

Teacher Retention: Work Engagement, Psychological Capital, and Human Resource Retention Practices Satisfaction in South Africa

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Abstract

The retention of high-quality teachers is an universal challenge that consistently impedes the attainment of educational objectives. In order to tackle this problem, it is necessary to employ innovative psychological approaches that promote the retention of teachers in public schools. This study investigates how psychological capital acts as a mediator between work engagement and teachers' satisfaction with human resource retention procedures. There is a lack of studies that investigate the relationship between work engagement, psychological capital, and human resource retention policies in public high schools, despite the considerable amount of study conducted on each of these factors individually. In order to address this lack of study, a quantitative research method was employed, utilising a cross-sectional survey design to gather data from 309 high school teachers in South Africa. The study findings emphasise the important role of psychological capital in mediating the positive association between work engagement and satisfaction with human resource retention methods among teachers. These findings have practical implications for the creation of initiatives to strengthen teachers' psychological capital resources, which can in turn enhance their work engagement and satisfaction with human resource retention policies.

Keywords: human resource retention practices, psychological capital, retention, teachers, work engagement

1 INTRODUCTION

The retention of experienced and highly effective teachers in public schools has been a long-standing global concern. For decades, public education had grappled with this challenge of teachers departing from teaching. This is concerning because teachers are the foundation upon which we build inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education (Saylor, 2022). They have a significant impact on students' socio-emotional and educational success. Because they have a direct impact on students' cognitive, affective, and social development, their retention is crucial (Kahveci, 2023). Through teachers, students learn vital skills and develop competencies for success (Choden, 2019). Their obligations transcend beyond the classroom. They advocate inclusive education for the enrichment of communities, contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals that are a global priority if we are to meet Agenda 2030 (Chin, 2023; Ydo, 2020).

Despite the critical role that teachers play, they remain subjected to inadequate working conditions, low salaries, social and economic challenges, and ineffective systems (Day & Gu, 2009; Schüßler, Richter & Mantilla-Contreras, 2019). Constant changes in education management policies and authoritarian bureaucratic administrative systems also create additional work and strain on teachers. These issues, combined with restricted career and advancement options, contribute to the high percentage of teacher attrition at school level (Pitsoe, 2013; Elmi, Rotich & Hussein, 2022).

In addition to the aforementioned issues, schools in Sub-Saharan African countries deal with large class sizes, which inhibit teachers from optimising their teaching time. As a consequence to all these challenges that drive teachers out of the classroom, 90% of Sub-Saharan African countries face teacher shortages, particularly at secondary level. If these countries are to meet the universal secondary education targets by 2030, 44 million more secondary school teachers must be hired.

To effectively address these difficulties, it is critical to investigate creative methods that can incentivise and encourage teachers to remain in the public school system. More so because the consequences of these issues have a significant impact on educational quality. The influence of teacher attrition on student achievement, particularly in disadvantaged communities, emphasises the need of addressing this issue (Born & Fenster, 2022; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). As a result, three crucial factors come into play in the context of teacher retention: work engagement, which represents the level of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption that employees bring to their professional responsibilities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Robijn, 2020); psychological capital, which represents an individual's constructive psychological state, characterised by attributes such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Xu et al., 2022); and human resource practices. Examining the

dynamics of these three elements and investigating their potential mediation effects can provide useful insights into addressing South Africa's teacher retention dilemma.

The primary goal of this research is to investigate the function of psychological capital in mediating the relationship between work engagement and teachers' satisfaction with human resource retention procedures. In doing so, this study is intended to add to the body of research about retention theory while also providing practical recommendations for improving teacher retention in public high schools.

Work Engagement

Work engagement, a positive psychology notion, has long been used to define an individual's mental state. Previous research described work engagement largely as an inevitable and mentally sustained sense of fulfilment (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Maslach, 1998; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work engagement is essentially concerned with how individuals use themselves, exert effort, and endure adversity in order to be successful and effective (Abu-Shamaa et al., 2015; Bakker, 2022; Borowski, 2018; Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010; Saks, 2006; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2010; Van Wingerden et al., 2017). It is a personal resource distinguished by qualities such as energy, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Teachers demonstrate work engagement in the classroom through initiative, physical vigour, emotional commitment, and cognitive absorption (Borowski, 2018; Dehaloo & Schulze, 2013). Previous research has found that engaged teachers are self-assured, enthusiastic about their work, and committed to achieving learning objectives and enhancing the standard of instruction (Dehaloo & Schulze, 2013; Laba & Geldenhys, 2016; Mendes & Stander, 2011, Van Wingerden et al., 2017). Such teachers are capable of providing continual help and supervision to their students (Lassibille, 2012; Renard & Snelgar, 2016). They are actively involved and demonstrate inventiveness and control, making it simple for them to win over others and acquire the necessary support (Hakanen et al., 2006; Lassibille, 2012).

Engaged individuals appear to be motivated by the pleasures of their profession, thus they rarely feel pressed to satisfy personal standards and attain self-imposed goals (Borowski, 2018; Van Wijhe et al., 2011). According to research, absorbed persons are often driven by both their personal and professional resources (Dehaloo & Schulze, 2013; Robyn & Mitonga-Monga, 2017). As a result, when they are engaged in their profession, they are less likely to consider quitting (Dehaloo & Schulze, 2013).

Engaged individuals advocate for their organisations' goals and ambitions; consequently, in order to retain momentum and increase happiness, organisations must create suitable work environments in proportion to their efforts (Maleka et al., 2022). While the concept of job engagement has received substantial investigation, there is a scarcity of research on the complicated relationships between work engagement and retention methods, particularly among teachers in marginalised communities. As a result, according to this study, work engagement is associated with teachers' satisfaction with human resource retention practices.

Human Resource Retention Practices

Human resource retention strategies include the tactics and procedures put in place by businesses to attract, motivate, and retain employees. Professional development possibilities, recognition and awards, career advancement paths, a supportive work environment, and competitive salary packages are among these (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). And are aimed at generating a positive work atmosphere and increasing job satisfaction, resulting in lower employee turnover. These behaviours are critical in the context of education for keeping quality teachers.

Previous research indicates that individuals who are satisfied with human resource retention procedures are more likely to commit to and continue in their professions for a longer period of time (Baloyi, 2016; Borah & Bagla, 2016; Iliya & Ifeoma, 2015; Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015). Those who are emotionally committed and required to stay in their organisations, for example, may find greater happiness with remuneration (Gani et al., 2020). Nonetheless, studies have demonstrated that remuneration is a predictor of teachers' work involvement (Shibiti, 2020). Although these data present diverse viewpoints on this retention technique, they do demonstrate that remuneration is one of the tools used to increase employee retention in organisations (Döckel et al., 2006).

There are also additional tactics that have arisen in the literature that businesses use to retain employees. Among these are job characteristics, which refer to the nature of a job and must be matched with a person's attitudes, knowledge, and capacities (Modau et al., 2018). Satisfaction with a profession, which means contentment with the job's diverse nature, flexibility and autonomy, and complicated and demanding opportunities (Döckel et al., 2006). Training and development is another tactic often regarded as effective in keeping high-performing staff. This method has been found to be strongly related to employees' involvement and dedication at work (Erasmus et al., 2015; Thomas & Letchmiah, 2017). Scholars also identified that contentment

with supervisory assistance might naturally motivate workers to accomplish duties gladly, use skills successfully, while contributing positively to organisational outcomes (Döckel et al., 2006; Redelinguys, 2021). This indicates that teachers who are satisfied with such a practice are less likely to retire, especially when genuine support, acknowledgment, and compassion are supplied.

Furthermore, studies have found that career opportunities influence employee retention habits. Employees who are recognised through promotions and professional advancements, for example, have higher engagement and morale than those who are ignored (Ogony & Majola, 2018). Employees acquire exposure to new difficulties as a result of this practice, and as a result, they build necessary skills and competences (Modau et al., 2018). There are also financial benefits that emerge from such practices, which contribute favourably to employees' desires and ethical duties to continue working in organizations (Döckel et al., 2006; Ghani et al., 2022). These are also employed by organisations for the sake of enhancing retention, while maintaining their sustainability and competitiveness (Modau et al., 2018).

Additionally, organizational support systems and procedures that promote employee success at work and at home are disclosed in literature. Among these are work-life policies that encourage staff members to devote time on family and personal obligations (Modau et al., 2018). Such policies may include referral programs, flexible work schedules to accommodate personal obligations, and family responsibility leave which are beneficial to both employers and employees (Döckel et al., 2006; Modau et al., 2018). It is clear from these findings that conflict between individuals' personal and professional lives can result in job dissatisfaction and resignation thoughts. Therefore, adoption of such policies may guarantee individuals' commitment and retention.

While literature studies provide evidence that indicate that individuals' satisfaction with human resource practice predicts work engagement, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction, there is nevertheless limited comprehensive research supporting work engagement as a predictor of individuals' satisfaction with human resource practices, particularly amongst teachers in marginalised communities. This study, on the whole, proposes this causal connection and further probes the role of psychological capital resource in this relationship.

Psychological Capital as a mediator

PsyCap, or psychological capital, is a positive psychological state that incorporates four fundamental components: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Setting and pursuing meaningful goals is part of the hope component, while one's trust in own ability to attain these goals is part of the efficacy component. Resilience, on the other hand, refers to an individual's ability to recover from misfortune, and optimism refers to a person's hopeful outlook on the future. These elements work together to improve people's psychological well-being by improving their ability to cope with stress and hardship.

Because psychological capital is an innate quality with psychological aptitudes, scholars agreed that it may be nurtured and strengthened by educational and therapeutic initiatives (Ching-Sheue, 2015; Hansen et al., 2015; Luthans, 2002; Luthans, 2011). They also agree that, as a personal resource within the COR's orbit, psychological capital might generate other new resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2018). This implies that when this resource is conserved, it can replace individuals' exhausted work engagement resources and increase their chances of reaching desired goals (such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and human resource retention practices satisfaction) (Hobfoll, 2001). It also appears that once an individual's capacities are formed, they can be maintained even in the face of adversity (Hobfoll, 2001).

Hope's psychological capital attribute, according to researchers, ensures that people create objectives, manage hurdles, and persevere in their quest of achieving goals (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2012; Hansen et al., 2015; Mao et al., 2021; Shelton & Renard, 2015). Individuals with this attribute are also able to communicate with one another and adjust to new settings and relationships with more enthusiasm, devotion, and commitment, and with less exhaustion (Luthans, 2002; Luthans, 2011). Within the teaching space, teachers who are filled with hope are able to try new methods and approaches, take chances, and can persevere through obstacles (Li & Monroe, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019).

On the other hand, individuals with an established psychological trait of resilience can recover quickly from catastrophic setbacks, according to studies (Flint-Taylor et al., 2014; Kotzé & Nel, 2013; Luthans, 2011). They are skilled at managing their environment and do so by putting in place protections that allow them to avoid the harmful effects of adversity (Kotzé & Nel, 2013; Luthans, 2011; Simons & Buitendach, 2013).

Furthermore, literature has underlined the special nature of the psychological capital attribute of self-efficacy and its cross-over influence between partners. Individuals with developed self-efficacy can set high standards, put in the necessary effort to achieve goals, deliver excellent results, and persevere in the face of adversity (Day, 2013; Mouton et al., 2013; Ojedokun et al., 2013; Simons & Buitendach, 2013). This explains why such individuals are

mostly content with their jobs and rarely show signs of fatigue or a desire to resign (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). It seems, self-efficacy can influence how people feel, think, and behave (Luthans et al., 2007; Ojedokun et al., 2013). According to research, self-efficacy can also intersect and improve partners' professional engagement, commitment at work, and overall well-being through regular interaction (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Van Wingerden et al., 2017). Furthermore, research has shown that optimism, an inner strength based on self-control, reflection on the past, planning for the unexpected, preventative care, and individuals' optimistic views about their current and future successes, acts as a source of strength that activates commitment and improves engagement (Ching-Sheue, 2015; Luthans et al., 2007; Mao et al., 2021).

While earlier research has looked at the individual linkages between work engagement, psychological capital, and human resource retention methods, few studies have looked at potential mediation effects in the setting of South African public high schools. This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the function of psychological capital as a mediator in the relationship between work engagement and satisfaction with human resource retention methods.

Research Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate the mediating role of psychological capital in the link between work engagement and human resource retention practices satisfaction among high school teachers in South Africa. To achieve this purpose, the study sets the following specific objectives:

Aim 1: To assess the interrelationship between the work engagement (an antecedent), psychological capital (a mediator), and human resource retention practices satisfaction (an outcome variable).

Aim 2: To assess whether work engagement has a positive link to human resource retention practices satisfaction through psychological capital, a mediating variable.

Based on these objectives, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a statistically significant interrelationship between work engagement (an antecedent), psychological capital (a mediator), and human resource retention practices satisfaction (an outcome variable).

H2: Work engagement has a positive link to human resource retention practices satisfaction through psychological capital, a mediating variable.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual mediation model tested in this study.

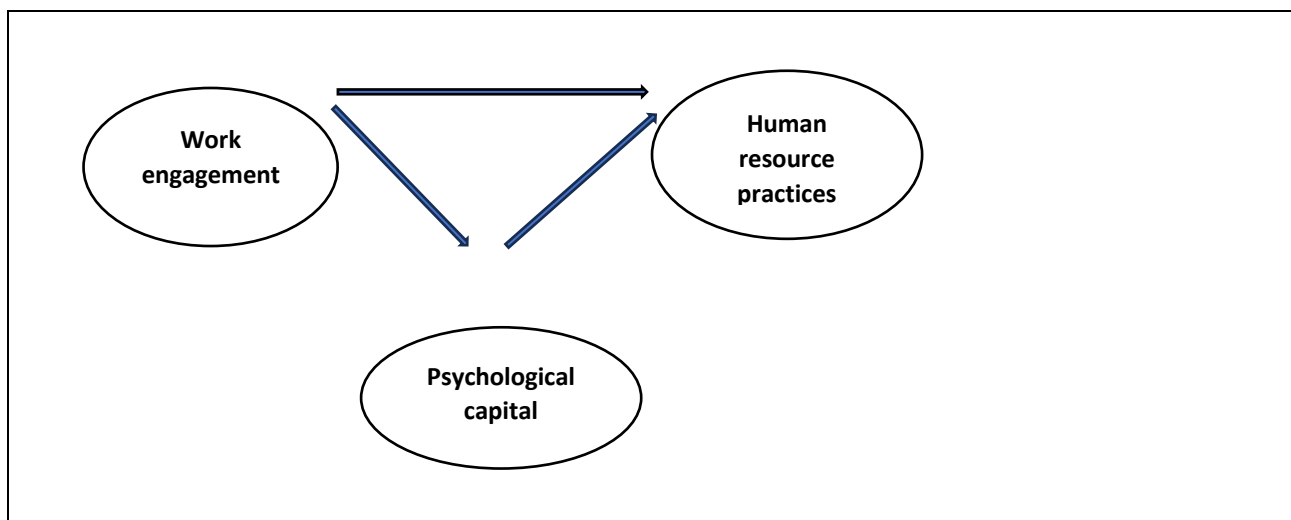


Figure 1: Research model

2 METHODS

Research Approach and Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach, utilizing a cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional research is appropriate for examining relationships between variables at a single point in time, making it suitable for investigating the mediation model proposed in this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Spector, 2019). The survey method allows for the collection of data from a large and diverse sample of high school teachers.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected from the Tshwane South District in South Africa. The sample included 309 high school teachers from various schools in marginalised communities within the district. A convenience sampling method was employed due to practical constraints, such as limited resources and access to participants. While convenience sampling may introduce some bias, efforts were made to ensure that the sample represented a broad cross-section of the teaching population in the district.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Gauteng Department of Basic Education, the Tshwane South District Office, and the management of the participating schools. An ethical clearance certificate with reference number 2019_CEMS/IOP_004 was obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at UNISA. Questionnaires were hand-delivered to participating schools wherein neutral individuals were identified and requested to facilitate the process. Attached to each questionnaire was information relating to anonymity, confidentiality, freedom to opt out, the agreement, and an indication that its completion and submission constitutes agreement to use the results for research purposes. All completed questionnaires were safely locked up and could only be accessed by the researcher.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaires to assess the levels of work engagement, psychological capital, and satisfaction with human resource retention practices among the participants. The questionnaires were hand delivered to the participants, and their responses were collected and analysed.

Measures

The variables in this study were assessed using the three measuring devices listed below:

Work Engagement: The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) created by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) was used to assess work engagement. The scale is divided into three parts: vigour, devotion, and absorption. On a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (nearly never) to 6 (every day), participants assessed their agreement with statements relating to these criteria.

Psychological Capital: The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) established by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) was used to assess psychological capital. The scale assesses psychological capital components such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. On a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), participants rated their agreement with statements relevant to these components.

Human Resources Retention Practices Satisfaction: The Retention Scale developed by Döckel (2003) was used to assess satisfaction with human resource retention methods. The scale has seven subscales, but only five were utilised to assess participants' satisfaction with various retention techniques in this study: remuneration, training and development, supervisor assistance, career advancement, and work-life balance. Participants rated their satisfaction on a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 6 being strongly agree.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was performed using IBM SPSS (version 27) and SAS (version 9.4) statistical software. The demographic features of the individuals were summarised using descriptive statistics. To test the hypothesised mediation model, Hayes' PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5.3 (2020) was used to perform the mediation analysis, allowing for the examination of the direct and indirect effects of work engagement on human resource retention practices satisfaction through psychological capital.

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for internal reliability, and bivariate correlation were determined to analyse the association between variables. Furthermore, Harman's single factor test and a one-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) solution were used to assess common method bias and variance, while a two multi-factor CFA was used on each measurement scale to establish construct validity (Aguirre Urreta & Hu, 2019; Kline, 2015).

On all three scales, Herman's single factor accounted for less than 50% (UWES = 9.07%, PsyCap = 10.43%, and RFS = 11.39%). When the items on the subscales were loaded onto a single construct in the one-factor CFA, the fit indices revealed that the single factor did not fit the data because CFI values were below .90 and RMSEA values were above .10 for all three scales: UWES (chi-square/df = 3.23; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .07; CFI = .86), PsyCap (chi-square/df = 3.32; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .07; CFI = .86), and RFS (chi-square/df = 4.51; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .11; SRMR = .12; CFI = .58). The absence of model fit implied that the scales were multi-factor scales, and that common technique bias did not pose a significant hazard in interpreting the research findings.

Items with loadings smaller than .50 were excluded from the second multi-factor CFA model, and modification indices were used to correlate some of the error terms. As a result, the data had an acceptable fit with CFI values above .90, RMSEA and SRMR values less than .10, and a lower AIC for all three scales: UWES (chi-square/df = 1.56; $p = .001$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .05; CFI = .98; and AIC = 15831.67), PsyCap (chi-square/df = 1.66; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .05; CFI = .95; and AIC = 16511.61), and RFS ((chi-square/df = 1.89; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .06; CFI = .92; and AIC = 31617.06), confirming the construct validity of the measurement models.

In order to reduce the likelihood of type I error, a bootstrapping strategy was deemed necessary (Brough, 2018). The confidence interval (CI) bootstrap approach was applied to a bootstrap sample 5 000 times in order to estimate indirect effects at 95% confidence interval. A CI with a zero value showed minor impacts, whereas a CI without a zero indicated strong links (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020).

3 RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Participants in the study included a broad group of high school teachers from various disciplines, teaching experience levels, and demographic backgrounds. The study included calculating descriptive statistics for each variable, such as means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables.

Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between variables. The mean scores of the variables and constructs varied from moderate (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and Retention Practices Satisfaction) to high (Psychological Capital). The overall measurement scales demonstrated strong internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of $\alpha \geq .93$, beyond the criterion of .70, indicating substantial reliability (Abu-Bader, 2021).

Work engagement was found to have positive associations with both overall psychological capital and overall retention practices, with correlation coefficients of .63 and .44, respectively (indicating medium to high practical benefits; $p \leq .01$). Furthermore, overall psychological capital correlated positively with overall retention practices ($r = .38$; indicating a modest effect; $p \leq .01$).

These findings support the link between work engagement, psychological capital, and satisfaction with human resource retention practices.

Table 1: Descriptive and bi-variate correlations between work engagement, psychological capital and human resource retention practicesN = 309; SD = standard deviation; *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$ **Hypothesis Testing: Mediation Analysis**

No	Variable	M	S	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	Work Engagement-Overall	4.52	1.29	.84	1														
2	Vigour	4.50	1.28	.85	.94*	1													
3	Dedication	4.62	1.28	.89	.89*	.78*	1												
4	Absorption	4.45	1.31	.83	.94*	.84*	.78*	1											
5	Psychological Capital - Overall	4.70	.78	.64	.63*	.61*	.54*	.61*	1										
6	Hope	4.77	.88	.68	.60*	.59*	.52*	.59*	.91*	1									
7	Optimism	4.72	.86	.67	.60*	.59*	.53*	.58*	.83*	.73*	1								
8	Resilience	4.48	.88	.67	.37*	.34*	.33*	.33*	.71*	.55*	.55*	1							
9	Self-Efficacy	4.81	.96	.69	.55*	.55*	.48*	.55*	.87*	.77*	.63*	.55*	1						
10	Retention Practices - Overall	3.37	.88	.63	.44*	.45*	.40*	.40*	.33*	.33*	.33*	.23*	.33*	1					
11	Compensation	2.93	1.25	.66	.27*	.28*	.23*	.26*	.33*	.33*	.13*	.27*	.03*	.77*	1				
12	Training and development	3.87	1.17	.65	.43*	.42*	.41*	.33*	.33*	.33*	.23*	.13*	.33*	.66*	.43*	1			
13	Supervisor support	3.90	1.16	.68	.39*	.37*	.41*	.33*	.33*	.33*	.13*	.33*	.55*	.33*	.43*	.43*	1		
14	Career opportunities	3.60	1.13	.63	.38*	.38*	.33*	.33*	.43*	.43*	.43*	.23*	.43*	.66*	.33*	.55*	.43*	1	
15	Work-life balance	3.20	1.36	.65	.19*	.22*	.13*	.13*	.13*	.13*	.13*	.03*	.13*	.43*	.23*	.13*	.13*	.13*	.13*

As shown in Table 2, both work engagement ($\beta = .36$; $p = .000$; bootstrap LLCI = .16; ULCI = .35) and psychological capital ($\beta = .18$; $p = .010$; bootstrap LLCI = .05; ULCI = .36) had positive significant relationships with retention practices. The mediation regression model explained 25% ($R^2 = .25$; $F = 57.16$; $p = .000$; moderate practical effect) of the variance in retention practices.

Table 2: Results of mediation analysis: Retention practices as dependent variable

Variable	β	SE	T	P	Bootstrap 95% CI		F	Model info	
					LLCI	ULCI		P	R ²
Constant	1.25	.26	4.87	.000***	.75	1.76	57.16	.000***	.25
Work engagement	.36	.05	5.37	.000***	.16	.35			++
Psychological capital	.18	.08	2.61	.010**	.05	.36			
Indirect effect of psychological capital in the work engagement- retention practices link									
	β	Boot SE	-	-	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI			
Psychological capital	.12	.05			.03	.22			

Note: N = 309. *** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

CI, confidence interval; LLCI, lower level confidence interval; ULCI, upper level confidence interval; SE, standard error; + $R^2 \leq .12$ (small practical effect size) ++ $R^2 \geq .13 \leq .25$ (moderate practical effect size) +++ $R^2 \geq .26$ (large practical effect size).

Table 2 also shows that the indirect effect of psychological capital on the link between work engagement and retention practices was positively significant ($\beta = .12$; SE = .05; bootstrap LLCI = .03; ULCI = .22), as the bootstrap LLCI and ULCI confidence interval range does not include zero.

The results of the mediation analysis provide evidence that work engagement has a positive link to human resource practices satisfaction through psychological capital. This shows that psychological capital functions as an important intervening personal resource in understanding associations between work engagement and feelings of satisfaction with human resource practices.

4 DISCUSSION

The findings of the current research study provide important insights into the psychological elements impacting teacher retention. They present evidence of psychological capital's mediating role in the relationship between work engagement and human resource retention practices satisfaction. Suggesting that teachers' psychological capital (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) resource is important in understanding positive connections between their work engagement and satisfaction with human resource retention practices relating to remuneration, training and development opportunities, supervisory support, career opportunities, and work-life balance. In simple terms, the finding emphasise that psychological capital presents an explanation in terms of how and why work engaged teachers are satisfied with human resource retention practices. It precisely provides a reason in terms of why such teachers are able to go beyond and above the scope of teaching to achieve desirable outcomes.

The findings are in line with previous research into this brain area which typified the significance of positive psychological capital attributes of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism in improving employees' satisfaction with work-related issues (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). The findings further support the idea of labelling both work engagement and psychological capital as contributing personal resources that lead to positive retention outcomes (Abu-Shamaa et al. 2015; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Hobfoll, 2018; Renard & Snelgar, 2016; Robyn & Mitonga-Monga, 2017; Yerdelen et al., 2018). They are also consistent with research corroborating the developmental properties of psychological capital in restoring other personal resources that boost productivity in times of adversity (Hobfoll, 2018).

One of the issues that emerges from these empirical findings is that retention interventions aimed at increasing teachers' psychological capital resources of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy can help to replenish and strengthen their depleted work engagement resources. Such valuable strategic practices could then ensure that

teacher retention goals are met. Particularly, interventions designed to encourage persistence (hope), change negative perceptions of failures and misfortunes (optimism), develop resilience to overcome challenges, and enhance self-efficacy to achieve teaching outcomes (Costantini et al., 2017; Day, 2013; Fernandes et al., 2019; Flint-Taylor et al., 2014; Kotzé & Nel, 2013; Luthans, 2002; Luthans, 2011; Mao et al., 2021; Mouton et al., 2013; Ojedokun et al., 2013; Simons & Buitendach, 2013). Since these are substantial practices for teacher development, they may provide direction to educational policymakers and human resource practitioners. Therefore, it is through targeted professional development programs, mentoring and coaching initiatives, and also by creating supportive and positive work environment that the retention of teachers can be achieved.

Additionally, since understanding the mediating role of psychological capital emphasises the need for comprehensive approaches to teacher retention, policies and practices that focus solely on improving work engagement or enhancing retention strategies may not be as effective as interventions that target the development of teachers' psychological capital. Therefore, by fostering a positive psychological state among teachers, educational institutions can create a more resilient and motivated workforce, which will ultimately improve the quality of education for students.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings provide vital insights that can be used to promote teacher retention. The findings of this study can be used by practitioners such as industrial psychologists, human resource practitioners, and education specialists to construct teacher interventions. They can adopt and incorporate the COR (Hobfoll et al., 2018) principles that emphasise the importance of creating and protecting personal resources in order to attain desired objectives. Thereby devising strategies that enforce the development of psychological capital resources to boost teachers' work engagement and satisfaction with retention practices. Teachers can also be encouraged to cultivate positive emotions. Such emotions can be produced by regular training and development programmes aimed at improving individual teachers' psychological capital qualities. As a result, teachers' involvement in teaching practice may improve.

Furthermore, school leadership teams should consider supporting flexibility and valuing wellbeing in their schools. Teachers can be helped to improve their excitement, activity, enjoyment, satisfaction, and relaxation, which may boost their engagement in the classroom (Watson & Stanton, 2017). School administration can also establish any internal and external support systems that focus on factors connected to teachers' experiences of growth and management of challenges. Small support groups, for example, may inspire teachers to confide in others, share experiences, and build long-term relationships. Constant engagement in such groups has the potential to generate and, in certain situations, strengthen internal traits and psychological capital resources in teachers.

In addition, positive human resource strategies can be embedded in schools to boost individual teacher engagement, eliminate any existing or potential quit desires, and improve teacher retention (Shibiti, 2020; Redelinghuys, 2021). Moreover, governments and educational institutions may need to prioritise teacher retention. Thereby offering suitable salary and amending policies and implementing measures designed to encourage better working environments in marginalised high schools. Also, excellent training is vitally needed for teachers to enhance their skills and expand their capabilities in order to contribute appropriately to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study sheds light on the mediation effects of psychological capital, it is not without limitations. One issue is the use of convenience sampling, which may restrict the findings' generalizability to a larger population of teachers. To improve the external validity of the results, future study could use a more diverse and representative sample. Furthermore, this study concentrated on the role of psychological capital as a mediator, leaving room for additional investigation of other potential mediators in the relationship between work engagement and teacher retention practices. Longitudinal studies might also be done to investigate the dynamic nature of these variables across time, offering a more complete knowledge of the factors impacting teacher retention.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Teacher retention continues to be a major issue for the public school system. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the significance of psychological capital as a mediator in the relationship between work engagement and human resource retention practices satisfaction among high school teachers. By recognizing the significance of teachers' psychological well-being and investing in interventions that enhance their psychological capital,

educational institutions may develop a more engaged, satisfied, and resilient teaching workforce. Addressing the teacher retention dilemma requires a multidimensional approach that combines efforts to enhance working conditions, create chances for professional growth, and foster a happy and supportive work environment. Therefore, understanding the interplay of work engagement, psychological capital, and human resource retention practices may allow policymakers, school administrators, and educational stakeholders to develop targeted interventions that promote teacher retention in order to improve educational quality and meet the Agenda 2030 targets.

Remark

This article is part of the PhD thesis entitled “Evaluating psychological factors in the construction of a retention model for Black African teachers”.

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