacher stress is only increasing rather than decreasing. Their study of Eastern Kentucky administrators saw differences in perceptions of how teachers at different grade levels handle stress. Wright and Ballesteros also compared their findings based on gender. They reported that principals believe that elementary school teachers and male teachers, in general, handle stress more effectively. These findings both support and conflict with earlier presented studies of teachers themselves, however, the perceptions of administrators provides a unique perspective.

The research on teacher stressors has revealed steady and, perhaps, uniform results. Contradictions exist regarding who reports higher levels of stress based on demographics. Theories for these differences include geographic disparities, cultural implications as well as the uniqueness of individual school buildings. However, a more important, overarching message remains clear: teachers do experience moderate to significant stress.

Further educational research has also examined individual characteristics, group dynamics and cultural aspects related to teacher stress. This marks an important shift from a basic understanding of teacher stress to a movement towards moderating stress. Constructs such as self-efficacy, social support, and school climate have been examined by researchers. While there is little debate that these are promising attributes, they have not yet been shown to consistently impact stress levels for teachers.

Chan (2002), in his study of 83 Chinese teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs, reported on the relationships among individual self-efficacy, levels of social support, teacher stress and the physical or psychological effects of stress. He found that self-efficacy was not an arbitrating factor between teacher stress and the resultant psychological distress, such as anxiety. However, Chan reported that social supports did have an impact on generalized stress. This study also documented high levels of stress for teachers in training with higher rates of associated physical complaints than would be expected. Finally, the group most at risk was those considered to have high stress, but lower levels of social support.

Additional studies have reported on teachers' social supports. Romero (2009) researched multiple individual characteristics in her mixed methods thesis study of pre-K

teachers. This study was a very small but in-depth examination using an ecological maps approach to assess social supports for teachers. She found that teachers experienced stress due to multiple roles, not just between home and school but within the school environment. Romero also discovered that the teaching profession had been chosen as a “career of circumstance” rather than as a vocation for almost half of the teachers interviewed. She stated that this type of career path may have implications for self-efficacy and job commitment. Romero also identified a theme, based on the qualitative interviews, of the importance of relationships with other educators as a support for teachers. It should be noted that these educator relationships need not be within a school, but may be colleagues from previous schools, from professional preparation programs or even family members who are educators. Finally, student success as well as a focus on student progress emerged as a way to maintain enthusiasm for teaching.

Self-efficacy was researched further by Schwarzer and Hallum (2008). In their cross-cultural study of over 1,200 German and Syrian teachers, they examined self-efficacy, job stress, and job burnout. They found significant differences between these two samples in both levels of self-efficacy and job burnout. However, while there may have been true differences in these areas, it is also equally likely that the samples may not have been representative or that the translations of the surveys instruments may have affected reliability. Even so, since the research design was not intended to compare the various groups, the findings that were reported continue to be relevant as descriptive research. Schwarzer and Hallum found that self-efficacy was indeed a protective factor when examining the process of job stress leading to job burnout. Teachers with low levels of self-efficacy would be more likely to experience job stress and therefore, put

them at risk for job burnout. These authors continued with a longitudinal study with the German sample from their original study to explore these results further. This second study confirmed the predictive nature of self-efficacy to job stress which then predicted job burnout. So too, did self-efficacy moderate job stress for those teachers under the age of 40.

Additional research has focused on the impact of self-efficacy for general and special education pre-service teachers. Dickerson (2008) compared these groups' self-efficacy as they moved from coursework to student teaching. Her results showed a significant change in self-efficacy based on pre and post survey data for general education teachers. However, special education teachers did not demonstrate this growth. These results may have implications for special education teachers' internship design.

Collective self-efficacy, a group's belief about their ability to accomplish a task, has also been examined as a stress moderator. Klassen, Usher and Bong (2011) reported on job stress, job satisfaction and collective self-efficacy through a large cross cultural study of Canadian, Korean, and United States' teachers. This study focused on the both the social and cultural aspects to working as a teacher. All variables were rated more highly by the Western participants when compared to the Eastern participants which is consistent with earlier cross-cultural studies. Klassen et al. found that collective self-efficacy was positively related to job satisfaction for all sample groups. Job stress and collective self-efficacy were inversely correlated for the Canadian and United States' teachers. However, collective self-efficacy was positively related to job stress for Korean teachers. So, although collective self-efficacy has been shown to relate to job satisfaction for Korean workers, it did not moderate stress levels. In fact, it appeared that Korean

teachers experience more stress when their fellow teachers are more confident and high performing. These results demonstrated the need to consider cultural context when studying teacher stress.

Teacher stress has been well-studied in the educational literature with a renewed focus on characteristics of teachers and schools that might moderate stress. Consistent results for stressors have been produced and conflicting results for demographic analysis remain. As teacher stress continues to be a global concern, cultural ramifications of research results must continue to be determined and considered.

Emotional Intelligence

According to Hansen (2003), stress, as a life experience, can be divided into three distinct parts: the stressor, the strain, and the appraisal of the stress. The stressor is the impetus for the strain, which can be described as the physical and/or psychological effects that occur as a result of the stressor. As Hansen explained further, appraisal “involves the judgments about the degree of threat a stressor presents and an evaluation of whether sufficient resources are available to cope with the stressor” (p. 612).

Therefore, the appraisal phase represents several cognitive processes which parallel constructs within both emotional intelligence (EI) and social emotional competence (SEC) frameworks. These include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and decision making.

EI has been studied with regard to general work performance, teacher effectiveness and student performance. The findings from these studies would support the importance of SEC due to the large overlays in the constructs. Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, and Sutton (2009) established that emotions do transfer from teachers to

students. Over 1,500 middle grades mathematics students and 71 teachers reported on their enjoyment and enthusiasm in this longitudinal study. Teachers' enjoyment and student enjoyment were positively related. Teachers' enthusiasm was also a mediating factor for student enjoyment.

The relationship between teachers' level of EI and students' levels of EI has also been specifically researched. Polat and Ulusoy-Oztan (2009) conducted a study in Europe with 84 responding 4th and 5th grade teachers and 587 students from the same grades. Polat and Ulusoy-Oztan reported that both teachers and students had high levels of EI. Significant differences were found between the groups: teachers had greater ability to recognize other's emotions while students had higher ratings on managing emotions. The strongest relationship identified in this study was a medium, positive correlation between a teacher's ability to recognize other's emotions and a student's ability to do the same. This has implications for teacher preparation programs. Finally, Polat and Ulusoy-Oztan also stated that teachers' levels of EI were predictive of students' levels of EI. This would support the reciprocal, social dynamic of the classroom environment.

Penrose, Perry and Ball (2007) examined teachers' self-efficacy and EI. Their study of over 200 Australian primary and secondary teachers revealed a significant, moderate positive correlation between EI and a teacher's self-efficacy. Levels of EI were also significantly different when comparing groups of teachers based on years of experience. Teachers with more years of experience had higher levels of self-efficacy.

Hosotani and Matsumura-Imai (2011), in their Japanese study of high quality teachers, found that the most effective teachers use a variety of emotions throughout their

instruction. They also reported that the successful use of emotional competence and the recognition of this as a teacher specific skill were related to high teacher effectiveness. Hosotani and Matsumura-Imai also stated that these results have implications for teacher preparation programs. Philipp and Schüpbach (2010) also examined the role of emotions in teachers' experiences. Their longitudinal study of over 100 teachers revealed the role of emotional labor in teaching. This variable impacted the health of teachers. However, teachers who were able to recognize and manage their emotions in challenging situations reported significantly less emotional exhaustion.

Several specific studies related to EI and adult stress or employee stress also exist in the literature. Ciarrochi, Deane, and Anderson (2002) studied over 300 college age students in Australia. Although considered an outdated study, important findings that disaggregate emotional intelligence components were reported and therefore, warrant inclusion in this literature review. Ciarrochi, Deane, and Anderson reported that participants with higher rates of emotional perceptiveness also reported higher rates of stress. However, those who rated themselves higher on the ability to manage their emotions, reported less stress. Therefore, it may be a narrower concept within the EI and SEC frameworks that offers hope for stress moderation as opposed to a generalized EI/SEC capacity. Another study by Gohm, Corser, and Dalsky (2005) produced conflicting results when it examined EI and stress in approximately 200 college freshman. These authors examined stress and EI within the parameters of specific personality variables labeled clarity, intensity and attention. Their overall results suggested that EI aids some individuals with stress but not others. There was no relationship between EI and those participants categorized as overwhelmed (intensity)

and confused (clarity). Such variables may impact a person's ability to access and use their emotional intelligence. This has implications for early intervention with stress coping.

Sunil and Rooprai (2009) offered a business perspective by studying the relationship between EI, workplace stress, and anxiety. They surveyed 120 randomly selected students, ages 21-26, all enrolled in universities in India for their Masters of Business Administration. Males were over represented in this study most likely due to the population of students enrolled in MBA programs. Sunil and Rooprai sought to understand the role EI plays in moderating work stress and anxiety. They reported significant relationships among all three variables. Not surprisingly, stress and anxiety were positively correlated at .710, indicating that more stressed individuals also experience higher levels of anxiety. In addition, a negative and significant correlation (-.667) was established between anxiety and EI. Higher levels of anxiety were associated with lower levels of EI. A significant negative correlation was also found for EI and workplace stress ($r = -0.547$). This would predict lower stress levels for individuals with higher reported EI.

The business community has also connected EI with a worker's intention to leave a job. Akintayo (2010) studied the relationship between EI, work/family conflict and intention to leave in low to middle management workers in Southwest Nigeria. Akintayo found that workers with higher levels of EI had lower levels of withdrawal intentions. This study has important implications for the education arena.

The specific relationship between teacher burnout and EI is well represented in the literature, almost exclusively from an international perspective. Chan (2006) studied

167 secondary school teachers in Hong Kong with a focus on EI and burnout. He found not only a significant relationship between EI and burnout, but identified two specific areas of EI that were preventative: emotional appraisal and the positive regulation of emotions. These constructs impacted burnout in the area of emotional exhaustion. These results support Ciarrochi, Deane, and Anderson's findings that regulation of emotions appears to moderate stress. Platsidou (2009) studied 127, primary special education teachers in Greece to examine the relationships between EI, job satisfaction and burnout. Results showed that Greek special education teachers reported lower burnout levels when compared to European and American special education teachers. These teachers also reported high scores on both specific and total EI factors. Several relationships were found between job satisfaction and job burnout: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization could both be predicted from job satisfaction. In addition, the specific EI constructs of optimism and mood regulation impacted the job satisfaction component of personal accomplishment.

Further research established the relationship between EI and burnout. Alnaggar (2011) studied pre-school special education teachers in Egypt. Approximately 280 participants responded to a survey regarding EI, locus of control and burnout. Alnaggar reported that this sample had higher than expected levels of emotional exhaustion when compared to other teacher groups from previous research. In addition, level of EI was significantly and negatively correlated to the level of job burnout. Akomolafe and Popoola (2011) corroborated these results with their Nigerian study of secondary school teachers. They also reported a negative and significant relationship between level of EI and burnout.

Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, and Salovey (2010) specifically researched the factor of emotion regulation ability (ERA) from the EI framework. They studied the relationships among ERA, job satisfaction and job burnout. Their sample consisted of 123 secondary school teachers in England who were almost exclusively white. This lack of diversity should be noted as a limitation. Brackett et al. reported that ERA was associated with job satisfaction and greater personal accomplishment but not with the components of job burnout, such as depersonalization. ERA was also related to a more positive affect and positively correlated with principal's support. In their summary, the authors stated, "It appears that teachers with higher ERA may be more skilled at generating positive emotions, using diverse strategies such as self-talk and cognitive reappraisal to undo negative emotional experiences, manage stress and promote job satisfaction" (p. 414).

Chang (2009) also targeted emotion regulation as a specific variable related to classroom disruptions, coping strategies and job burnout. This study represented a large sample group of Midwest teachers. These 555 participants were 94.5% white and all had between 1-5 years of teaching experience. For this group of novice teachers, intense emotional reactions due to classroom disruptions were associated with job burnout. Those teachers with higher levels of emotion regulation would be predicted to have lower levels of burnout. This study also supported self-efficacy as a moderator of job burnout. In addition, active coping strategies that were solution focused were negatively correlated with burnout while denial was positively associated with burnout. It should be noted that while burnout is a construct distinctly different from this researcher's interest, teacher

stress, it is well established that stress is the inroad to burnout (Brackett et al., 2010; Chan, 2006; Melton & Gaffney, 2010). Therefore, all of these studies' results are warranted for inclusion in this review of the literature.

Ignat (2010), on the other hand, analyzed data for teacher stress, not job burnout or generalized worker stress. Ignat studied the relationships among general life satisfaction, self-efficacy, teacher stress, and emotional intelligence. The participants were over 100 teachers, largely female from both urban and rural regions in Romania. A unique finding from this research was related to the demographic variable of marital status. Ignat reported that married teachers with children were significantly more satisfied with life than their unmarried counterparts. More related to this researcher's interest, Ignat also found positive correlations among emotional intelligence scores, self-efficacy for both self and as a teacher, as well as satisfaction with life. It can be extrapolated that teachers with higher EI and self-efficacy also experience greater satisfaction in life. Further examination of emotional intelligence and teacher stress coping revealed that EI was positively correlated with active coping strategies for stress such as positive reframing, seeking support and making plans to manage stress. EI was not associated with passive stress coping strategies like acceptance or denial.

Social Emotional Competence

Research on social emotional competence has historically focused on students' capacity to grow in these areas. It is important to recognize that educational research supports the competence and "growth oriented" perspective. Whitted (2011) explained that there are proven programs that do promote gains in students' levels of SEC, such as Second Step. In addition, The Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning

(CASEL) presented a large meta-analysis of over 200 studies involving approximately 300,000 students who participated in social emotional learning as part of their instructional program at school. CASEL (2008) reported a 9% decrease in conduct problems, 10% decrease in emotional distress like anxiety, 9% improvement in attitude about self, others and school, 23% improvement in social emotional skills, 9% improvement in school and classroom behavior, and 11% improvement in academic achievement. Durlak, Weissbert, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011) also supported the 11% increase in academic achievement.

Recent, primary research also supports the competency perspective. Fitzsimmons and Lanphar (2011) studied middle school experiences with relationship to authentic learning and emotional engagement. They examined both student and teacher perspectives in their qualitative study. Fitzsimmons and Lanphar found that a deliberate focus on relationships and emotions in the instructional process provided more opportunities for and greater student engagement in learning. Barr and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2009), on the other hand, revealed the complicated nature of pro-social behaviors. They compared two high schools, one traditional and the other, designated as a Just Community School. Just Community Schools are based on Kohlberg's moral development theory and emphasize greater moral reasoning, as well as a democracy centered school. Barr and Higgins-D'Alessandro conducted a longitudinal study of 30 students, which examined changes in pro-social behaviors, empathy and school culture. They found significant changes in pro-social behavior in the traditional high school students from year one to year two. The Just Community School students showed gains in the positive perceptions regarding their school culture, but not with increases in pro-

social behavior, despite the overarching theme of their school. Changes in school culture were not associated with increased pro-social behavior in this study. Further research was suggested to examine the stimuli that promote pro-social behavior changes. Finally, Linares, Rosbruch, Stern, Edwards, Walker, and Abikoff (2005) assessed students in fourth and fifth grade for changes after participation in social emotional learning model. They reported gains in math achievement, self-efficacy and students' ability to problem solve.

In 2008, however, Jennings and Greenberg proposed a pro-social classroom model with a focus on teachers' rather than students' levels of SEC. They believed that these skills would engender strong teacher-student relationships, more effective classroom management, lower rates of burnout and higher student achievement. This model was supported by previous research and moved the focus towards an examination of adult learning with social emotional competence. Few studies appear to exist that report on adult responses to social emotional training. Boyatzis, Stubbs, and Taylor (2002) conducted longitudinal research with graduate management students at Case Western Reserve University. They reported that students' emotional competencies can improve during schooling without sacrificing the academic achievement process. However, Boyatzis et al. recommended that the curriculum be broad with a range of experiences that include group projects and collaboration with peers as practice.

Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, and Kehoe (2010) utilized an intervention program called Tuning into Kids in their research with parents of pre-school age children. The goal of this study was to both enhance and to assess emotional and socialization practices with these 216 adults in Australia. The parents attended six training sessions

and two booster sessions. Participants reported gains in their own level of emotional awareness and regulation. They also recognized emotions more frequently in their children with greater verbal labeling of emotions as well as discussions centered on what caused the feelings. These findings are important considering the minimal level of intervention and the resultant improvements. Further research is obviously needed to determine how adults, specifically teachers, respond to education and training with SEC. Previous research would indicate that growth is most probable.

Teacher Preparation and Retention

The solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining effective teachers begins with rigorous and successful teacher education programs. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education released a plan for reforming teacher preparation that called for higher accountability. Aldeman, Carey, Dillon, Miller, and Silva (2011) reported that, despite requirements that states report low and higher performing teacher preparation programs, only 37 programs out of 1,400 have been reported as low performing. Some states have never reported a single teacher education program as low performing. In addition, Levine (2006) stated that 62% of teachers report that they feel unprepared for the realities of teaching. Thorough clinical training, tracking performance data for graduates, and revised teacher certification exams were all included in this reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

An emphasis on the teacher as an individual has also emerged in teacher education literature. In 2002, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) ratified professional standards for teacher dispositions. Significant

debate has ensued regarding the definition and assessment of dispositions (Green, Chiricello, Mallory, Melton, & Lindahl, 2011). Several years later, revised definitions were offered (NCATE, 2006). Borko, Liston, and Whitcomb (2007) offered the following broad definition: “Dispositions are an individual’s tendencies to act in a particular manner. As such, they are predictive of patterns of action” (p. 6). Examination of teacher dispositions offers an inroad into understanding teacher effectiveness within a broader context; teachers are no longer vessels of content knowledge and pedagogy, but rather unique individuals who use themselves to apply this learning.

A call for training in EI/SEC has been heard in several literature reviews and meta-analyses. Palomera, Fernandez-Berrocal, and Brackett (2008), in their review of research, compared findings on EI with the daily functions of classroom teachers. They recommended that as Europe continues to reform teacher preparation, training in emotional competency for classroom teachers should be included. White, Bloomfield, and LeCornu (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of trends in teacher preparation in Australia. They identified the social and emotional demands that arise not only from classroom teaching but from collegial interactions. This included professional learning communities and an emphasis on mentor-teacher relationships. White et al. (2010) powerfully stated, “We, as teacher educators, cannot assume that teachers have the necessary skills and attitudes that are needed for them to engage productively in the enhanced ‘reflective’ work and ‘emotional work’ that is needed in learning circles or similar structures” (p. 190). These authors also felt that explicit teaching of a high level of interpersonal skills should be completed during pre-service training.

Primary research has also supported the idea of addressing emotions and the components of SEC in teacher training. Jakhelln (2011) reported findings from a Norwegian case-study with three upper school teachers. She stated that the emotional part of teaching is largely neglected for early career teachers and in professional development as well. In addition, Tait (2008) focused on novice teachers, resilience and emotional competence in her mixed methods Canadian study. She found that novice teachers who demonstrated higher resilience also demonstrated higher levels of emotional competence. In addition, they were developing self-efficacy and utilizing problem solving strategies. Their resilience appeared tied to setting goals, a focus on learning from experiences, taking care of themselves and preserving an optimistic approach. Tait also proposed that teacher preparation and induction programs address SEC components such as self-assessment, empathy, social skills, and self-motivation. This should be done in a structured fashion to allow for practice of effective coping skills and reframing strategies. Finally, Tait identified resilience as a possible contributing factor to teacher commitment and retention.

Teacher retention remains a critical issue due to its implications for both student achievement and the financial costs to local boards who must continually recruit and hire qualified teachers. The Teacher Follow-up Survey 2008-09, as part of the Schools and Staffing Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, found that attrition rates ranged from 8% to nearly 16% for public and private school teachers, respectively, in just one year. Novice teachers, defined as having one to three years of experience, reported higher rates of leaving the profession (Keigher, 2010). A recent international study found

attrition rates to average 17% per year for teachers (Mancuso, Roberts & White, 2010). These high attrition rates continue despite the economic downturn (Hutchings, 2011).

Summary

Abundant literature exists with regard to basic understandings of teacher stressors. Teacher stress has also been disaggregated by demographics with contradictory results. Movement towards deeper analysis of individual, group and cultural characteristics that may influence teacher stress has begun. Both self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (EI) are represented in the literature but with inconsistent results. The construct of social emotional competence (SEC) has emerged in educational research with a focus on student growth, but more recently, teacher or adult competence has been highlighted. Substantial overlaps between the EI and SEC constructs allow for transference of research results. The educational and development perspective of SEC translates well into further research with moderating teacher stress. Large gaps exist, however, particularly with research in the United States, in relationship to teachers' SEC and its impact on teacher stress.

Reform efforts with teacher preparation programs continue both in the USA and internationally. These reformed programs hope to graduate well-prepared teachers who have not only content knowledge and best instructional practices, but the skills to manage the daily demands of the classroom. Results, such as these, would potentially create positive impacts on teacher retention and student achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The significant impacts of teacher stress on student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and teacher attrition demanded continued research into this construct (Hutchings, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kauts & Saroj, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Plash & Piotrowsky, 2006). Individual characteristics that may moderate teacher stress have been established through the literature as opportunities for change. More specifically, teachers' levels of social emotional competence (SEC) have not been studied extensively. In particular, further investigation was needed into how this characteristic affects several arenas: the teachers themselves, their students, the classroom environment and pedagogy. This research focused on establishing what relationships exist among teachers' levels of SEC, teacher stress, and teachers' intention to leave. In addition, information regarding teacher preparation and professional learning courses on components of SEC was collected, along with demographic data.

Research Design

A quantitative design, using an online survey, was employed for this investigation in order to determine what, if any, statistically significant relationships exist among the three variables: teachers' level of SEC, teacher stress, and teachers' intention to leave. As de Vaus (2002) has written, "Quantitative survey research is sometimes portrayed as being sterile and unimaginative but well suited to providing certain types of factual, descriptive information- the hard evidence" (p. 5). Further, this design allowed for additional analysis regarding the variables and demographic information. Data regarding

teachers' exposure to the five components of SEC during teacher pre-service courses and professional learning also were assessed.

Population

Georgia's First District Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA) serves 18 school districts within the Southeastern portion of the state. The 2010 population census for these systems covered a broad range from approximately 10,000 residents to almost 260,000 residents (State of Georgia, 2011). Three school districts from the First District RESA agreed to participate in this study. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009), these districts were classified as "fringe rural" districts based on their population size and proximity to both rural and urbanized regions. The total population of teachers, based on information provided by district representatives, approached 1,600 certified teachers. Specific details of district populations and number of teachers by county was not reported to protect the anonymity of the participating districts. However, the information provided still offered parameters for readers and other researchers regarding the ability of the results to be extrapolated to other distinct groups of teachers.

Sample

A convenience sample was drawn from the teacher populations of the three participating districts. All certified teachers identified within these districts were sent the online questionnaire. Teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as alternative settings were included. The sample also consisted of a variety of classroom teachers: regular education as well as non-homeroom based teachers such as special education teachers, early intervention program (EIP) teachers at the elementary level, Title I funded teachers, and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers.

Teachers were contacted through their school email addresses after approval was granted for this study by the Institutional Review Board of Georgia Southern University. The superintendents from the three participating districts agreed in writing for their teachers to be included in this study. Based on Cohen's (1992) sample sizes for multiple regression analysis with a maximum of eight independent variables, alpha set to .05, power = .80, and an effect size $f^2 = .15$, a minimum sample of 107 was recommended. A total of 145 teachers completed the online survey for this study.

Instrumentation

A thorough review of the literature on teacher stress, SEC, and teacher attrition was conducted to gain an understanding of these variables. Although existing teacher stress surveys were found, these appeared to focus more thoroughly on the identification of teacher stressors. This study aimed to gain a level of teachers' stress, therefore specific items related to these known stress factors were used in a researcher created instrument. The educational literature has identified the following as consistent stressors for teachers: work/role overload, salary issues, student discipline or motivation and factors such as state and federal mandates which affect decision making (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005, Johannsen, 2011, Kyriacou, 2001). Five items related to these factors were included in the instrument draft.

SEC contains five competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, relationship management, responsible decision making, and self-management (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). The relationship of this construct to emotional intelligence has been previously discussed in the background section, as has the use of SEC in the corporate world. Available surveys for SEC stem from business entities and require

administrator training. In addition, the instruments are lengthy and contain both a self-report approach as well as an observer report. Emotional intelligence inventories traditionally take a trait perspective rather than a competency perspective and typically do not include decision making in their paradigm. So, although these available questionnaires were not appropriate for this researcher's use, information from both arenas was used to develop 34 items in this researcher's pilot survey. In addition, a descriptive checklist for each component of SEC was created. This aided in clearly identifying the relationship between survey items and specific competencies included in each of the five components. This process also allowed for confidence that survey items thoroughly embraced the five components of SEC.

Three additional items were developed to ascertain a teacher's intention to leave the profession. Respondents were also asked about their pre-service classes and professional learning experiences in regards to five areas of SEC for a total of 10 items. Teachers were asked to rate the degree to which they had been exposed to the SEC components using three choices: not at all, somewhat or a great deal. Then, teachers were requested to share their years of teaching experience, race, their sex and which grade level(s) they currently teach. These items allowed for the research sub-questions to be answered. The pilot survey, in its original version, contained 55 items, along with a text box for feedback about the questions. A 7-point Likert scale, which ranged from very strongly disagree (1) to very strongly agree (7), was used for respondent ratings. Reverse scored items were included to prevent generalized response patterns by participants based on survey language.

The researcher created instrument was first reviewed by a panel of experts for face validity and clarity. Both the survey directions and survey items were revised based upon this feedback. Then, in order to establish internal consistency, a pilot study was launched after approval was granted from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University. In addition, permission was given from the superintendent of one participating school district for inclusion in the pilot study.

Data were collected using an online survey which did not track respondents Internet Protocol (IP) addresses. Twenty-seven teachers from elementary, middle, high school and multiple grade levels were represented in the pilot results. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated using SPSS 20 for each of the five instruments. In addition, the five components of SEC were analyzed individually for internal consistency.

Analysis of the five teacher stress items revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .862. According to de Vaus (2002), scores at or above .7 would indicate sufficient internal reliability. Therefore, all items remained for the teacher stress instrument. The total scale instrument for SEC revealed an initial alpha of .567. However, after analysis and revisions to the five components, the total revised scale consisting of 24 remaining items, rose to .898. Again, this was evidence of sufficient internal consistency of the revised, total SEC scale.

Within this scale, seven original items pertained to the self-awareness component. This researcher's goal was to include 3-5 items per component in the revised instrument while also maintaining acceptable levels of reliability as well as construct completeness. The initial Cronbach's alpha coefficient for self-awareness was .506 for all items. Three were removed based on the statistical analysis and the resultant alpha was .746 for the

remaining four items. Seven items were included in the original SEC scale for the component deemed self-regulation. The original alpha was .703. Removal of one item increased the alpha to .766. Deleting additional items would decrease the alpha value so six items were included in the revised instrument.

Six items were included in the piloted instrument for the social awareness component. The original alpha was .651. The removal of one item increased the alpha to .664. Additional items could not be removed without decreasing the coefficient. This score represents an alpha below the benchmark for acceptable reliability. However, since this component still contributes to the overall reliability for the total SEC alpha of .898, the items will still be included. Caution will be recommended for interpreting scores for the social awareness component by itself. The relationship management component presented with seven original items and an alpha of .647. Two items were deleted with a Cronbach's alpha of .812 for the remaining five items. The final component of SEC, decision making, contained seven original items. The initial reliability coefficient was .712. The deletion of three items resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .770. Therefore, four items remained in the revised instrument.

Three items were created for the teacher intention to leave portion of the original instrument. The pilot study results indicated an alpha of .797 and initially, all three items were retained for the revised survey. However, additional review was conducted after the pilot study to analyze for the completeness of the construct. Teacher intention to leave may indicate a desire to leave the profession entirely. On the other hand, it may also indicate a desire to leave one school for another. Therefore, a fourth item was created to provide further details of the respondent's specific intent. As a result of adding this item

after the pilot study was completed, a Cronbach's alpha was not available for the revised instrument in Table 1. Analysis of teachers' recall of both teacher pre-service classes and professional learning experiences, targeted towards the components of SEC, demonstrated high Cronbach's alphas of .904 and .864, respectively. All items remained for the revised instrument.

The open ended text box item for the pilot survey revealed concerns about item 31 for wording. This item, as part of the relationship management component, was deleted based on the data analysis for internal consistency. In addition, teachers commented on their interest in the survey, as they had not considered the lack of training in the SEC areas. Other notes included questions about spelling on two items. These were checked for accuracy.

The revised, researcher designed survey has 43 items for the five instruments with an additional four demographic questions for a total of 47 items. Although items were deleted from the pilot instrument, the integrity of the constructs was maintained. Based on the time durations for completion of the pilot survey, it was estimated that the revised survey could be completed in 10-15 minutes. A text box was not included in the revised survey as qualitative information would not be analyzed for this research design. See Table 1 for a summary table of the Cronbach's alphas from the pilot study and for the revised instrument. See Appendix A for detailed information of sources for item generation. See Appendix B for the revised survey.

Table 1

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for piloted and revised instruments

| Component | Pilot Alphas | # of Items Deleted | Revised Alphas |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Teacher Stress | .862 | 0 | .862 |
| SEC Total | .567 | 10 | .898 |
| ----self-awareness | .506 | 3 | .746 |
| ----self-regulation | .703 | 1 | .766 |
| ----social awareness | .651 | 1 | .664 |
| ----relationship management | .647 | 2 | .812 |
| ----decision making | .712 | 3 | .770 |
| Teacher Intention to Leave | .797 | See details pg. 45 | N/A |
| Teacher Pre-Service | .904 | 0 | .904 |
| Professional Learning | .864 | 0 | .864 |

Data Collection

This study contained an online survey which was launched after approval from Georgia Southern University's Institutional Review Board. At the request of the superintendents, the survey was sent to all principals from the participating districts, who forwarded the email to all certified teachers within their building. The email contained a brief introduction to the study as well as an embedded link to the survey. The survey, once opened in the link, included a thorough introduction with detailed directions for

completion (See Appendix B). A complete informed consent document was included as an attachment. An identical reminder email was sent five work days after the initial request, to encourage a greater number of responses, although those teachers who had already participated were asked to ignore this prompt. Internet Protocol (IP) addresses of respondents were not collected. This protected the anonymity of the sample as well as the participating counties, in general. If sufficient response was not generated by the online survey, the researcher had the option to conduct paper surveys, distributed at faculty meetings within the school districts, in order to meet the minimum sample size. However, the two email prompts generated more than sufficient responses for the required sample size. No paper surveys were used. Electronic survey data were stored on an external data storage device that was password protected with only the researcher having access. The electronic survey data was also stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office, with only the researcher having access. Data will be stored for three years after publication of the research report, after which all raw data will be destroyed by the researcher. Incomplete surveys responses were excluded from the data set and deleted by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Results from the data collection were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20. The analysis answered the following overarching research question: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of social emotional competence (SEC) and reported level of stress? This included further examination of the relationship between specific components within SEC and teacher stress. In addition, the following questions were addressed:

1. Does SEC moderate the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave the profession?
2. Do teachers' levels of SEC vary by demographic descriptors (i.e., sex, years of experience, grade level taught)?
3. What pre-service or in-service training do teachers report regarding social emotional competencies?

To answer the overarching research question, correlational analysis determined if a relationship existed between the two variables of SEC and teacher stress. Additional regression analysis was employed since this study contains multiple independent variables. According to de Vaus (2002), regression analysis “estimates the impact of one variable on another, evaluates the relative impact of various independent variables and predicts the value of the dependent variable under various conditions” (p. 364). Finally, descriptive data regarding teacher pre-service and professional learning experiences regarding SEC were included. Results were reported in both text and graphical forms.

Summary

A quantitative study, using an online survey, was conducted to generate greater understanding into the relationships among teacher stress, levels of SEC and teachers' intentions to leave the profession. In addition, teachers' exposure to the components of SEC was assessed. Demographic information was also collected. A pilot study was completed to establish both content validity and internal reliability for the researcher created instrument. The sample of teachers for this study was drawn from three participating districts in Southeast Georgia. The data collection was web-based and

protected the anonymity of respondents. Data analysis included both correlational and multiple regression analysis using SPSS 20.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

While many challenges exist in reforming education across the globe, student achievement remains the fundamental focus. The primary instrument of instructional delivery, the teacher, and her effectiveness are also well represented in reform literature and research. It follows that such constructs as teacher stress and teacher attrition which have direct links to teacher effectiveness and student achievement would also be of great concern (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kauts & Saroj, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Plash & Piotrowsky, 2006). Research on teacher stress has consistently identified specific stressors, yet has had inconsistent findings on stress according to demographics. Teacher attrition rates continue at significant levels despite the current economic profile (Hutchings, 2011).

Efforts to reduce teacher stress have moved from organizational strategies to either collective or individual characteristics, such as efficacy or social supports. Social emotional competence (SEC), represents an individual skill set comprised of self-awareness, social awareness, relationship management, responsible decision making, and self-management (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Educationally, SEC has been used in classrooms with a focus on students' abilities to use these skills. Implementation of social emotional learning programs has been reported to impact many aspects of the general classroom experience as well as the individual student experience. This included a decrease in conduct problems and classroom problem behavior, decreased anxiety, more positive attitude towards self and school, improved social emotional skills and increased academic achievement (CASEL, 2008). Inspired by the

pro-social classroom model proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2008), an examination of teachers' levels of SEC offered an opportunity to understand new potential pathways to impact the teachers' work experience in regards to stress and thoughts of leaving.

Research Questions

The following overarching research question guided this study: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of social emotional competence (SEC) and reported level of stress? The relationships between the five specific components of SEC and teacher stress were also analyzed. In addition, the following questions were addressed:

1. Does SEC moderate the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave?
2. Do teachers' levels of SEC vary by demographic descriptors (i.e., sex, years of experience, grade level taught)?
3. What pre-service or in-service training do teachers report regarding social emotional competencies?

Research Design

A researcher designed, online survey of classroom teachers was conducted in three school systems within the First District Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA) in Southeast Georgia. The survey consisted of five instruments designed to measure: 1) level of stress, 2) level of SEC, 3) intention to leave, and teacher exposure to the five components of SEC during 4) teacher preparation and 5) professional learning. Demographic data also were collected for years of experience, race, sex, and grade level(s) taught. Data analysis was conducted through the use of SPSS 20 and included both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents to this survey were 145 certified teachers drawn from three school districts in Southeast Georgia. Table 2 demonstrates the number of participants by sex. Descriptive analysis revealed that 26 of the respondents were male teachers who represented 17.9% of the total participants. There were 119 female teachers who represented 82.1% of the total respondents.

Table 2

Demographics of respondents by sex

| Sex | Number | Percent |
|--------|--------|---------|
| Male | 26 | 17.9 |
| Female | 119 | 82.1 |
| Total | 145 | 100.0 |

Descriptive analysis was also conducted on the years of experience held by the participants. Table 3 shows the years of teaching experience by five general categories: 0-3 years, 4-7, 8-11, 12-15 and greater than 15 years of experience. It should be noted that 47.6% of the respondents had more than 15 years of teaching experience which was more than double compared to any other teacher group by years of experience.

Table 3

Demographics of respondents by years of teaching experience

| Years of Teaching Experience | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 0-3 | 6 | 4.1 |
| 4-7 | 22 | 15.2 |
| 8-11 | 29 | 20.0 |
| 12-15 | 19 | 13.1 |
| 15+ | 69 | 47.6 |
| Total | 145 | 100.0 |

The respondents also provided information about their race during the survey. Descriptive analysis is presented in Table 4, which reveals that the overwhelming majority of participants were respondents who identified themselves as White/Caucasian. Black/African American participants were the next largest group of respondents at 11%.

Table 4

Demographics of respondents by race

| Race | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Asian | 1 | .7 |
| White/Caucasian | 124 | 85.5 |
| Black/African American | 16 | 11.0 |
| Hispanic | 2 | 1.4 |
| Multi-racial | 2 | 1.4 |
| Total | 145 | 100.0 |

Data were also collected from participants regarding the current grade level they teach. Respondents could choose from elementary, middle, high school or multiple grade levels. Table 5 demonstrates the descriptive analysis of participants by grade level

taught. There was an even distribution of respondents by elementary (42.8%) and middle school (43.4%) teachers; however high school teachers represented only 7.6% of participants and multiple grade levels was 6.2%.

Table 5

Demographics of respondents by grade level taught

| Grade Level Taught | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Elementary | 62 | 42.8 |
| Middle | 63 | 43.4 |
| High School | 11 | 7.6 |
| Multiple Grade Levels | 9 | 6.2 |
| Total | 145 | 100.0 |

Findings

This study utilized a researcher designed instrument that was reviewed, piloted and revised to develop both construct validity and internal reliability. The pilot study revealed acceptable levels of Cronbach’s alpha for the areas of teacher stress, total score of social emotional competence (SEC), four of the sub-constructs within SEC, teacher intention to leave, as well as teacher preparation and professional learning experiences for the five areas of SEC. The teacher intention to leave portion of the instrument was modified to include one additional item, therefore a revised pilot Cronbach’s alpha was not available.

Data analysis was performed for internal consistency of the instrument based upon the 145 participants in this study. Table 6 compares the Cronbach’s alphas for both the pilot and dissertation studies. Four out of five of the instruments for the dissertation

study had alphas above the accepted level of reliability: Teacher Stress = .756, SEC Total = .877, Teacher Pre-Service = .896 and Professional Learning = .924. The alpha for Teacher Intention to Leave was below the accepted level of reliability at .639. If item number 31 was deleted, the alpha would rise to .702. This item asked teachers to rate how much they agree with this statement: “It would be easy for me to find a job as good as the one I have now.” This information may be helpful for future researchers should they intend to assess teachers’ intentions to leave or to use these survey items.

Table 6

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for pilot survey and study survey instruments

| Component | Pilot Alphas | Study Alphas |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Teacher Stress | .862 | .756 |
| SEC Total | .898 | .877 |
| --self-awareness | .746 | .625 |
| --self-regulation | .766 | .608 |
| --social awareness | .664 | .657 |
| --relationship management | .812 | .844 |
| --decision making | .770 | .808 |
| Teacher Intention to Leave | N/A | .639 |
| Pre-Service | .904 | .896 |
| Professional Learning | .864 | .924 |

The construct of SEC contains five dimensions within it: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship management and responsible decision making. Reliability analysis by dimensions revealed acceptable Cronbach’s alphas for both relationship management and responsible decision making. However, self-awareness, self-regulation and social awareness had alphas below the acceptable standard. Nonetheless, the total construct of SEC had an acceptable alpha of .877 which indicated that the overall SEC instrument comprised of the five dimensions was a reliable instrument for this study.

This study aimed to establish a general stress score for teachers in order to determine its relationship to the construct of SEC. Table 7 provides descriptive statistics for the respondent group regarding a general stress score. This score was computed as the mean of the respondents’ general stress score. A 5 on the individual survey items represented “Agree” while a 6 represented “Strongly Agree.” The mean for the participant group was 5.36.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics for general stress score for all respondents

| | N | Range | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------|-----|-------|------|------|--------|----------------|
| Mean of general stress scores | 145 | 5.00 | 2.00 | 7.00 | 5.3600 | 1.16562 |
| Valid N | 145 | | | | | |

This researcher also sought to establish a total SEC score for each respondent, using the means of the five sub-constructs. Table 8 provides the descriptive statistics for the total SEC scores for all respondents. The mean total SEC score was 5.69. This would indicate that overall participants responded positively (agreed to strongly agreed) with items related to social emotional competencies.

Table 8

Descriptive statistics for total SEC scores of all respondents

| | N | Range | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------|-----|-------|------|------|--------|----------------|
| SEC TOTAL | 145 | 4.14 | 2.86 | 7.00 | 5.6951 | .62582 |
| Valid | 145 | | | | | |

This study also examined teacher attrition through an instrument designed to measure a teacher’s intention to leave, whether it be the profession or current position. An overall mean score was computed based on the participant’s responses to four questions. Table 9 provides the descriptive statistics for the all of the respondents’ teacher intention to leave mean scores. The mean of 3.34 indicated that, on average, teachers disagreed with items related to leaving the profession or their current position.

Table 9

Descriptive statistics for teacher intention to leave for all respondents

| | N | Range | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Teacher Intention to Leave | 145 | 5.50 | 1.00 | 6.50 | 3.34 | 1.42 |
| Valid | 145 | | | | | |

Response to Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study sought to establish if a relationship exists between a teacher's overall level of SEC and reported level of stress. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the two variables. The correlational analysis revealed a very weak, negative, but statistically significant relationship at the .05 level, $r = -.169$, $N = 145$. Statistically significant, negative correlations indicate that as one variable increases, the second variable decreases. Caution should be noted in interpreting this finding as larger sample sizes may increase the likelihood of a significant result. The coefficient of determination, $r^2 = .028$ would indicate that only 2.8% of the variance in teacher stress may be predicted by teacher level of SEC.

Pearson correlation coefficients were also computed to examine the relationships among all the variables. Statistically significant, moderate to strong positive correlations were found for all of the five dimensions of SEC with the Total SEC (self awareness $r = .669$, self regulation $r = .757$, social awareness $r = .829$, relationship management $r = .750$ and responsible decision making $r = .744$). Within the five sub-constructs, statistically significant, moderate positive correlations were also established for social awareness and self-regulation ($r = .551$), relationship management and social awareness ($r = .591$), as well as social awareness and responsible decision making ($r = .587$). Weak positive correlations were found for responsible decision making and relationship management ($r = .448$), responsible decision making and self-regulation ($r = .397$), responsible decision making and self-awareness ($r = .402$), relationship management and self-regulation ($r = .467$), social awareness and self-awareness ($r = .375$) and self-

regulation and self-awareness ($r = .445$). A statistically significant, positive but weak correlation was established for teacher stress and teacher leaving ($r = .257$). A statistically significant, negative but weak correlation was also found for self-regulation and teacher stress ($r = -.303$) as well as a very weak, but significant correlation between teacher leaving and relationship management ($r = -.171$). The reader is cautioned that statistical significance may be established with larger sample sizes but that the strength of the correlation offers understanding of the strength of the relationship between the two variables. In addition, as the construct of SEC in education has been generally limited to the student perspective, this researcher also sought to examine if levels of SEC varied by demographics, including sex, years of experience, race and grade level taught. Although no significant results were obtained for this analysis, the skewed demographic data for samples' sex, race and years of experience would have warranted caution for any interpretation. Table 10 provides a summary of the correlations between teacher stress, SEC total, the five components of SEC, as well as teacher intention to leave, in tabular form.

Table 10

Correlations among all variables

| Variable | Correlations | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1. Stress | --- | | | | | | | |
| 2. SEC Total | -.169* | --- | | | | | | |
| 3. Self Awareness | .011 | .669** | --- | | | | | |
| 4. Self Regulation | -.303** | .757** | .445** | --- | | | | |
| 5. Social Awareness | -.157 | .829** | .375** | .551** | --- | | | |
| 6. Relation. Manage | -.258** | .750** | .242** | .467** | .591** | --- | | |
| 7. Resp. Decision | .087 | .744** | .402** | .397** | .587** | .448** | --- | |
| 8. Teacher Leaving | .257** | -.139 | -.050 | -.146 | -.081 | -.171* | -.064 | --- |
| Mean | 5.36 | 5.69 | 5.79 | 5.50 | 5.52 | 5.45 | 6.21 | 3.34 |
| SD | 1.16 | .626 | .915 | .780 | .777 | .960 | .764 | 1.42 |

Note. N = 145

**p<.01; * p < .05

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to learn more about the relationships between teacher stress, SEC total and teacher intention to leave. As provided in Table 11, a non-significant, negative relationship was identified between SEC total and teacher intention to leave. Only 1.9% of variance in teacher leaving could be associated with a teacher's level of SEC. However, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. This indicates that as teachers' stress increases so does their intention to leave the profession.

Table 11

Regression of teacher stress and SEC total on teacher intention to leave

| Predictor Variables | b | se | t |
|---------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| (constant) | 3.052 | 1.273 | 2.398 |
| SEC Total | -.225 | .100 | -1.207 |
| Teacher Stress | .293 | .186 | 2.931** |

Note. $R^2 = .075$, $F = 5.788$, $df = 2$; $n = 145$.

** $p < .01$

Further regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships of the five individual components of SEC to teacher stress as well as teacher intention to leave. The component of self-regulation had a statistically significant moderate negative correlation to teacher stress ($r = -.501$). This would indicate that as a teacher's ability to regulate her emotions increases, her stress would decrease. The construct of relationship management had a statistically significant weak correlation with teacher stress ($r = -.285$). This would indicate that as a teacher's competence in managing relationships increases, her stress decreases. In addition, the SEC component of responsible decision making had a statistically significant moderate positive relationship with teacher stress. This result would suggest that the more responsible and ethical a teacher's decision making paradigm, the more stress she would experience. Multiple regression analysis of the five components of SEC and teacher intention to leave did not result in any significant findings. Finally, to answer the research question, "Does SEC moderate the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave?" an interaction variable was created and analyzed using multiple regression. The results demonstrated that

moderation effects were not evident for SEC on teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave. Tables 12, 13 and 14 provide summaries of these additional regression analyses.

Table 12

Regression of SEC components and teacher stress

| Predictor Variables | b | se | t |
|----------------------|-------|------|----------|
| Constant | 6.355 | .840 | 7.569 |
| Self-awareness | .144 | .113 | 1.275 |
| Self-regulation | -.501 | .146 | -3.428** |
| Social awareness | -.092 | .167 | -.551 |
| Relationship Manage | -.285 | .118 | -2.409* |
| Resp Decision Making | .481 | .149 | 3.229** |

Note. $R^2 = .200$, $F = 6.960$, $df = 5$; $n = 144$.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 13

Regression of SEC components and teacher intention to leave

| Predictor Variables | b | se | t |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Constant | 4.918 | 1.125 | 4.371 |
| Self-awareness | .017. | .151 | .113 |
| Self-regulation | -.213 | .196 | -1.087 |
| Social awareness | .130 | .224 | .579 |
| Relationship Manage | -.246 | .158 | -1.557 |
| Resp Decision Making | .020 | .200 | .100 |

Note. $R^2 = .038$, $F = 1.112$, $df = 5$; $n = 144$.

Table 14

Regression of interaction variable of SEC and teacher intention to leave

| Variable | b | se | t |
|-------------|-------|------|--------|
| Constant | 3.349 | .116 | 28.859 |
| SEC total | -.202 | .197 | .307 |
| Interaction | .048 | .131 | .712 |

Note. $R^2 = .076$, $F = 3.881$, $df = 2$; $n = 144$.

This study also aimed to learn what exposure to the components of SEC a teacher recalled from both teacher pre-service classes as well as professional learning experiences. Teachers were asked to whether the exposure was “Not at all” (0), “Somewhat” (1) or “A great deal” (2). Table 12 provides descriptive information regarding the frequency of responses based on items 36-40. These items asked about pre-service exposure to the five dimensions of SEC. Several respondents’ answers for particular items were unusable due to multiple answer choices. It should be noted that teachers responded to questions 38 and 41 had 51.7% and 60.0%, respectively, that they had received no exposure to pre-service learning on self-awareness or managing emotions. However, 51.0% of teachers responded that their teacher preparation classes emphasized social awareness skills “somewhat.”

Table 15

Frequency chart of responses to pre-service exposure to SEC

| Question # | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | % | % | % | % | % |
|------------|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|------|------|------|------|------|
| Rating 0 | 75 | 50 | 67 | 87 | 53 | 51.7 | 34.5 | 46.2 | 60.0 | 36.6 |
| Rating 1 | 53 | 74 | 59 | 42 | 65 | 36.6 | 51.0 | 40.7 | 29.6 | 44.8 |
| Rating 2 | 14 | 20 | 17 | 13 | 26 | 9.7 | 13.8 | 11.7 | 9.2 | 17.9 |
| Total | *does not add up to 145 | | | | | | | | | |

In addition, data were gathered to learn what exposure teachers had received during professional learning experiences related to the five constructs within SEC. Table 15 outlines the frequency of responses for the categories of “Not at all” (0), “Somewhat” (1), or “A great deal” (2). Responses that had multiple answers chosen were not included in the data set. Again, managing emotions (question 46) had over 50% of teachers

respond that professional learning experiences had emphasized this area “not at all.” However, 50.3% of teachers reported that professional learning emphasized responsible decision making “somewhat.”

Table 16

Frequency chart of responses to professional learning exposure to SEC

| Question # | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | % | % | % | % | % |
|------------|--------------------------|----|----|----|----|------|------|------|------|------|
| 0 | 58 | 54 | 61 | 79 | 46 | 40.0 | 37.2 | 42.1 | 54.5 | 31.7 |
| Rating 1 | 61 | 64 | 63 | 53 | 73 | 42.1 | 44.1 | 43.4 | 36.6 | 50.3 |
| 2 | 23 | 24 | 18 | 12 | 24 | 15.9 | 16.6 | 12.4 | 8.3 | 16.6 |
| Total | * does not add up to 145 | | | | | | | | | |

Summary

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to conduct an analysis of the data provided from 145 participants in this study. Demographic examination revealed that the vast majority of respondents were White/Caucasian, females. Almost half (47.6%) of the responding teachers had greater than 15 years of experience. Both elementary and middle schools were well and evenly represented with 42.9% and 43.4% of respondents coming from these grade levels, respectively. Analysis of the internal consistency of the five instruments of the researcher designed survey used in the study revealed acceptable Cronbach’s alphas for the teacher stress, SEC total, teacher pre-service and professional learning instruments. Within SEC, the sub-constructs of relationship management and decision making also had acceptable Cronbach’s alphas.

Correlational analysis provided detailed information about the relationships between the variables contained in this research. A negative relationship was found between teacher stress and SEC total. While weak, this relationship was statistically significant nonetheless. In addition, moderate to strong positive and statistically significant correlations were found between all five of the dimensions of SEC and the total construct. A weak but positive correlation was established between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. Weak negative but statistically significant correlations were found for teacher stress and self-regulation as well as teacher stress and relationship management.

Regression analysis was conducted to further understand the relationships between teacher stress, SEC, and teacher intention to leave. No statistically significant relationship was found between SEC and teacher intention to leave. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. This indicates that as teacher stress increases so does a teacher's intention to leave. Further regression analysis of the five components of SEC and teacher stress found a moderate negative correlation between self-regulation and teacher stress. A weak negative correlation was established for relationship management and teacher stress. A moderate positive correlation was found for responsible decision making and teacher stress. Additional regression analysis was conducted for the interaction between SEC on teacher stress and teacher intention to leave and no moderating effects were found.

Information on the pre-service and professional learning experiences regarding the five dimensions of SEC offered to teachers was collected. Frequency data demonstrated that for pre-service training in the areas of self-awareness and self-regulation, over 50% of respondents stated they had no exposure to these concepts. However, the majority of participants stated that they had received pre-service experiences related to social awareness. In regard to professional learning, over 50% of teachers stated that self-awareness was emphasized “not at all.” On the other hand, the majority of teachers did report professional learning activities tied to responsible decision making. It should be noted that for both pre-service and professional learning exposure, no more than 18% of respondents stated that any area of SEC was emphasized “a great deal” during their experiences.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Teacher stress and continuing high attrition rates for the teaching profession have significant multiple impacts, although arguably the most important is student achievement. Researchers have found that as teacher stress increases to high levels, teacher effectiveness decreases (Kauts & Saroj, 2010). Although there are multiple studies which have established consistent stress factors for teachers, many have their basis in organizational structures, deep social challenges as well as state and federal mandates which remain out of the individual teacher's control (Billehoj, 2007). Examination of individual characteristics of teachers continues to offer hope for stress moderation.

Social emotional competence (SEC) is a set of skills that allow an individual to understand oneself, her emotions, the social context, as well as relationships and decision making. Existing research has focused on students' levels of SEC with reported positive results from structured social emotional learning programs for classroom behavior, achievement, attitude, and negative emotions such as anxiety. Very limited research is available for adults' responses to such programs. Both self-awareness and decision making directly impact the appraisal or judgment phase of stress. The cognitive skills which comprise the construct of self-regulation, such as self-talk, have been identified as a source of potential stress coping (Brackett et al., 2010). There is limited research, particularly in the United States, which has examined the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' levels of SEC. Therefore, this study offered an inroad to explore if a relationship exists. In addition, this researcher sought to understand the relationships

among SEC, teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave the profession or their current school.

Dialogue continues around the world regarding the most effective teacher preparation models. However, the professional literature is just beginning to address the social and emotional demands placed on teachers. Professional learning experiences during a teacher's career also offer opportunities to enhance effectiveness and provide teachers with the practical tools for everyday use in the classroom. This research examined exposure to the five dimensions of SEC during both teacher preparation and professional learning classes.

The reader is reminded that the foremost focus of this study was on the following research question: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of social emotional competence (SEC) and reported level of stress? In addition, the following questions were addressed:

1. Does SEC moderate the relationship between teacher stress and teachers' intentions to leave?
2. Do teachers' levels of SEC vary by demographic descriptors (i.e. gender, years of experience, grade level taught)?
3. What pre-service or in-service training do teachers report regarding social emotional competencies?

This research was conducted after approval from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board and the superintendents from the three participating districts drawn from the First District Regional Educational Services Agency in Southeast Georgia. Through the use of a researcher created online survey, data were gathered

regarding teacher stress, teachers' levels of social emotional competence, which was broken down by the five dimensions, as well as the teacher's intention to leave the profession or current school. Finally, teachers were also asked to report their exposure to the components of SEC during their teacher preparation program and during in-service classed during their professional career. Results from the survey were analyzed using SPSS 20 and included descriptive, correlational and regression statistical analysis.

Analysis

Instrument Development

A thorough literature review was initially conducted to gain an understanding of the broad topics contained within this study: teacher stress, social emotional competence (SEC), teacher attrition as well as teacher preparation programs. In addition, the researcher reviewed available surveys to use as assessment tools during the study. Teacher stress surveys appeared to focus on determining teacher stressors rather than to gain an understanding of stress level.

From the outset, it was also obvious that the construct of social emotional competence (SEC) was emerging in the literature both as an outgrowth of emotional intelligence (EI), but also from a student centered focus to a whole classroom perspective which included the teacher. Differences between SEC and EI were noted for the inclusion of the idea of responsible decision making as well as a competence approach compared to a trait like characteristic of individuals. A major challenge for this research existed with the ability to assess SEC. EI inventories did not contain responsible decision making and surveys from corporate entities for EI were too lengthy for this research design. In addition, training was required and included a 360° approach which meant

having peers or supervisors also rate the respondent. Therefore, the researcher developed a survey to determine an overall level of SEC as well as individual levels of the five dimensions. Items were also developed to assess a teacher's intention to leave as well as their exposure to SEC during pre-service and in-service training.

The survey development process included the aforementioned literature review, expert review, revisions, as well as a pilot study. The results demonstrated acceptable levels of construct validity and internal consistency for all constructs except for the social awareness dimension within SEC. Additional literature review of the teacher intention to leave construct resulted in a broadening to include teachers who intend to leave their current school but not the teaching profession. Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha from the pilot study was no longer applicable due to one item being added to the study instrument.

The use of a researcher created instrument for this study resulted in a double focus for the research. While three of the five dimensions of SEC did not result in acceptable levels of internal reliability, analysis of the total construct of SEC did demonstrate very high internal consistency. This would imply that all of the five dimensions of SEC are closely related and that the use of this instrument to assess SEC overall would be appropriate. However, use of the individual dimensions of self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness was not appropriate. The Cronbach's alphas for teacher stress and the items related to teacher's exposure to SEC during pre-service and in-service learning also demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency from the study data. However, assessment of teacher intention to leave did not meet the minimum acceptable level of reliability.

Survey Results

Analysis of the respondents indicated that the vast majority of teachers who took the survey were white and female. In addition, elementary and middle school teachers were well represented, but high school and teachers who work with multiple grade levels were underrepresented. Experienced teachers represented almost half of the respondents. Therefore, the sample demographics should be considered when interpreting the results from the study. In particular, the reader is encouraged to consider how the skills, experiences, coping, and risk of attrition of a teacher with 15 or more years experience would differ from teachers with fewer years of experience.

Analysis of the results of the overarching research question established a very weak inverse relationship between teacher stress and teacher level of SEC. The inverse relationship was expected but the weak relationship that was found may be due to many factors. Since no other studies used this instrument or identical constructs, it is difficult to assert a strong conclusion. Also, this research used self-report measures. Self-report measures rely on an individual's ability to accurately and, in a very detailed manner for this study, assess and report about themselves. Teacher's who, in actuality, have lower levels of self-awareness would have experienced difficulty accurately reporting. In addition, the respondents may report how they desire to be perceived rather than how they actually view themselves. The social desirability effect may influence scores, particularly with the content of the items contained within SEC. All of these factors should be considered when examining the mean for the respondents' total SEC score. This mean score could be interpreted to say that, generally speaking, teachers report having a moderate to high degree of overall SEC.

Further detailed correlational analysis of the relationship between SEC and teacher stress involved the examination of the five dimensions of SEC and their relationship to teacher stress. Two statistically significant inverse relationships were established between stress and self-regulation and stress and relationship management. Although considered statistically significant, the relationships would still be considered weak. It is also important to note that the mean total stress scores were relatively high for the overall respondent group. It can be interpreted that, in general, teachers report a considerable amount of stress associated with their job. This would be consistent with previous results in the literature. At this time and in the area from which the sample was drawn, a new curriculum has been implemented and a new teacher evaluation tool has been proposed which ties performance to student achievement outcomes. These external factors may have also influenced the stress scores. These relatively high stress scores should also be considered in light of the large number of respondents that had more than 15 years of experience in education. It appears that stress for all teachers, regardless of years of experience, remains an important factor to consider.

Examination of the mean scores for teacher intention to leave indicated that, overall, the respondents generally disagreed with these items. This would suggest that the risk for this group to leave their current position or leave the teaching profession was somewhat minimal. The current economic downturn should again be considered with this result, although it has been reported in the literature that teacher attrition rates continue despite this. Again, almost half of the respondent group had more than 15 years of experience, so these teachers have established themselves in some regard as having successfully negotiated the challenges of teaching just by their length of tenure. It also

may be that teachers with this many years of experience have a different perspective on not just teaching, but the reality of other opportunities that may or may not exist in an alternative field or different school. Teachers with more years of experience also potentially have more advanced degrees and higher salaries which may tie them in other ways to their current profession. Also, given the level of experience, many of the participants would have established families with roots in the community, including enrollment in schools for their children. For other groups of teachers, the literature on attrition does document the risk for novice and special education teachers. With only 4% of respondents for this study with 0-3 years of teaching experience, analysis was not conducted by years of experience. In addition, no data were collected on special education versus general education teachers.

Another important question for this research involved the examination of the relationships among SEC, stress and teacher intention to leave. Multiple regression analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. In addition to common sense, these findings corroborate previous studies related to stress and burnout, namely that as stress levels increase so does job attrition. This finding underscores the importance of continuing research on teacher stress and its relationship to attrition.

Additional multiple regression analysis was conducted to learn about the relationships between specific components of SEC and teacher stress. This analysis established a moderate negative relationship between the SEC component of self-regulation and teacher stress and a weak negative relationship between relationship management and teacher stress. A moderate positive relationship was found for

responsible decision making and teacher stress. These results may suggest, as have previous studies, that stress is a complex phenomenon and that higher SEC component scores may not always be related to lower stress. In addition, this researcher's results support continued investigation into the SEC components of self-regulation and relationship management.

Multiple regression analysis, however, did not determine a significant relationship between total SEC and teacher intention to leave. Therefore, it does not appear to be a significant predictor of teacher attrition, whether for leaving the profession or current position. Regression analysis by the five SEC components and teacher intention to leave again did not reveal significant results. This study also targeted the moderating effects of SEC, if any, on the relationship between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. No moderating effects of SEC on this relationship were determined by the interaction regression analysis. Therefore, level of SEC did not alter the relationship between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave for this respondent group.

Due to the highly social nature and emotional demands of the daily classroom experience, this study also sought to learn about teachers' exposure to the five dimensions of SEC during teacher preparation classes and professional learning experiences. Analysis of the survey responses revealed that the majority of teachers recalled no exposure at all during pre-service training to the dimensions of self-awareness and managing their emotions. In fact, managing emotions received the lowest ratings among the five items for all rating levels. However, social awareness skills were addressed somewhat during teacher preparation. Teacher preparation classes appear to recognize the social aspects of the teaching experience, potentially due to classroom

management requirements, more than a focus on the teacher herself. Many classroom management approaches utilize the building of positive relationships with students as a foundation. The mostly highly rated item for exposure was responsible decision making. Therefore, teacher pre-service classes appear to address more successfully the reality of the many decisions teachers make, some of which are highly ethically charged. The demographics of the respondents again must be considered with this data as pre-service classes continue to evolve. Almost half of the respondents were teachers with more than 15 years of experience. Teacher preparation programs may have changed considerably since their years in school. In addition, these questions rely on the respondents' ability to recall coursework, which may be from a considerable time in the past for many of the respondents.

Data regarding teachers' exposure to the five dimensions of SEC during professional learning classes were also gathered. Consistent with the pre-service learning, in-service training focused more on social awareness skills and responsible decision making. Skills related to managing one's emotions were again rated the lowest for exposure. These consistencies may reduce the notion that recall of events has impacted the teacher ratings for pre-service events. Instead, these patterns may indicate that educational training, in general, somewhat recognizes the need for exposure to some components contained within SEC that appear to relate directly to students. However, it continues to neglect the components more related to the teacher herself, in particular, the management of emotions.

Conclusions

Research into teacher stress continues to be represented in current literature, both for identifying demographic variables associated with higher stress levels as well as individual characteristics that may influence stress. This study adds to the professional literature by examining how social emotional competence (SEC) is related to teacher stress. SEC, with its roots in emotional intelligence, has fundamentally been applied to students in classroom with social emotional learning programs. Few studies appear to have examined adults' responses to social emotional learning. Studies from the emotional intelligence realm have identified the role of emotions in teaching as well as relationships with burnout, attrition, self-efficacy and teacher competence (Frenzel et al., 2009; Gohm et al., 2005; Hosotani & Matsumura, 2011; Penrose et al., 2007; Polat & Ulusoy-Oztan, 2009). In addition, EI and work attrition have been inversely correlated in a study by Akintayo (2010). This study utilized SEC as a framework due to its growth oriented, educational perspective; and it sought to learn about the relationships between SEC, teacher stress and attrition. Due to a lack of instruments available to assess SEC in adults, a researcher designed instrument was created.

This study offers a researched instrument for future development and use to identify a level of stress for teachers, a comprehensive SEC score, and items to assess teachers' exposure to the concepts contained within the SEC framework. The use of the SEC dimensions individually is not warranted based on the data for self-awareness, social awareness, and self-regulation. However, the items offer a foundation for understanding these constructs and additional items may improve the reliability for the individual dimensions.

This research found that the surveyed teachers, in general, reported significant stress from their work as teachers. The scores evidenced from the instrument items support previous research by Austin et al., (2005) and Johannsen, (2011) that work load, student behavior, and state and federal mandates all represent stressors for teachers. In addition, the findings support Pei and Guoli's (2007) finding that teachers at all grade levels report considerable degrees of stress.

The overarching research question examined the relationship between teacher stress and level of SEC. Correlational analysis indicated that little relationship existed between the constructs. Multiple regression analysis, however, found moderate relationships with the self-regulation and relationship management components of SEC and teacher stress. These results support previous research with self-regulation conducted by Brackett et al. (2010), Chang (2009) and Ciarrochi et al. (2002).

The results also documented that the five dimensions of SEC all have moderate to strong positive relationships with the total construct of SEC. This provides evidence for the total SEC framework. Data from the respondents demonstrated the relationship between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. This supports the widely held concern about how stress impacts teacher attrition. The instrument items developed for this study also offer a foundation for further research into assessing a teacher's intention to leave as no current instruments appear to exist.

Finally, the results gathered regarding teacher exposure to the five dimensions of SEC demonstrated that educational training whether pre-service or during professional learning tended to concentrate on the areas of social awareness skills, relationship

management and responsible decision making. The areas of self-awareness and self-regulation of emotions were largely ignored.

Implications

As an investigation into the relationship between SEC and teacher stress, this research offers the following implications:

- Teacher stress surveys should include a measure of stress level rather than solely stress factors. A valid and reliable, five-question survey to measure a teacher's stress level is gained from this study.
- The broad construct of SEC is well defined by its five dimensions and this study offers a valid and reliable instrument for measuring an overall level of SEC.
- Teacher stress continues at a significant level and, therefore, individual characteristics that offer stress moderation are important to continue researching.
- Two specific SEC components, self-regulation and relationship management, warrant further investigation into their relationship to teacher stress.
- Due to the nature of self-report measures, educational research may benefit from the use of strategies embraced in the business sector for assessing workers. In particular, the use of ratings from peers and supervisors to offer a wider perspective may be helpful. This type of research has ethical challenges which must be considered.
- Both teacher preparation programs and professional learning experiences provide some skills training in the areas of social awareness skills, relationship management, and responsible decision making. Therefore, there is some acknowledgement of these areas of SEC in educational practice. A broader

approach to consider, including the remaining dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation, is important. Exposure to all of the components of SEC could benefit all teachers.

- Although teacher attrition information is widely available, the risk or intention of leaving appears neglected. Assessment of teachers' intention to leave could potentially generate targeted prevention strategies for teachers at risk.
- The generalizability of these results to all teachers is limited due to the restricted geographic area of the sample, demographics of the respondents and weak reliability for some portions of the instrument.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as a result of this research:

- Instrument development should continue for assessing teacher stress. Caution should be noted that identifying stressors may not necessarily allow the researcher to determine a level of stress reaction. Further instrument development is needed for the individual dimensions of SEC for self-awareness, social awareness, and self-regulation.
- Valid and reliable instruments need to continue to be developed to assess teachers' individual characteristics. Current research into teacher dispositions may offer guidance for construct development.
- Instrument development is needed to assess a teacher's intention to leave.
- The construct of SEC has strong student based outcomes that support its social emotional learning models. However, the lack of research into adult responses to social emotional learning is a weakness, particularly when adults implement the

programs. Pre-intervention data compared to post-intervention data regarding SEC training for adults may provide important information to understand this individual characteristic. This type of information may be more accurate than self-report measures.

- Additional studies should continue to research how SEC relates to an individual's overall well-being include stress, self-efficacy, work effectiveness, and attrition from the teaching profession. This study was foundational in nature.
- Replication of this study with a focus on novice teachers would offer insight into their unique levels of stress, SEC and risk for intention to leave.

Summary

This study examined the relationships between teacher stress, social emotional competence and teacher intention to leave. Data were also gathered about teachers' exposure to the five dimensions of SEC during teacher pre-service and professional learning experiences. Results from the survey indicated that valid and reliable instruments for teacher stress level and the total construct of SEC were developed. A weak negative relationship was found between teacher stress and SEC total. A moderate negative relationship was identified between the SEC component of self regulation with teacher stress. A weak negative relationship was found between the component of relationship management and teacher stress. In addition, moderate to strong positive correlations were found between all five of the dimensions of SEC and the total construct. A weak but positive correlation was established between teacher stress and teacher intention to leave. No statistically significant relationship was found between SEC and teacher intention to leave. The results also demonstrated very limited exposure

to self-awareness and emotion regulation activities during pre-service and professional learning experiences for teachers. Individual characteristics that may moderate stress are important to continue researching for the benefit of all teachers and their students.

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APPENDIX A

REFERENCES FOR SURVEY ITEMS

| Component | Item #'s | References |
|----------------------------|----------|---|
| Teacher Stress | 1-5 | Abebe & HaileMariam (2011) Austin, Shah & Muncer (2005) Billehoj (2007) Brown, Ralph, & Brember (2002) Fimian (1984, 2000) Johannsen (2011) Reig, Paquette & Chen (2007) Romero (2009) Santiago et al. (2008) |
| SEC | 6-29 | Bar-On (2005) CASEL (2011) Cooper & Petrides (2010) Gardner & Qualter (2010) Goleman (2001) Hosotani & Matsumuro-Imau (2011) Jakhelln (2011) Jennings & Greenberg (2009) Kauts & Saroj (2011) Mayer & Salovey (1997) Petrides (2006) Petrides & Furnam (2006) Polat & Ulusoy (2009) Salovey & Mayer (1990) Sterrett (2000) Wolff (2005) Zins et al (2004) |
| Teacher Intention to Leave | 30-33 | Center for Disease Control (2010) Plash & Piotrowsky (2006) Tait (2008) Wang et al (2011) |

APPENDIX B

FORCINA SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Instructions:

The purpose of this survey is to learn about the relationships among teacher stress, social and emotional competence, and teachers' intentions to leave the profession. For the purpose of this survey, teacher stress is defined as the experience of negative emotions as result of working as a teacher. Social emotional competence is defined as a set of skills that include self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship management and decision making. Teacher intention to leave is defined as a teacher's desire or plans to no longer work as a teacher.

Your answers will help provide a better understanding of how these ideas are related. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as candidly as possible. Use the scale below to answer **how much you agree** with each statement. Answer 1 if you very strongly disagree with the statement. Answer 7 if you very strongly agree. Use the numbers in between to best describe how you feel. Please answer every item.

1. I feel stressed over the amount of work I have to do as a teacher. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. Having little control over decisions at work is stressful for me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. The fact that my job interferes with my personal and family life is stressful. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. My students' behavior causes me stress as a teacher. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. I experience a significant degree of stress at work. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I recognize when I am frustrated and need to take a break. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. I have difficulty understanding why I feel the way I do. (R) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. I am aware of the physical reactions I have when I experience a strong emotion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. I can clearly state my personal strengths and weaknesses. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. I can adequately express my feelings with words. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. I have difficulty controlling strong emotions like anger. (R) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I regularly use strategies to help manage my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. I worry about losing control of my emotions. (R) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. I rarely hold grudges. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. I maintain a positive outlook on life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. I am aware of other people's perceptions of me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. I am good at reading non-verbal cues during a conversation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. I have trouble accepting other people's opinions. (R) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. I truly am a good listener. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. I easily can imagine myself in "another's shoes" and understand how they feel. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. I easily build relationships with new people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. I work well with all different types of people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. Others respect my opinions and ideas most of the time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. I am good at getting other people to compromise. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I am good at motivating other people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. I weigh the pros and cons of a situation before making a decision. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. I use my ethics and values to help me make decisions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. Good decisions involve thinking about how my choice affects others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. I collect facts before I make a decision. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

To what extent has **professional learning** or **training** during your teaching career emphasized:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 43. Self awareness (activities to enhance your understanding of yourself, strengths/weaknesses) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 44. Social skills (understanding others' feelings, skills needed to work in groups) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 45. Managing relationships (building and maintaining positive, healthy relationships) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 46. Managing emotions (regulating your emotions in healthy ways) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 47. Decision-making (strategies to enhance good decision making) | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Thank you for participating in this survey!

