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#TeacherQuitTok: A content analysis of how teachers navigate attrition on TikTok

Increasing numbers of veteran teachers are leaving the field while fewer new candidates are coming to take their place. The issue has accelerated over the past decade, with attrition prior to retirement representing almost 90% of classroom staffing needs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The number of new teachers entering and completing preparation programs has fallen significantly in the last 10 years (García & Weiss, 2019). According to recent data published by the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), 44% of public schools reported having issues filling teacher vacancies. Over 50% of schools with vacancies shared that their job openings were largely due to resignations. 68% of school administrators polled in a recent survey by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2021) voiced concerns about teacher burnout and attrition and the impact on future instruction.

How teachers perceive the quality of their work environment can impact feelings of job satisfaction and the desire to stay (Kraft, et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Sutchter, et al., 2016). Teacher quality can have a significant impact on students' academic achievement (Hattie, 2023). Prior research has noted a connection between the loss of experienced teachers at a school and declines in student success (Hanushek, et al., 2016; Holme, et al., 2018). Increased use of social media as a connective public platform to share thoughts, feelings, and beliefs may offer researchers an opportunity to explore perspectives on the work environment and attrition described in teachers' own voices.

The purpose of this study is to use thematic content analysis to examine conversations and factors most discussed by teachers centering on attrition using the TikTok social media platform. Social media offers teachers a way to connect with others and share their thoughts while maintaining a perceived level of professional distance from their workplace. This research will explore how teachers use social media to provide a window into their classroom, working conditions, and decisions to leave or stay. The study was guided by the following questions: (1) How are current and former teachers using the TikTok social media platform to discuss or express their views on the teacher resignation trend? And (2) How do perceived and expressed attrition factors differ between teachers who leave and those who stay?

The analysis of teacher videos on TikTok may provide insight into the impact of social, political, and cultural structures on teacher stress and decisions to leave. Schools, districts, and policymakers have a high interest in understanding how to support teacher retention. Understanding how teachers discuss and describe factors for leaving may help stakeholders better address teacher needs and focus efforts on improving job satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework and Prior Literature

This study is grounded within Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping where stress is linked to an individual's assessment of an event including presumed demands, potential resources, and prior coping experiences. In this model, stress levels move beyond the event itself and are instead related to how an individual evaluates and responds to the encounter. The influence of working conditions on teacher feelings of job satisfaction have been widely discussed in the literature (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017; O'Brennan, et al., 2017; Rumschlag, 2017). Positive emotions toward the workplace often translate into greater ownership and feelings of belonging. In the school setting, organizational culture, psychological frameworks, support structures, and community politics all contribute to how working conditions are perceived (Torres, 2019). When environmental contexts are

observed as collaborative and consistent, teacher retention has been shown to be positively impacted (Kraft, et al., 2016; Podolsky, et al., 2016). Social and political frameworks are not static, requiring stakeholders to take note of current trends and identify the drivers behind teacher perceptions of working conditions.

Working Conditions

More than salary, class assignment, or school demographics, how teachers view and assess the quality of their working conditions can greatly influence emotional exhaustion and impact decisions to remain in the classroom (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Rumschlag, 2017; Sims, 2020). Frustration with job demands and the workplace environment are significant contributors to leaving decisions prior to retirement (Sutcher, et al., 2016). Teachers want to feel both trusted as professionals and supported in their work. Collaborative contexts where teachers work together and have voice in decision-making processes helps to build a culture of empowerment, ownership, and effectiveness (Ronfeldt, et al., 2015). This sense of belonging works to strengthen a teacher's connection to the school, improving efficacy and potentially reducing stress (Lee & Nie, 2014; Kraft & Papay, 2014).

Beyond professional efficacy, professional connections and social supports within an organization may work to reduce stress and burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021). In contrast, lack of collegiality and professional autonomy may increase the influence of job demands on stress (Fernet, et al., 2012; O'Brennan, et al., 2017; Ryan, et al., 2017). Social conditions such as positive work relationships with peers and administrators can help establish an optimistic workplace perception (Johnson, et al., 2012). When teachers feel supported by administration and other stakeholders, they are less likely to be impacted by stress from job demands (Bettini, et al., 2017; Ingersoll & May, 2012; Van Droogenbroeck & Spruyt, 2016). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) note that positive social contexts have a direct impact on teacher's job satisfaction and motivation to remain in the field.

Stress and Self-Appraisal

Research into the interaction of job demands and perceived resources is not new and remains a useful frame for exploring the current trend in teacher attrition. The decision to leave teaching highlights a complex interplay between the structural factors of an organization and an individual's evaluation of their agency within it (Kelchtermans, 2017). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) consider this evaluation as a continual appraisal of environmental stimuli. As working conditions are perceived as emotionally stressful or demanding, the individual then considers and applies personal coping strategies to help alleviate or remove the stress. The potential emotional impact of environmental factors varies by individual and is dependent on contextual factors including personal perceptions of expertise, resources, and experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Lazarus, 2006). Appraisal is an ongoing process that provides a consistent feedback loop between an individual and their environment. Challenging events generate a primary appraisal where the individual evaluates the level of perceived threat. If considered as an unmitigated stressor, a secondary appraisal process will consider strategies available to cope (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Initial reactions and outcomes following a stressful event can play a role in how assessments are perceived. For example, if the event is considered as highly challenging with low potential resources available for coping, this may impact the individual's ability to manage the stressor. Similarly, frequent engagement with events considered highly threatening may

influence the emotional response of how these events are perceived (Goh, et al., 2010). Favorable coping outcomes can promote positive emotions, feelings of agency, and provide a foundation to manage future events. In contrast, unresolved or unfavorable outcomes stimulate a need to reconsider coping strategies to resolve the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Continually encountering unresolved or unfavorable outcomes may lead an individual to consider leaving their current environment as a final act of agency within it (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Leaving as Agency and Coping

Although teachers are responsible for providing direct instruction and are the primary contact for students, they are often excluded from taking part in conversations about school policy and education reform (Anderson et al., 2015). Rather than be welcomed advocates for student needs, teachers are instead placed in the middle between policy actors, parents, and politics. A teacher survey by the Texas State Teachers Association (2022) reported that 85% of respondents felt that parents and political leaders held a poor opinion of teachers as capable professionals with 65% considering this belief to be common among the public as a whole. This perception is supported in policy discussions as teachers are described as lacking professional skill, promoting personal agendas, and unable to change (Ellison, et al., 2018).

Teachers are called to exhibit a neutral stance on political or personal topics in the classroom, yet teaching is inherently a political and personal activity. This brings teachers into what Hess and McAvoy (2014) consider a “political education paradox” where teachers must operate within a partisan political environment while simultaneously trying to remain outside of it. Disclosing political views in the school building may have significant negative consequences for teachers. Rather than risk potential sanctions or loss of work, teachers may attempt to navigate neutrality by suppressing their political and social views to other stakeholders (Dunn, et al., 2019; Journell, 2016). Considering the role of social connections in the workplace on teacher job satisfaction, it is little surprise that teachers look elsewhere to share their thoughts.

While low levels of trust and support are noted as significant predictors for attrition, school stakeholders disagree with teachers as to its importance (Harris, et al., 2019). This disconnect may contribute to teachers’ loss of agency and exclusion from decision-making processes. Santoro (2017) notes that teachers feel that social, political, and systemic hurdles inhibit their opportunity to display professional skill and expertise to stakeholders. In the absence of influence to change the system and respect for the work, teachers instead choose to express their agency by leaving (Bartell, et al., 2019; Dunn, 2018). Glazer (2018) considers this act of teacher agency as a form of resistance by invested leavers, as fully certified and experienced teachers choose leaving over remaining in the job in the current context.

Self-Advocacy on Social Media

Social media facilitates a means for educators to connect, socialize, advocate, and exchange professional or personal advice with others beyond the school building (Greenhow, et al., 2020; Prestridge, 2019). Carpenter, et al. (2020) share that educators often use social media to build community around a topic of interest, establish a professional identity, and interact daily to reduce feelings of isolation within their physical professional context. The open and self-governing structure of many social media platforms may encourage greater risk-taking in what is shared online (Lantz-Andersson, et al., 2018). Prior to the pandemic, Kelly and Antonio (2016) note that online teacher communities emphasized the sharing of practical advice and resources

rather than direct mentoring or developmental support. In the years during and after COVID-19, teachers have become more open to authentically sharing their thoughts or feelings and to follow others who do as well (Aguilar, et al., 2021).

One example of risk-taking online may be the sharing of resignation decisions. Prior research by Dunn, et al. (2017) investigated publicly posted teacher resignation letters as an emerging genre. They noted that many writers shared feelings that continuing their work within the school system would act to legitimize the current state and instead chose to resign as a form of resistance. These letters shared real-world experiences as a means to encourage advocacy for change. Although social media may not be limited to strictly professional discourse, continued online engagement by teachers reflects a perceived personal value in these less formal interactions.

The unmoderated and distilled nature of TikTok as a social media platform may offer a unique view into the thoughts, feelings, and interactions of teachers and leavers. Prior studies on the platform have used a thematic content analysis to explore viewpoints and perceptions about coping with eating disorders (Herrick, et al., 2021), substance abuse (Marynak, et al., 2022; Russell, et al., 2021; Sun, et al., 2021), and COVID 19 (Li, et al., 2021; Southwick, et al., 2021). A common theme found in these studies was the capability of social media to influence public perception toward advocacy or acceptance. Currently, research is limited in the study of individual teacher voice and perspective in terms of leaving the field. This study will add to the literature by examining the factors most discussed by teachers sharing their resignation stories on TikTok and how those factors may differ from those who chose to stay.

Methods

Social media has proven a useful tool for exploring personal thoughts, opinions, and emotions on a variety of real-world topics (Carpenter, et al., 2020). As a shared micro video platform, TikTok offers a succinct view into how teachers express themselves on the world stage while also providing insight into how others value these expressions. This study sought to explore how current and former teachers navigate teacher attrition through an analysis of videos on the TikTok social media platform. The purpose is to advance our understanding of the reasons teachers quit and investigate potential subtleties within reasons already discussed in the literature. This study was organized in two primary steps: (1) a quantitative analysis of data using a pre-defined set of video characteristics and (2) a qualitative thematic content analysis informed by the quantitative data.

The institutional review board at the University of Texas at Tyler determined the collection of publicly available data from openly accessible social media accounts did not qualify as human subjects research. To maintain compliance with the TikTok terms of service (TikTok, 2019), videos were collected directly from the TikTok application without the use of automated scripts or aggregators. No user content was downloaded, copied, or modified.

Sample

This study included 100 English-language videos posted by individual users using the keyword “teacher resignation.” Criteria for inclusion included explicit reference to being a current or former teacher and a post centered on teacher attrition. To increase the diversity of perspectives for analysis, only one video was considered per user account, with the first video presented being selected. As the TikTok algorithm presents content based on prior views and interactions, the researcher used a new account created for this study and a separate incognito

browser window for each view. This provided a sample similar to what another user may find when conducting a comparable search on the same day. Not including a pilot run for keyword identification and codebook development, a total of 174 videos were reviewed before the sample was complete.

Keyword identification was an iterative process conducted one week prior to data collection, starting with terms such as #formerteacher (67.4 million views), #quitteaching (18.2 million views), and #teacherquittok (69 million views). Additional hashtags were added from the results and combined until saturation of content was noted between listings. Among the 20 potential keywords identified, the greatest number was found with the combination “teacher resignation,” which had over 41.4 billion views recorded as of the study date.

Codebook Development

Codebook development followed a process similar to that outlined by Roberts, et al. (2019) where preliminary codes are identified through literature and theory before being tested, refined, and applied to the actual data set. One month prior to data collection, a pilot run of 100 videos was viewed using the selected hashtags. Initial codes were identified and described based on current literature surrounding teacher burnout and attrition and applied to the pilot data. Codes were checked for presence or absence and descriptions revised based on codable events found in the videos. Additional codes were established to fill gaps in descriptions.

The draft codebook was applied to 25 randomly selected videos from the actual data set and independently evaluated by two researchers for intercoder reliability. Codes and descriptions were again revised before applying the codebook to the full sample of 100 videos. In addition to coding each video, supplementary data was gathered on number of views, likes, comments, and shares. When provided or available, demographic data was gathered on gender, teaching level, and years of teaching experience. Similarly, it was noted whether the teacher explicitly shared if they had quit, were considering quitting, discussing the resignation trend, or had chosen to stay. Of those who quit, it was also recorded if they noted leaving prior to the end of the school year.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with a quantitative evaluation of codes which were then used to inform a secondary qualitative content analysis and theme development. Most videos posted to TikTok are one minute in duration or less. In 2021, the application began allowing posts up to three minutes (TikTok, 2021). For this sample, the mean video length was 58 seconds with a median of 50 seconds and a range between 5 and 180 seconds. The short nature of each video meant that content creators often focused on specific aspects of their story or discussion point and was considered when analyzing the results.

During the quantitative analysis, counts were taken for each predetermined content characteristic noted in the codebook. These results were then separated into two groups: (1) teachers who have quit or are considering quitting, and (2) those that are simply discussing the topic or have chosen to stay. In 100 videos, there were 66 teachers who shared they had quit, 12 of which explicitly stated they had quit mid-year. An additional 3 posts were from teachers thinking of quitting. Posts from the other group included teachers discussing the issue ($n=21$), sharing why they chose to stay ($n=8$), and those who chose to return to the classroom after seeking other employment ($n=2$). Of the teachers who shared years of experience, the average of the entire sample was 9.5 years ($n=21$) and those who quit or were thinking was 8.6 years ($n=19$).

For each video, an engagement score was calculated by adding the total number of likes, comments, and shares and dividing the sum by the total number of views. This information was used to provide a weighted score for themes developed later during the qualitative analysis. The mean engagement rate for all posts was 9.96 with a range of 1.64 to 22.86. The full sample had a cumulative 39820525 views, 5512027 likes, 84241 comments, and 223041 shares.

Guided by the quantitative data, current literature, and theoretical framework, the qualitative analysis involved a review of code descriptions and how they were presented in the videos. This study followed a reflexive thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to compare relationships and identify discrepancies between predetermined content characteristics prior to combining codes into themes. Once potential themes were developed and described, themes were reviewed by an external researcher and applied to a random sample of 10 videos from the dataset. Themes were then further revised for clarification and key coded extracts identified for final analysis.

Results

Table 1 shows the content characteristics identified for inclusion in the final codebook along with the frequency of each for the entire sample ($n=100$), teachers who quit or are considering quitting ($n=69$), and those who are discussing the issue or have decided to stay ($n=31$). Of the 24 categories included in the entire data set, conversations about emotional health were found in 30%, positive student relationships and school or district policies in 24%, the social or political environment in 23%, teacher attrition trends in 22%, and job demands in 20%, representing the most frequently observed characteristics. When differentiating between those teachers who have quit or are considering quitting from those who are discussing or have chosen to stay, the greatest disparity between groups was found in emotional health with a 29.5% difference in observed frequency. Positive student relationships (16.1%) and pay or benefits (15.7%) were additional areas of disparity between groups. It should be noted that sharing about a new job also had a high difference of 21.7%, but it would be expected that this characteristic would not be present in the discussing or staying group.

Table 1
Frequency of Observed Content Characteristics by Group

Characteristic	All Posts ($n=100$)		Quit or Thinking ($n=69$)		Discuss or Stay ($n=31$)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Emotional health	30	30.0%	27	39.1%	3	9.7%
Positive student relationships	24	24.0%	20	29.0%	4	12.9%
School or district policies	24	24.0%	16	23.2%	8	25.8%
Social or political environment	23	23.0%	13	18.8%	10	32.3%
Teacher attrition trends	22	22.0%	8	11.6%	14	45.2%
Job demands	20	20.0%	14	20.3%	6	19.4%
Work / life balance	19	19.0%	16	23.2%	3	9.7%
Respect for teaching profession	18	18.0%	12	17.4%	6	19.4%
Quitting advice or encouragement	17	17.0%	14	20.3%	3	9.7%
Sharing a new job	15	15.0%	15	21.7%	0	0.0%
Work efficacy	15	15.0%	13	18.8%	2	6.5%
Time on job	15	15.0%	9	13.0%	6	19.4%

Pay or benefits	15	15.0%	7	10.1%	8	25.8%
Administrator professional support	14	14.0%	9	13.0%	5	16.1%
Negative parent relationships	12	12.0%	5	7.2%	7	22.6%
State or federal policies	10	10.0%	5	7.2%	5	16.1%
Administrator communication	9	9.0%	9	13.0%	0	0.0%
Physical health	9	9.0%	7	10.1%	2	6.5%
Negative student relationships	9	9.0%	3	4.3%	6	19.4%
Equity, diversity, and inclusion	8	8.0%	6	8.7%	2	6.5%
Hope for change	8	8.0%	5	7.2%	3	9.7%
School culture	7	7.0%	4	5.8%	3	9.7%
Administrator discipline support	5	5.0%	3	4.3%	2	6.5%
School safety	4	4.0%	1	1.4%	3	9.7%

The coded content characteristics were combined into a thematic structure which included Personal Health and Wellness, Relationships and Support, Working Conditions, the Social Environment, and Employment. Videos were then reevaluated for the presence or absence of one or more of the underlying characteristics within each theme. Table 2 shows the frequency of identified themes by group. For the quitting or thinking group, the most frequent theme was Personal Health and Wellness (55.1%) followed by Relationships and Support (44.9%). In comparison, for the discussing or staying group, Social Environment (61.3%) and Working Conditions (58.1%) were observed most frequently. A large disparity in observed frequency between groups was noted for the themes of Personal Health and Wellness (39.0% difference) and Social Environment (25.1% difference). The greatest similarity in observed frequency was noted in the themes of Relationships and Support, and Employment.

Table 2
Frequency of Observed Themes by Group

Theme	All Posts (<i>n</i> =100)		Quit or Thinking (<i>n</i> =69)		Discuss or Stay (<i>n</i> =31)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Working Conditions	46	46.0%	28	40.6%	18	58.1%
Social Environment	46	46.0%	25	36.2%	19	61.3%
Relationships & Support	44	44.0%	31	44.9%	13	41.9%
Personal Health & Wellness	43	43.0%	38	55.1%	5	16.1%
Employment	32	32.0%	23	33.3%	9	29.73%

Table 3 shows the total and mean weighted engagement score for each theme. This represents the level to which users interact with the posted videos. The TikTok algorithm presents videos based on a user's prior engagement, interests, and viewing patterns, thus promoting some video posts over others. The purpose of the engagement score is to explore how users interact with each video while also considering the number of times it has been presented to individual users. The total score was calculated by adding the likes, comments, and shares for all identified videos and dividing by the sum of overall views. The mean score was calculated using the weighted engagement score for each individual video represented within the theme.

The highest engagement score was noted for the theme of Personal Health and Wellness (16.87) with the lowest score for Employment (12.11).

Table 3
Total and Mean Engagement by Theme

Theme	<i>n</i>	Total Eng	Mean Eng	Views	Likes	Comments	Shares
Personal Health & Wellness	43	16.87	10.66	20306571	3205847	48157	172026
Relationships & Support	44	15.87	11.39	24863887	3706114	54092	185095
Working Conditions	46	15.71	11.84	26812143	3943390	66618	200853
Social Environment	46	15.41	12.24	23356328	3333835	64118	201299
Employment	32	12.11	9.01	12243378	1449606	14235	18833

A further discussion of relevant themes and differences relating to the research questions can be found in the following section.

Discussion

This study sought to understand the following questions: (1) How are current and former teachers using the TikTok social media platform to discuss or express their views on the teacher resignation trend? And (2) How do perceived and expressed attrition factors differ between teachers who leave and those who stay? The exploration of teacher stories on social media may provide school leaders insight into the many individual reasons teachers choose to leave the field. This may assist with reversing the current trend in attrition, even if only on a local level. Prior studies have described how effective school leaders can offer emotional supports and improve working conditions through buffering stress and workload challenges (Burkhauser, 2017; Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Lambersky, 2016). While pay, policy, and accountability remain concerns to be addressed on a state or national level, understanding how current social, political, and cultural structures impact teacher stress and burnout may provide meaningful information into how to better support and retain teachers in the current educational context. While working conditions, the social environment, and supportive relationships were noted most frequently in posts by all users, there were notable differences observed between leavers and those who chose to stay.

Over half the posts by teachers who explicitly shared their leaving intentions or potential interest in leaving spoke to the theme of personal health and wellness (55.1%). This theme also had the highest total engagement score of 16.87, meaning that posts within this theme were shared, liked, or commented on more frequently than other posts. Within this theme, former teachers included stories about declining physical or emotional health, a focus on personal well-being, failing to manage a positive work/life balance, and an absence of joy or efficacy derived from the work. Some teachers mentioned ongoing exhaustion and lack of supportive resources as common contributing factors. Others expressed feelings of loss or failure as a job they once enjoyed had become an emotional burden and source of anxiety. For these teachers, the ongoing presence of stressful experiences led to actual physical distress and a belief that quitting would offer relief.

While personal health and wellness was the most frequently observed theme in posts by leavers, it represented the lowest observed theme in posts by stayers (16.1%). Instead, the teachers who stayed considered the social environment as a primary driver of teacher attrition

with this theme being observed in 61.3% of posts. The theme of social environment encompassed social and political structures, respect for teaching as a profession, issues of equity, inclusion, or diversity, and the discussion of teacher attrition as an ongoing trend. Common narratives within this theme spoke to changes in school board leadership and support, pressures from community engagement in political advocacy, teacher certification programs that would potentially lower standards, and how these combined factors were leading to a reduction in professional autonomy and respect for teachers still in the classroom. This theme was only observed in 36.2% of posts by leavers.

Considering the differences between groups through the lens of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping may provide some insight into why these differences exist. Teachers who have experienced emotional struggles at work and yet were able to find favorable coping outcomes may have gained a more positive outlook and greater ability to navigate future emotional encounters. For this group, successfully fostering personal health and well-being in times of struggle could mean that this issue plays a reduced position in consideration of attrition factors. In contrast, teachers who experience unresolved or unfavorable coping outcomes must continually reassess and reconsider their strategies in an attempt to reduce the impact of stressful events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). As the stress remains unresolved, it may be that these issues persist as primary beliefs about work and influence feelings of agency to navigate future stressors (Goh, et al., 2010). Because of this reduced perceived agency and lack of favorable coping outcomes, teachers who retain stress may instead choose to leave to regain agency (Bartell, et al., 2019; Dunn, 2018).

The theme of relationships and support was observed in 44.0% of all posts and represented the smallest difference between groups with only a 3% disparity. This theme also had the second highest engagement score of 15.87. Posts within this theme centered on feelings of belonging and support that come from positive relationships and communication with students, parents, and administrators. Former teachers spoke to encouraging relationships with students, but lacking administrator support when facing challenges or experiencing personal issues of well-being. This included feeling either ignored by their principals, or that personally important concerns were rarely addressed in a meaningful way. Current teachers shared about how a positive school culture emphasizing relationships and self-care helped confirm decisions to stay. They cited stories of principals who spent time understanding their needs, fostering collaboration, and helping to find resources to mitigate teacher stress. The importance of relationships and support prevalent in the narratives of both groups is well acknowledged in the literature and could be expected. Supportive relationships and collegial social structures can help buffer the impact of stressful experiences and may provide a means of coping when they occur (Madigan & Kim, 2021; O'Brennan, et al., 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Of note is how both groups differed in their descriptions of relationships within their individual school environment.

This study has a number of limitations that should be considered in context of the findings. First, the dataset for this study represents a relatively small cross-section of the vast number of posts available on this topic on TikTok. Future research may attempt to gather a larger sample of teacher voices. Advances in machine learning and analysis could potentially assist in this endeavor by significantly increasing the number of videos observed. Second, sampling strategies involve choices that may impact the data accessible for evaluation. This study used an iterative approach to keyword identification but ultimately selected "teacher resignation." It may be possible that other keywords would provide a different result. Similarly, this study focused on

individual teacher voices and only considered the first post presented by users with an explicit reference to being a current or former teacher. Future studies may potentially look to all users who engage in this topic whether teachers, school leaders, community members, or other stakeholders. Finally, this study represents a single snapshot in time and the findings may be influenced by factors that were most pronounced in this context. It is possible that external factors such as the influence of the COVID 19 pandemic or heightened political discourse near elections might have had an impact on both post content and how they were presented by the TikTok algorithm. While difficult to control for, an expanded timeframe or the use of multiple snapshots may provide an interesting result for future research.

Conclusions

Due to limited hierarchal structures and organically shared governance found online, teachers may be willing to share more authentic thoughts about work than in more formal channels such as employee surveys or exit interviews (Lantz-Andersson, et al., 2018). With resignations on the rise and fewer new candidates entering the field, it should be little surprise that school leaders are concerned in the ability to fill future positions (NASSP, 2021). The frequency in which former teachers mentioned issues of personal health and wellness as reasons for leaving may be indicative of a larger issue of employee mental health that could be worthy of further study. It may be possible that developing intentional systems of care could help provide greater resources for coping and reduce attrition. The individual and private nature of personal health and wellness may be a contributing factor as to the difference in perspective between groups. This also may represent a fundamental misunderstanding of the severity of the issue for teachers struggling to balance feelings of efficacy with the challenges of teaching. While limitations exist in this study, the differences found between teacher groups suggest that it could be beneficial for school leaders and policy makers to expand their efforts to meaningfully understand the factors influencing attrition. A further exploration of online interactions could offer a starting point in that endeavor.

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