The Influence of Principals' Servant Leadership on Teacher Intention to Stay in the Schools of Maldives

Abdul Latheef Ali[1], Al-Amin Mydin[2], Abdul Ghani Kanesan Abdullah[3]

School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia[1, 2, 3]

Corresponding email: latheef@outlook.com

Article Information	Abstract
Keywords Teacher attrition, Servant leadership, Intention to stay, School principals.	This research article examines the issue of teacher attrition in the Maldives Teacher attrition, and explores the potential impact of servant leadership practices by principals Servant leadership, on teachers' intention to stay in schools. The study addresses the concern of Intention to stay, School gradual teacher attrition, which poses significant challenges for the education principals. sector and the government. With an annual attrition rate of 2%, maintaining teacher stability becomes crucial for school leaders and policymakers. The research adopts a cross sectional survey design and involves 375 teachers selected from public schools across the four atolls of the southern province of the Maldives. The findings indicate that the servant leadership behaviors of school principals significantly influence teachers' intention to stay. The findings align with previous research from diverse contexts, highlighting the importance of servant leadership in addressing teacher attrition. By implementing servant leadership practices, school principals can enhance teacher retention, productivity, and overall school effectiveness. The research findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and educational practitioners in the Maldives, contributing to efforts to improve the public education system.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the field of education, it is highly important to maintain teacher continuity and prevent attrition. This refers to the idea of retaining experienced and qualified teachers in schools, increasing their desire to remain in the profession, and promoting stability within the teaching workforce (Nasir & Mahmood, 2016). Teachers have a crucial role in shaping students' educational experiences. When teachers stay in the profession and at the same school for a long period, they develop a deep understanding of the curriculum, student needs, and effective teaching strategies. This expertise leads to improved teaching practices and better educational outcomes for students (Kini & Podolsky, 2016).

The recent announcement by the Ministry of Education in the Maldives regarding the hiring of expatriate primary teachers after 15 years has raised concerns about the shortage of local teachers (Asima, 2019). The decision to rely more heavily on expatriate teachers for the primary section has caused apprehension within the Ministry of Education (Malsa, 2019). This research aims to address the urgent issue of teacher scarcity in the Maldives by understanding the reasons why teachers leave the profession and exploring strategies to retain them.

Annual statistics from the Ministry of Education provide evidence of the increasing shortage of local teachers in the country. Despite minimal changes in the number of schools and student population in the past five years, the student population per school has only experienced a small annual increase of 4-15 students (MoE, 2017, 2018, 2019c). This slight increment in student population does not significantly impact on schools' staffing requirements, indicating that the need for additional teachers is not solely due to a sudden surge in student numbers.

However, a closer analysis of the statistics reveals a concerning trend in the teaching workforce. While the number of teachers has gradually increased over the years, the percentage of local teachers has significantly declined. The data shows that the proportion of local teachers decreased from 75% to 73% in 2018 and further dropped from 73% to 71% in 2019, representing an average annual decrease of 2% (MoE, 2017, 2018, 2019c). Asima (2019) and Malsa (2019) have highlighted that this downward trend is expected to continue, with the potential loss of all local teachers in the Maldives. If this decline persists at the current pace, the country will face significant challenges in addressing the loss of local teachers.

To understand the factors contributing to teacher attrition, it is crucial to examine existing literature. Studies conducted by Ingersoll et al. (2018) consistently point to school leadership as the most influential factor affecting teachers' intention to stay in the field. Effective leadership practices have a significant impact on teacher satisfaction, professional development opportunities, and the overall work environment, leading to a higher intention to stay in the teaching profession (Arroyo, 2020).

This research focuses on investigating the reasons behind teachers leaving the teaching profession in the Maldives, specifically examining the decline in the number of local teachers. By analyzing the factors that contribute to teacher attrition and identifying effective strategies to retain teachers, the study aims to understand how principal leadership and teacher engagement influence teachers' intention to stay in Maldivian schools. The findings will provide valuable insights to educational policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders, enabling them to implement evidence-based measures to address the scarcity of local teachers and ensure stability and quality in primary education in the Maldives.

Retaining teachers leads to reduced tensions, increased engagement, and lower turnover rates, ultimately developing highly effective teachers (Kent et al., 2009). This research will prompt school leaders to reflect on their practices. By addressing relational factors, school leadership can focus on issues that may deter teachers from leaving and help them become more satisfied and dedicated educators, leading to a greater intention to stay in the profession. Additionally, this study will guide the allocation of administrative resources and expertise to establish stronger connections with individuals and encourage more people to pursue teaching as a profession.

The findings will have significant implications for teacher intention to stay and will offer school leaders leadership strategies to reduce teacher turnover and improve student achievement. Retaining teachers can have substantial effects on the economy and education. Moreover, schools can reduce administrative expenses, attract more qualified teachers, build relationships, and foster trust between staff and students.

The comparative analysis conducted in this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and can be utilized in future leadership development programs for principals. By enhancing principals' understanding of the factors that contribute to a positive school atmosphere and increased teacher intention to stay, valuable resources in terms of money, time, and effort can be saved when making investments or decisions. Furthermore, principal mentoring and professional development can support principals in openly demonstrating their leadership styles. School superintendents can also utilize the findings to identify the qualities required for selecting principals and advise higher authorities on necessary policy changes to enhance effective school management.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study examined the influence of principals' servant leadership on teacher intention to stay in schools in the Maldives. The specific objectives of the study are as follows. In relation to these objectives, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What is the level of principals' servant leadership practices in the schools of the Maldives?
2. What is the level of teacher intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives?
3. Do the principals' servant leadership practices significantly influence teachers' intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the impact of servant leadership on teachers' intention to stay in their current positions. The seven dimensions of servant leadership were treated as separate independent variables. Data collection was conducted through a web-based questionnaire.

Population and Sampling

The target population of interest in this study was teachers in the Maldives. The study focused specifically on the Southern Province region due to convenience. According to the Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Education Maldives (MoE, 2019c), the total number of teachers in the country was 10,424, and this constituted the target population for the study.

To determine the sample size, the "Small Sample Technique" proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was applied. Based on this technique, a population of 10,000 individuals would require a sample size of 370. Therefore, the research aimed to obtain a sample of 370 respondents from the target population of 10,424 teachers. The stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the necessary samples from the four atolls in the Southern Province. The allocation of samples for each atoll was determined proportionally based on the number of teachers in each respective atoll, as indicated in Table 1. Stratified random sampling ensures that the obtained estimates are representative of the population, like a weighted average, thereby improving accuracy compared to a simple random sample (Daniel, 2012).

TABLE 1
ALLOCATION OF SAMPLES TO THE FOUR ATOLLS OF THE SOUTH PROVINCE

Schools	Population	Sample
1. Gaafu Alifu Atoll	317	71
2. Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll	406	91
3. Gnaviyani Atoll	284	64
4. Seenu Atoll	644	144
Total	**1,651**	**370**

Instrument

The research employed a survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data, which was divided into three sections.

Section A focused on gathering demographic information from the respondents and included six items covering gender, age, working experience, job title, highest level of education, and nationality.

Section B assessed servant leadership practices using The Servant Leadership Survey (SL-28), developed by Liden et al. (2008). The SL-28 is one of the three scales out of 16 suggested by Eva et al. (2019) for its effectiveness in measuring servant leadership. It consists of 28 questions, with four questions dedicated to each of the seven dimensions of servant leadership as shown in Table 2.. The respondents rated their perceptions of servant leadership in the workplace using a Likert-style format with five response alternatives for each item.

Section C utilized the 15-item version of the Intention to Stay Scale, developed by Roodt (2004), to measure teachers' perceived intention to stay in the workplace globally. This scale aimed to assess how likely teachers were to remain in their current positions.

In summary, Section A collected demographic information, Section B assessed servant leadership practices using the SL-28 scale, and Section C measured teachers' intention to stay using the Intention to Stay Scale.

TABLE 2
SERVANT LEADERSHIP SURVEY-9

Dimensions	Items
Conceptual Skills	1, 8, 15, 22
Empowering	2, 9, 16, 23
Helping followers Grow and Succeed	3, 10, 17, 24
Putting followers First	4, 11, 18, 25
Behaving Ethically	5, 12, 19, 26
Emotional Healing	6, 13, 20, 27
Creating Value for the Community	7, 14, 21, 28

Validity and Reliability

To validate the questionnaires used in the study, a pilot study was conducted. This ensured the reliability and validity of all the study items. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items used to measure the variables. The pilot study results indicated that the Cronbach's Alpha (α) for the dimensions of the Servant Leadership Survey ranged from 0.84 to 0.92, while the Cronbach's Alpha (α) for the Intention to Stay Scale ranged from 0.78 to 0.88. These values demonstrated the reliability of the instruments in measuring the principal's servant leadership behavior and its impact on teacher intention to stay.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining approval from the School of Educational Studies at Universiti Sains Malaysia and the Ministry of Education Maldives, the data collection process began. The participants received an information letter that explained the research goals, duration, questionnaire, data collection process, and timeline. Links to the survey questionnaire were sent to teachers and leading teachers through their respective principals. The data collection followed the specified order of the strata outlined in Table 1 to ensure clarity and organization.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data was analyzed in three stages using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of IBM SPSS version 26. First, the demographic features of the respondents, including gender, nationality, educational background, job specialization, and years of experience, were analyzed using frequency and percentage. Second, the mean and standard deviation were utilized to interpret the level of the research variables. The mean scores were categorized according to Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) interpretation scale, which ranged from 1 to 5. Different levels such as "high," "highly moderate," "moderate," "low," and "extremely low" were assigned based on the mean score ranges. Finally, the linear multiple regression analysis approach was employed to examine the influence of servant leadership on teacher intention to stay. The significance of the dominant dependent variable was assessed using the R value.

RESULTS

Question 1: *What is the level of principals' servant leadership practices in the schools of the Maldives?*

According to the data collected from the 375 cleaned responses, the level of principals' servant leadership practices in schools in the Maldives can be considered highly moderate. The mean score for the overall level of principal's servant leadership was 3.88, with a standard deviation of 1.16. This indicates that the perception of servant leadership among teachers in the Maldives schools falls within the highly moderate range.

Among the seven dimensions of servant leadership, the highest level was observed in Conceptual Skills, with a mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.99. This suggests that principals in the Maldives schools are perceived to possess strong conceptual skills related to servant leadership behaviors. The other dimensions ranked as follows: Behaving Ethically (M = 4.13, SD = 1.03), Creating Value for the Community (M = 4.04, SD = 1.08), Help followers Grow & Succeed (M = 3.84, SD = 1.14), Empowering (M = 3.80, SD = 1.19), Putting followers First (M = 3.63, SD = 1.18), and Emotional Healing (M = 3.51, SD = 1.34).

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the level of conceptual skills demonstrated by principals is higher compared to the other dimensions of servant leadership behavior in schools in the Maldives.

TABLE 3
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ITEMS

Dimension	No.	Items	*M*	*SD*	Level
Conceptual Skills (CS)	CS1	My principal can tell if something work-related is going wrong.	4.20	1.00	Highly moderate
	CS2	My principal is able to effectively think through complex problems.	4.10	1.00	Highly moderate
	CS3	My principal has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals.	4.30	1.00	High
	CS4	My principal can solve work problems with new or creative ideas.	4.00	1.10	Highly moderate
		M	**4.20**	**0.99**	**Highly moderate**
Empowering (EMP)	EMP1	My principal gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my job.	4.00	1.10	Highly moderate
	EMP2	My principal encourages me to handle important work decisions on my own.	3.90	1.10	Highly moderate
	EMP3	My principal gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.	3.90	1.10	Highly moderate
	EMP4	When I have to make an important decision at work, I do not have to consult my principal first.	3.30	1.40	Moderate
		M	**3.80**	**1.19**	**Highly moderate**
Helping followers Grow and Succeed (HSGS)	HSGS1	My principal makes my career development a priority.	3.90	1.10	Highly moderate
	HSGS2	My principal is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals.	3.80	1.20	Highly moderate
	HSGS3	My principal provides me with work experiences that enable me to develop new skills.	4.00	1.10	Highly moderate
	HSGS4	My principal wants to know about my career goals.	3.60	1.20	Highly moderate
		M	**3.84**	**1.14**	**Highly moderate**
Putting followers First (PSF)	PSF1	My principal seems to care more about my success than his/her own.	3.70	1.20	Highly moderate
	PSF2	My principal puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.	3.60	1.10	Highly moderate
	PSF3	My principal sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs.	3.50	1.20	Highly moderate
	PSF4	My principal does whatever she/he can, to make my job easier.	3.80	1.20	Highly moderate
		M	**3.63**	**1.18**	**Highly moderate**

Behaving Ethically (BE)	BE1	My principal holds high ethical standards.	4.10	1.00	Highly moderate
	BE2	My principal is always honest	4.00	1.10	Highly moderate
	BE3	My principal would **not** compromise ethical principles to achieve success.	3.90	1.10	Highly moderate
	BE4	My principal values honesty more than profits.	4.00	1.20	Highly moderate
	M		**4.13**	**1.03**	**Highly moderate**
Emotional Healing (EH)	EH1	I would seek help from my principal if I had a personal problem.	3.50	1.40	Highly moderate
	EH2	My principal cares about my personal well-being.	3.80	1.20	Highly moderate
	EH3	My principal takes time to talk to me on a personal level.	3.50	1.30	Highly moderate
	EH4	My principal can recognize when I'm disappointed without asking me.	3.20	1.30	Moderate
	M		**3.51**	**1.34**	**Highly moderate**
Creating Value for the Community (CVC)	CVC1	My principal emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community	4.00	1.00	Highly moderate
	CVC2	My principal is always interested in helping people in our community.	4.10	1.10	Highly moderate
	CVC3	My principal is involved in community activities.	4.00	1.20	Highly moderate
	CVC4	I am encouraged by my principal to volunteer in the community.	3.70	1.20	Highly moderate
	M		**4.04**	**1.08**	**Highly moderate**
	Overall		**3.88**	**1.16**	**Highly moderate**

The results from Table 4.4 provide further insight into the specific items within each dimension of principal servant leadership in the Maldives schools. Here are the highest and lowest mean scores for each dimension:

1. Conceptual Skills (CS):
- Highest mean: "My principal can reason through complex problems effectively" (M = 4.10, SD = 1.00).
- Lowest mean: "My principal can solve work problems with new or creative ideas" (M = 4.00, SD = 1.10).

2. Empowering (EMP):
- Highest mean: "My principal gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my job" (M = 4.00, SD = 1.10).
- Lowest mean: "When I have to make an important decision at work, I do not have to consult my principal first" (M = 3.30, SD = 1.40).

3. Helping Followers Grow and Succeed (HSGS):
- Highest mean: "My principal provides me with work experience that enable me to develop new skills" (M = 4.00, SD = 1.10).

- Lowest mean: "My principal wants to know about my career goals" (M = 3.60, SD = 1.20).

4. Putting Followers First (PSF):
- Highest mean: "My principal does whatever she/he can to make my job easier" (M = 3.80, SD = 1.20).
- Lowest mean: "My principal sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs" (M = 3.50, SD = 1.20).

5. Behaving Ethically (BE):
- Highest mean: "My principal holds high ethical standards" (M = 4.10, SD = 1.00).
- Lowest mean: "My principal would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success" (M = 3.90, SD = 1.10).

6. Emotional Healing (EH):
- Highest mean: "My principal cares about my personal well-being" (M = 3.80, SD = 1.20).
- Lowest mean: "My principal can recognize when I'm disappointed without asking me" (M = 3.20, SD = 1.30).

7. Creating Value for the Community (CVC):
- Highest mean: "My principal is always interested in helping people in our community" (M = 4.10, SD = 1.10).
- Lowest mean: "I am encouraged by my principal to volunteer in the community" (M = 3.70, SD = 1.20).

These findings provide a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive the different dimensions of servant leadership demonstrated by their principals in the Maldives schools.

Question 2: *What is the level of teacher intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives?*

According to Table 4, the means and standard deviations of the Teacher Intention to Stay items in the schools of the Maldives are as follows:

The overall mean value of Teacher Intention to Stay: 2.82 (SD = 1.45).

The study results indicate that the level of teachers' intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives is at a moderate level. The mean score of 2.82 suggests that, on average, teachers have a moderate intention to stay in their current positions.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that teachers' intentions to stay in the schools of the Maldives vary, ranging from low to moderate and highly moderate levels. The mean scores of the items range from 2.00 to 3.79, indicating a range of intentions to stay among the teachers surveyed.

These results provide insights into the level of teacher intention to stay in the Maldives schools and can be used to understand the factors that influence their decision to remain in their current positions.

TABLE 4
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF INTENTION TO STAY ITEMS

Dimension	No.	Items	*M*	*SD*	Level
Intention to Stay (INT)	INT1	My current job satisfies my personal needs.	3.79	1.19	Highly moderate
	INT2	I compromise my personal values at work.	3.58	1.28	Highly moderate
	INT3	I have considered leaving my job.	2.38	1.43	Low
	INT4	I am often frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve my personal work-related goals.	2.80	1.28	Moderate
	INT5	I dream about getting another job that will better suit my personal needs.	2.61	1.47	Moderate
	INT6	I may accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to me.	2.66	1.41	Moderate

INT7	I often look forward to another day at work.	3.77	1.16	Highly moderate
INT8	My responsibilities prevent me from quitting my job.	3.38	1.40	Moderate
INT9	I scan the internet in search of alternative job opportunities.	2.26	1.38	Low
INT10	The benefits associated with my current job prevent me from quitting the job.	3.00	1.30	Moderate
INT11	My current job has a negative effect on my personal well-being.	2.36	1.33	Low
INT12	I frequently scan newspapers in search of alternative job opportunities.	2.00	1.29	Low
INT13	I am frequently emotionally agitated when arriving home after work.	2.62	1.32	Moderate
INT14	"Fear of the unknown" prevent me from quitting my current job.	2.38	1.32	Low

According to the results presented in Table 4, the Teacher Intention to Stay items in the schools of the Maldives can be categorized into three levels: lower level, moderate level, and higher moderate level. The means and standard deviations of these items are as follows:

1. Lower Level (Mean score ranging from 2.00 to 2.55):
- The highest mean: "I think about starting my own business" (M = 2.55, SD = 1.49).
- The lowest mean: "I frequently scan newspapers in search of alternative job opportunities" (M = 2.00, SD = 1.29).

2. Moderate Level (Mean score ranging from 2.61 to 3.38):
- The highest mean: "My responsibilities prevent me from quitting my job" (M = 3.38, SD = 1.40).
- The lowest mean: "I dream about getting another job that will better suit my personal needs" (M = 2.61, SD = 1.47).

3. Higher Moderate Level (Mean score ranging from 3.58 to 3.79):
- The highest mean: "My current job satisfies my personal needs" (M = 3.79, SD = 1.19).   - The lowest mean: "I compromise my personal values at work" (M = 3.58, SD = 1.28).

These findings provide insights into the different levels of teacher intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives. It shows that some teachers have lower levels of intention to stay, while others have moderate or higher moderate levels. Understanding the specific items and their corresponding mean scores can help identify areas where interventions or improvements may be needed to enhance teacher retention in the Maldives schools.

Question 3: *Do the principals' servant leadership practices significantly influence teachers' intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives?*

Multiple regression analysis was utilized to study the influence of Principal's Servant Leadership on Teacher Intention to Stay. The result of the regression analysis is shown in Table 5.

Based on the regression analysis results presented in Table 5, it is evident that the behavior of Principals' Servant Leadership has a statistically significant influence on Teacher's Intention to Stay in schools in the Maldives. The R-squared value of 0.078 indicates that approximately 7.8% of the variation in Teacher's Intention to Stay can be explained by the seven dimensions of Principals' Servant Leadership.

Among the seven dimensions, three dimensions were found to be significant predictors of Teacher's Intention to Stay. These dimensions are Empowering (β = 0.262, $p < 0.05$), Helping Followers Grow and Succeed (β = 0.355, $p < 0.05$), and Emotional Healing (β = 0.200, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that when principals exhibit empowering behaviors, provide opportunities for growth and development, and show concern for the emotional well-being of teachers, it positively influences their intention to stay in their current positions.

Based on the findings of the regression analysis, there is a significant influence of principals' servant leadership practices on teacher intention to stay in the schools of the Maldives. The findings support the notion that certain dimensions of Servant Leadership have a meaningful impact on Teacher's Intention to Stay.

However, it's important to note that the overall explained variance is relatively low (7.8%), indicating that other factors beyond the dimensions of Servant Leadership also contribute to teachers' intention to stay. Further research may be required to explore additional variables that could enhance our understanding of this relationship.

TABLE 5
RESULT OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Principal's Servant Leadership	Teacher Intention to Stay (β Value)
Predictor	
Conceptual Skills	-.135
Empowering	.262*
Helping Followers Grow and Succeed	.355*
Putting Followers First	-.093
Behaving Ethically	-.061
Emotional Healing	.200*
Creating Value for Community	.026
R	.279
R2	.078
Adjusted R2	.065
F Value	6.295

Note. *Significant at $p < .05$ level.

DISCUSSION

Level of Principals' Servant Leadership Practices

The descriptive analysis highlights that principals in the schools of the Maldives possess servant leadership attributes at a highly moderate level. Specifically, the Conceptual Skills dimension stands out as the highest level among the seven dimensions, with the item "My principal has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals" receiving the highest mean score.

Having a thorough understanding of the school and its goals is crucial for effective leadership. It enables principals to conceptualize the school's objectives, dynamics, and purpose, allowing them to address issues, creatively solve problems, and align actions with the overall goals of the school. This understanding also facilitates engagement with various stakeholders such as the school board, parents, and the broader community, who can contribute to the school's mission. By being aware of these details, principals can provide support, offer valuable feedback, and conduct meaningful evaluations.

The finding emphasizes that principals with servant leadership attributes demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of schools and their goals. Goal setting is essential for leaders as it provides direction and momentum to the entire team. When leaders have a strong conviction towards their goals and effectively communicate them, staff members can better track their progress and stay motivated. Achieving milestones and witnessing progress builds confidence among staff members, shaping their long-term self-image, and enabling them to face future goals with less stress. Increased self-assurance allows staff members to set more ambitious goals and continue their personal and professional development.

Moreover, goal-oriented visionary school leaders align their behavior with servant leadership attributes. By promoting a shared vision within the school community, leaders bring together individuals towards a common objective known as the "school mission." A clearly defined vision leaves no room for misunderstanding or uncertainty and benefits the entire community. It enhances education, strengthens the relationship between the school and the public, and ensures alignment with the broader spectrum of the national curriculum. This aligns

with previous research suggesting that conceptualization is an essential attribute of educational leaders, enabling them to transcend daily events and align activities with the national curriculum to help each child reach their full potential (Wheaton, 1999).

Level of Teacher Intention to Stay

The descriptive analysis reveals that the level of Teacher Intention to Stay in the schools of the Maldives is at a moderate level. This suggests that teachers in the Maldivian schools have a moderate level of intention to stay within their current school or the teaching profession. The item "I often look forward to another day at work" received the highest mean score, indicating teachers who experience job satisfaction and have a positive outlook are more likely to have a higher intention to stay.

Job satisfaction is a crucial factor influencing teachers' loyalty and commitment to their organization. When teachers are satisfied with their job, they are more likely to be dedicated and actively participate in school activities.

Their satisfaction also affects their job performance, contributing to their intention to stay and the overall success of the school. Job satisfaction is associated with achieving job-related goals and experiencing positive emotions, both of which contribute to a higher intention to stay.

Organizational commitment is another significant factor influencing teacher intention to stay. Teachers with higher levels of organizational commitment demonstrate behaviors such as punctuality, minimal sick leave usage, and a reduced likelihood of leaving for another school or leaving the teaching profession altogether. These committed teachers prioritize the success of the school over personal considerations and are more motivated to provide quality instruction and support student academic success. Increased organizational commitment has been linked to improved job performance and a higher intention to stay among teachers.

Teacher turnover is a concern, particularly among early-career educators who may leave the profession before reaching their full potential. This turnover can result in a loss of expertise and impact the quality of instruction, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged students. The impact of teacher turnover extends beyond individual classrooms, affecting the teaching and learning process as a whole. Disruptions caused by teacher turnover can negatively impact student learning outcomes and overall school operations. The loss of instructional strategies, collaborative relationships, and knowledge of students' learning needs further contribute to the negative consequences of teacher mobility on student learning.

In summary, the descriptive analysis highlights the importance of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and teacher retention in promoting a positive teaching and learning environment. By fostering job satisfaction and organizational commitment, schools can increase teacher intention to stay, leading to enhanced instructional quality and improved student outcomes.

The Influence of Principals' Servant Leadership on Teacher Intention to Stay

The quantitative findings of the study indicate that there is a significant positive impact of principals' servant leadership practices on teachers' intention to stay. This means that when principals demonstrate servant leadership behaviors, teachers are more likely to stay in their positions. The study examined seven dimensions of servant leadership as recommended by Liden et al. (2008) in the context of leading and managing teachers in Maldivian schools. Out of these dimensions, three dimensions (Empowering, Helping Followers Grow and Succeed, and Emotional Healing) were found to have a significantly positive influence on teachers' intention to stay.

Principals' servant leadership practices contribute to enhancing teachers' intention to stay by fostering emotional support and resource exchange between principals and teachers. This is consistent with the LeaderMember Exchange (LMX) theory proposed by Dansereau et al. (1975), which suggests that emotions result from an exchange process primarily driven by obligations within exchange relationships. High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by trust, respect, and a sense of duty (Dulebohn et al., 2012). Servant leaders establish positive LMX interactions with their followers and treat them equally, demonstrating ethical behavior (Ehrhart, 2004). Servant leadership focuses on building relationships with followers and assisting them in their growth and success (Liden et al., 2008).

The findings align with previous studies. Rock (2016) found that servant leadership contributes to employee intention to stay. Shaw and Newton (2014) also discovered a significant positive correlation between the level of principals' servant leadership practices and teachers' intention to stay. Additionally, Odell (2018) identified servant leadership as a potential solution to address teachers' career drift and detachment.

In the school setting, principals are expected to be imaginative, creative, well-informed, and motivating educational leaders who adhere to their principles. Ethical leadership, as supported by Elçi et al. (2012), reduces employees' turnover intention. Ethical behavior displayed by leaders influences employee turnover, and

employees' intention to stay increases when they receive help from their leader, observe ethical behavior, and are given more responsibility.

The attributes of servant leadership, such as conceptual skills, empowering, helping followers grow and succeed, putting followers first, behaving ethically, and emotional healing, contribute to creating a positive environment. Leaders who consistently demonstrate these attributes can help others develop and progress, fostering a positive working culture. School principals who delegate tasks, make work engaging, and encourage employee participation and interaction reduce alienation, promoting a positive working environment and a higher perception of intention to stay. These findings are consistent with Cates' (2015) research, which concluded that servant leadership helps build a positive working atmosphere where employees share a stronger sense of common organizational values, leading to a higher commitment to the organization and an increased intention to stay.

To improve teachers' efficiency, principals should not only embody the characteristics of a servant leader but also set an example for others to follow, provide additional opportunities for teachers to take action, inspire and support teachers, and communicate a larger goal to be pursued. Servant leaders who prioritize their followers' needs above their own transform their teams by modeling the actions and behaviors they want their followers to emulate. As principals set positive examples and provide teachers with the necessary resources to succeed, both parties can work together to achieve the school's goals. Salman et al. (2014) supported this idea, concluding that employees are more likely to work for leaders who serve and inspire them and who are always willing and ready to help.

Indeed, developing positive relationships with teachers and delegating more responsibility to them are effective approaches to increasing teacher intention to stay. Principals can foster a sense of belonging through servant leadership by leading teachers to work on tasks that align with their interests and by providing support for their growth and success in their careers. This perspective is supported by Hughes (2012), who found that the principal's leadership is a significant predictor of a teacher's intention to stay in school. Similarly, Chiong et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of high-quality principal leadership as a crucial factor contributing to teacher intention to stay in the teaching profession.

However, it is important to acknowledge that conflicts with principals and a lack of support have been identified as significant factors influencing a teacher's intention to leave school, as highlighted by Pesavento-Conway (2010). Teachers need to feel that they are part of a team with principals, and a lack of support can lead to feelings of isolation and questioning of their commitment to the teaching profession. It is not solely the responsibility of principals to provide support; it should come from the wider system, including the island community, the atoll, the province, and the county. Teachers need to have a sense of identity and belonging within an institution to be motivated to remain employed there. If they do not feel a connection or believe they have a place within the organization, they are more likely to seek employment elsewhere (Chiong et al., 2017).

Helping Followers Grow and Succeed The Helping Followers Grow and Succeed dimension of Servant Leadership, as highlighted in this study, had a significant positive influence on teachers' intentions to stay. This finding suggests that principals who prioritize teachers' career development goals and actively support their growth and success have a greater impact on teacher retention. Principals should demonstrate a genuine interest in helping teachers achieve their career aspirations and provide them with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills that contribute to their professional growth (Liden et al., 2008).

Teachers, by nature, are committed to learning, maximizing their potential, and supporting the growth of others. It is essential to recognize that teachers who seek to improve their skills and knowledge do not intend to undermine the authority of principals. Instead, teachers and principals should collaborate in a shared pursuit of growth and improvement. Principals should invest time in identifying the potential in each teacher and assist them in finding and pursuing opportunities that align with their individual pathways. By recognizing and leveraging the unique contributions of teachers, both the school and the community can benefit, moving beyond a mere "check-the-box" approach to professional development. Research by Sass et al. (2022) supports the notion that teachers expect substantial support from principals to make a meaningful difference in their profession. Moreover, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are better equipped to navigate stressors, leading to increased job satisfaction and a stronger intention to stay in the profession (Sass et al., 2022).

Principals who prioritize helping teachers grow and succeed demonstrate effective servant leadership. By actively supporting teachers' career development, principals can foster a collaborative relationship that empowers teachers to enhance their skills, navigate challenges, and contribute to the overall success of the school.

Empowering In this study, the Empowering dimension of servant leadership was identified as the second dimension that significantly influenced teachers' intention to stay. Empowering teachers involves providing them with the responsibility and autonomy to make important decisions about their work, encouraging them to handle

critical work decisions independently, allowing them to respond to challenging situations in ways they deem most effective, and freeing them from the need to seek the principal's approval for significant job-related decisions (Liden et al., 2008).

When teachers are empowered, given leadership opportunities, and entrusted with decision-making authority, they are more likely to develop a long-term commitment to their profession and have a positive influence on others within their schools. Principals can empower teachers by providing them with the necessary skills to enhance their leadership abilities, offering coaching and mentoring opportunities, facilitating professional development sessions, and encouraging participation in book and article studies. Pesavento-Conway (2010) found that empowering teacher leadership is an effective strategy for reducing teacher attrition rates. Similarly, Nasir and Mahmood (2016) conducted a study on the impact of empowerment on employee turnover and found that empowerment serves as a viable tool for reducing turnover and increasing the intention to stay.

Principals should focus their efforts on fostering institutional improvement, involving teachers in the decisionmaking process, and promoting open collaboration among teachers for institutional advancement. Shared decision-making and active collaboration empower teachers and contribute to higher levels of student achievement. Caffey (2012) also supported the idea that servant leadership and empowering teachers positively affect teacher retention. Empowering teachers and practicing servant leadership can strengthen teachers' intention to stay within the profession (Caffey, 2012).

The Empowering dimension of servant leadership plays a crucial role in increasing teachers' intention to stay. By empowering teachers, principals enable them to take ownership of their work, make important decisions, and contribute to the overall improvement of the institution. This fosters a sense of autonomy, responsibility, and professional growth, which ultimately enhances teachers' commitment and desire to remain in their roles.

Emotional Healing The emotional healing dimension of servant leadership, which involves the principal's support for teachers' emotional well-being, had a significantly positive influence on teachers' intention to stay in the study. Emotional healing encompasses teachers' willingness to seek assistance from the principal when facing personal problems, as well as their perception that the principal genuinely cares about their welfare, takes time to have personal conversations with them, and listens attentively (Liden et al., 2008).

When teachers feel emotionally healed, they develop a sense of trust and confidence in approaching their principals for support, whether it's related to resource allocation or issues with students. This emotional healing process is associated with increased job satisfaction, commitment to the teaching profession, and a higher intention to stay. Han and Jekel (2010) found similar results, highlighting that leaders who appreciate their employees' hard work, understand their problems, actively listen to their concerns and ideas, and provide support contribute to higher levels of intention to stay. Similarly, Afaq et al. (2017) noted that servant leadership transforms teachers' perceptions of their administrators from mere bosses to role models. By genuinely listening to teachers' concerns and striving to help them achieve emotional stability, servant leaders can create a positive environment that fosters a sense of accomplishment and well-being.

Support from the principal is crucial, especially in situations where a teacher's authority in the classroom may be undermined, such as when dealing with parent complaints. While there may be instances where the principal cannot fully endorse a teacher's decision, it is important to demonstrate support for teachers and value their professional ideas and choices, as long as they align with school policy and ethical considerations. By standing by teachers, principals can strengthen the teacher-principal relationship and enhance teachers' passion, collaboration, and intention to stay. Joo (2010) reinforces this notion, emphasizing that employees are more likely to remain with leaders who exhibit a willingness to provide help, demonstrate confidence in their abilities, and display empathy.

The emotional healing dimension of servant leadership significantly influences teachers' intention to stay. By creating a supportive environment and showing genuine care for teachers' well-being, principals can foster trust, appreciation, and effective communication with their teachers. This emotional healing process contributes to increased job satisfaction, commitment to the teaching profession, and a higher intention to stay among teachers. Principals who actively support their teachers and value their professional decisions ultimately contribute to a positive and empowering work environment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the discussion of this dissertation highlights the level of principals' servant leadership practices in Maldivian schools and their impact on teacher intention to stay. The findings reveal that principals possess servant leadership attributes at a highly moderate level, with a strong emphasis on conceptual skills. Principals who have a thorough understanding of their organization and its goals can effectively address issues, align actions with the school's objectives, and engage with stakeholders for the school's mission. This understanding fosters a positive teaching and learning environment.

Moreover, the study indicates that teacher intention to stay in Maldivian schools is at a moderate level. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are crucial factors influencing teachers' loyalty and dedication to their school. When teachers are satisfied with their job and committed to the organization, they are more likely to stay, contributing to improved instructional quality and student outcomes.

Furthermore, the study establishes a significant positive impact of principals' servant leadership practices on teachers' intention to stay. Specifically, the dimensions of empowering, helping followers grow and succeed, and emotional healing demonstrate a significant influence. Principals who empower teachers, support their career development, and attend to their emotional well-being create a positive work environment, fostering teacher commitment and retention.

To enhance teacher intention to stay, principals should embody servant leadership attributes, set an example for others, provide opportunities for teacher growth, and foster collaboration. Teachers should also feel supported and connected within the school community and receive assistance from principals and the wider system. By prioritizing teacher development and empowerment, principals can create a culture of trust, autonomy, and professional growth, ultimately leading to increased teacher intention to stay and improved overall school performance.

In conclusion, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of servant leadership practices among principals in Maldivian schools. By demonstrating servant leadership attributes and focusing on empowering teachers, supporting their growth, and attending to their emotional well-being, principals can enhance teacher intention to stay and create a positive teaching and learning environment that benefits both teachers and students.

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