

A Preliminary Comparison of Intention to Quit between Heterosexual and Homosexual Elementary School Teachers: School-Related and Individual Contributors

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Abstract

Research Background: In international literature, intention to quit their profession is significantly under-investigated for elementary school teachers, and especially for those who belong to sexually minority groups. Furthermore, it is still unclear if school-related and individual factors contribute in a differentiated way to heterosexual and homosexual teachers' intention to quit. **Aim:** The present study aimed to investigate comparatively intention to quit between heterosexual and homosexual elementary school teachers. Also, the role of school-related (school belonging, colleague support) and individual contributors (teachers' resilience, working value) in their intention to quit was co-examined, through an explanatory mediation model, for both teacher sub-groups. **Method:** Overall, 295 teachers ($N = 151$ heterosexual [43% women] and $N = 144$ homosexual [56% women]) completed online a self-report questionnaire, which included scales related to the variables involved. **Results:** The findings showed that homosexual teachers' intention to quit was above average, and it was expressed to a greater extent, compared to heterosexual teachers. Furthermore, in the relationship between school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) and teachers' intention to quit, teachers resilience and work meaning proved full mediators in the case of heterosexual teachers and partial mediators in the case of homosexual teachers. **Conclusions:** The findings imply the necessity to strengthen underlying psychological mechanisms in the school environment as well as during teachers' undergraduate studies. These actions could be protective of teachers' intention to quit and primarily for those who belong to sexually minority groups.

Keywords

Intention to Quit, Elementary School Teachers, Homosexuality,

1. Introduction

1.1. Heterosexual and Homosexual Elementary School Teachers' Intention to Quit: Literature Gaps

Teachers' frequent exposure to multidimensional stressful circumstances in their work environment (e.g., students' disruptive behavior, communication/collaboration problems with colleagues and parents) justifies why the teaching profession has been systematically connected to high rates of emotional exhaustion and burnout (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021; Wang & Burić, 2023). Except for these negative emotional outcomes, many studies examine in-service teachers' intention to quit the teaching profession (e.g., Leung & Lee, 2006; López et al., 2020; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Raju Pamu, 2010; Wang & Hall, 2021). The theoretical framework for investigating teachers' intention to quit their profession derives from the Theory of Planned Behavior, according to which intentions are considered the most proximal predictor of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, investigating teachers' intention to quit could be awakening for related psychoeducational prevention actions or interventions at schools.

However, it should be mentioned that most of the above available studies have been conducted either on secondary school teachers (e.g., Raju Pamu, 2010) or on a mixed sample including teachers of preschool, elementary and secondary education (Leung & Lee, 2006; López et al., 2020; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Wang & Hall, 2021). In the latter case, there are no clear findings regarding the intention to quit on behalf of the under-investigated group of elementary school teachers. A related study focused exclusively on elementary school teachers (as the present study) could inform about the extent to which intention to quit the teaching profession also concerns elementary education, which is supposed to be characterized by more favorable working conditions (e.g., closer interpersonal relationships with students/colleagues, more positive school climate), compared to secondary education (Touloupis, 2021).

Furthermore, the less favorable working conditions at school, which may lead to teachers' intention to quit their profession, sometimes are likely to be experienced by teachers of minority groups, such as those with homosexual sexual orientation (Lee, 2019; Smith et al., 2008). Specifically, it seems that teachers who do not identify themselves as heterosexuals but as homosexuals (e.g., lesbian, gay), namely they are romantically and sexually attracted by individuals of the same gender/sex, report that they usually feel unsafe and unsupported in their workplace, while they perceive their school climate with fear and distrust (Smith et al., 2008). Also, homosexual teachers, due to their usual difficulty in revealing their real sexual identity at school, often perceive their personal and

professional identities as incompatible. As a result, they experience low self-worth, as well as stressful and depressive emotions (Lee, 2019). Considering that teachers of color, due to the discrimination issues they experience at school, sometimes leave their profession (Marx et al., 2023), it could also be expected that homosexual teachers' negative school experiences could make them prone to quit. After all, teachers' poor mental health has been significantly related to their intention to quit (Chambers Mack et al., 2019). Nevertheless, to date, to the author's knowledge no study has examined homosexual teachers' intention to quit their profession. Furthermore, no study has examined this intention comparatively between heterosexual and homosexual teachers. Only through comparative findings some conclusions could be made regarding the most vulnerable teacher subgroup to leaving their profession.

1.2. School-Related and Individual Contributors to Teachers' Intention to Quit: Applying Social Cognitive Theory

Discussing about teachers' intention to quit, it is of high importance to identify the related contributors. In this light, Bandura's (2002) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) could be applied to offer a multilevel and therefore more realistic explanation of teachers' intention to quit, co-examining both context-related and individual contributors. Based on the SCT, context-related factors (e.g., related to the school environment) could interact with individual social-emotional factors, which in turn could contribute to an intended behavior (e.g., intention to quit) (Bandura, 2002).

Regarding context-related factors, perceived negative school climate has been systematically linked to teachers' intention to quit (Chang et al., 2017; Jackson, 2018). Perceived school climate concerns teachers' general sense of the psychological atmosphere at their school, formed by different parameters (e.g., interaction with students, teaching duties, logistical infrastructure) (Chang et al., 2017; Jackson, 2018). However, a few recent studies have highlighted more specific school-related psychological parameters predictive (explanatory) of teachers' intention to quit. These parameters are primarily related to teachers' interpersonal relationships with their colleagues at school and their feelings derived from these relationships. These parameters seem to concern perceived colleague support and sense of school belonging. Teachers' perceived colleague support concerns teachers' perceived emotional and professional support from their colleagues at school (Zimet et al., 1988). It has been found that teachers' perceived social support from colleagues and workplace in general negatively predicts teachers' intention to quit their job (López et al., 2020; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022). Regarding teachers' sense of school belonging, it refers to their psychological sense of being accepted by their colleagues and the school leadership (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Teachers' sense of not fitting or belonging to their school seems to act as an aggravating factor for their intention to move to another school (Vekeman et al., 2017), which could be considered as a risk factor for their fu-

ture intention to quit the profession.

As far as individual (intrapersonal) factors, teachers' feelings related to their profession, such as burnout and job satisfaction have been largely reported as significant contributors to teachers' intention to quit (Chambers Mack et al., 2019; Leung & Lee, 2006; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it has been recently supported that teachers' positive feelings derived from positive psychology, such as resilience and work meaning, could protect them to a greater extent from their intention to quit their profession (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Converso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Heleno et al., 2018). Teachers' resilience concerns their positive and optimistic sense that they can address obstacles in their profession (Morgan, 2011). Work meaning has to do with teachers' conviction that their profession is meaningful with significant impact on others (Fry et al., 2005). Both resilience (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Lee et al., 2021) and work meaning (Converso et al., 2018; Heleno et al., 2018) seem to have the potential to weaken the negative psychological effects of perceived school-related problems and therefore make teachers less prone to thoughts about quitting their profession.

Nevertheless, the reported contribution of these school-related (school belonging, colleague support) and individual factors (resilience, work value) to teachers' intention to quit is based on limited studies. Therefore, it is considered a significantly under-investigated field, especially for homosexual teachers. Thus, further confirmative findings are needed. Also, it is worth mentioning that the psychosocial variables related to the school context, such as school belonging and colleague support, have been reported as contributors to positive feelings, such as resilience (Koçak, 2021; Li & Li, 2024; Park & Song, 2018; Suryaratri et al., 2020).

Consequently, based on the above literature review, it could be assumed that, within the SCT' framework, colleague support and school belonging, as perceived exogenous school-related factors, may contribute to teachers' intention to quit, not only directly, but also indirectly through their positive feelings of resilience and work meaning. Considering the frequently less favorable school environment that homosexual teachers often experience (Lee, 2019; Smith et al., 2008), it would be of higher importance to also investigate this explanatory mediation model for this teacher subgroup. Investigating comparatively this mediation model for both heterosexual and homosexual teachers possibly differentiated patterns of interactions among the variables involved explanatory of teachers' intention to quit may emerge in each case.

1.3. Rationale, Aim and Hypotheses of the Present Study

Summing up, it seems that that intention to quit the profession is significantly under-investigated for elementary school teachers, while related findings for minority teacher groups, such as homosexual teachers, are almost absent. Furthermore, no study to date has applied the SCT to test the under-investigate

contributing role of colleague support, school belonging, resilience and work meaning in teachers' intention to quit, through an explanatory mediation model for both heterosexual and homosexual teachers.

The present study aimed to investigate comparatively intention to quit between heterosexual and homosexual elementary school teachers. At the same time, the role of school-related (colleague support, school belonging) and individual contributors (teachers' resilience, working meaning) in their intention to quit was co-examined, through an explanatory mediation model, for both teacher subgroups. Based on the literature review, the hypothetical structural model of the variables involved is reflected in **Figure 1**.

According to the research hypotheses, it was expected that:

1) Homosexual teachers will report intention to quit their profession to a greater extent, compared to their heterosexual colleagues (Hypothesis 1; Lee, 2019; Marx et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2008).

2) For heterosexual teachers, colleague support and school belonging (as school-related factors) positively contribute to their intention to quit, both directly (Hypothesis 2a; López et al., 2020; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Vekeman et al., 2017) and indirectly through the positive mediating role of teachers' resilience and work meaning (Hypothesis 2b; Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Converso et al., 2018; Heleno et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2024; Park & Song, 2018; Suryaratri et al., 2020). A related hypothesis for homosexual teachers could not be formulated, due to the lack of related findings.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

According to the results of the G*Power analysis (see Data Analysis Plan), the participants of the present study were 295 elementary school teachers ($N = 151$ heterosexual [43% women] and $N = 144$ homosexual [56% women]). Teachers ($M_{\text{age}} = 39.4$, $SD = 1.02$), came from almost all Regional Education Directorates of Greece, while their distribution based on their years of teaching experience was the following: Heterosexual teachers (1 - 5 years [23%], 6 - 10 years [12%],

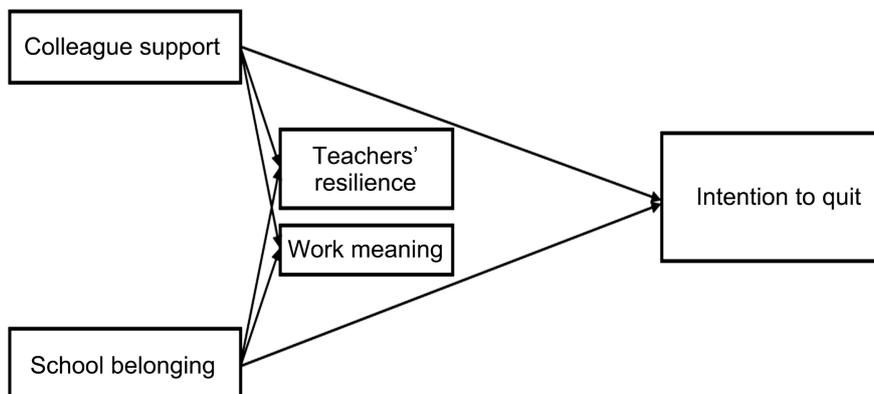


Figure 1. Hypothetical structural model of the relationships among variables.

11 - 15 years [46%], more than 15 years [19%], Homosexual teachers (1 - 5 years [39%], 6 - 10 years [12%], 11 - 15 years [26%], more than 15 years [23%]. The pilot sample included 43 elementary school teachers ($N = 24$ heterosexual [49% women] and $N = 19$ homosexual [41% women]), whose distribution based on their years of teaching experience was the following: Heterosexual teachers (1 - 5 years [41%], 6 - 10 years [29%], 11 - 15 years [18%], more than 15 years [12%], Homosexual teachers (1 - 5 years [22%], 6 - 10 years [35%], 11 - 15 years [14%], more than 15 years [29%]. It should be mentioned that, due to the unequal distribution of both teacher subgroups, based on their teaching experience, the role of this demographic variable in teachers' intention to quit was not examined as unsafe conclusions could emerge.

2.2. Measures

The data were selected through an online self-report questionnaire, which except for the demographic questions (e.g., gender, age, sexual orientation [heterosexual/homosexual], years of teaching experience), included the following main parts:

1) *Intention to quit*: Teachers' intention to quit their profession was measured using the Greek version (using the back-and-forth translation method) of the Intention to Quit Questionnaire of Rosin and Korabik (1991), which includes four related questions (e.g., "At this time in your career, would you want to quit this job if it were possible?"). These questions reflect the factor "Intention to quit", with good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.82$; Rosin & Korabik, 1991). The questions are answered on a 7-point Likert type scale (from 1 = *Never* to 7 = *I will*).

Testing the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, a principal component analysis using the Varimax-type rotation was applied to the total sample (KMO = 0.934, Bartlett Chi-square = 3112.09, $p < 0.001$) and separately to heterosexual (KMO = 0.912, Bartlett Chi-square = 2981.98, $p < 0.001$) and homosexual teachers (KMO = 0.881, Bartlett Chi-square = 2034.14, $p < 0.001$), to ensure the same factorial validity in each case. In each case, one factor emerged with an eigenvalue > 1.0 and a significant interpretive value: Total sample (Factor 1 = *Intention to quit*, explaining 64.97% of the total variance with loadings from 0.641 to 0.715), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Intention to quit*, explaining 61.14% of the total variance with loadings from 0.512 to 0.652), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Intention to quit*, explaining 62.08% of the total variance with loadings from 0.622 to 0.751). The one factor had good internal consistency index: Total sample (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.901$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.882$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.848$]). The affinities (according to Pearson's correlation coefficient r) of the score of each question by each factor with the sum of the scores of the remaining questions of the same factor (corrected item - total correlation) were considered satisfactory¹: Total

¹In a sample of 300 and 600 people, loadings of more than 0.29 and 0.21, accordingly, are accepted (Field, 2005).

sample (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.58$ to $r = 0.71$], Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.61$ to $r = 0.74$], Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.57$ to $r = 0.72$])).

2) *Colleague support*: Teachers' perceived colleague support was measured using the Greek version (using the back-and-forth translation method) of the related subscale of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS, Zimet et al., 1988). The subscale includes four related statements (e.g., "My colleagues are willing to help me make decisions"). These statements reflect the factor "Colleague support", with good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$; Cauty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000). The statements are answered on a 5-point Likert type scale (from 1 = *Disagree* to 5 = *Agree*).

Testing the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, a principal component analysis using the Varimax-type rotation was applied to the total sample (KMO = 0.953, Bartlett Chi-square = 8489.12, $p < 0.001$) and separately to heterosexual (KMO = 0.931, Bartlett Chi-square = 4452.02, $p < 0.001$) and homosexual teachers (KMO = 0.904, Bartlett Chi-square = 3940.23, $p < 0.001$), to ensure the same factorial validity in each case. In each case, one factor emerged with an eigenvalue > 1.0 and a significant interpretive value: Total sample (Factor 1 = *Colleague support*, explaining 62.12% of the total variance with loadings from 0.489 to 0.554), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Colleague support*, explaining 61.03% of the total variance with loadings from 0.422 to 0.543), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Colleague support*, explaining 60.49% of the total variance with loadings from 0.414 to 0.548). The one factor had good internal consistency index: Total sample (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.839$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.822$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.789$]). The affinities (according to Pearson's correlation coefficient r) of the score of each question by each factor with the sum of the scores of the remaining questions of the same factor (corrected item – total correlation) were considered satisfactory: Total sample (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.43$ to $r = 0.58$], Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.45$ to $r = 0.6$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.41$ to $r = 0.59$])).

3) *School belonging*: Teachers' sense of school belonging was measured using the Greek version (using the back-and-forth translation method) of the Feeling of Belonging Scale of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011). The scale includes three related statements (e.g., "I feel that I am accepted by the school leadership"). These statements reflect the factor "School Belonging", with good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.78$; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The statements are answered on a 6-point Likert type scale (from 1 = *Completely disagree* to 6 = *Completely agree*).

Testing the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, a principal component analysis using the Varimax-type rotation was applied to the total sample (KMO = 0.919, Bartlett Chi-square = 5092.93, $p < 0.001$) and separately to heterosexual (KMO = 0.889, Bartlett Chi-square = 3829.14, $p < 0.001$) and homosexual teachers (KMO = 0.832, Bartlett Chi-square = 3223.87, $p < 0.001$), to en-

sure the same factorial validity in each case. In each case, one factor emerged with an eigenvalue > 1.0 and a significant interpretive value: Total sample (Factor 1 = *School belonging*, explaining 65.43% of the total variance with loadings from 0.553 to 0.642), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *School belonging*, explaining 62.04% of the total variance with loadings from 0.522 to 0.654), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *School belonging*, explaining 61.12% of the total variance with loadings from 0.589 to 0.699). The one factor had good internal consistency index: Total sample (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.854$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.839$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.804$]). The affinities (according to Pearson's correlation coefficient r) of the score of each question by each factor with the sum of the scores of the remaining questions of the same factor (corrected item – total correlation) were considered satisfactory: Total sample (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.53$ to $r = 0.66$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.51$ to $r = 0.69$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.54$ to $r = 0.63$]).

4) *Resilience*: Teachers' resilience was measured using the Greek version (using the back-and-forth translation method) of the Resilience Scale of Morgan (2011). The scale includes nine related statements (e.g., "Feeling certain that things will come right even if there are serious problems in school"). These statements reflect the factor "Teachers' Resilience", with good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.93$; Fernandes et al., 2019). The statements are answered on a 7-point Likert type scale (from 1 = *Not confident at all* to 7 = *Absolutely confident*).

Testing the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, a principal component analysis using the Varimax-type rotation was applied to the total sample (KMO = 0.882, Bartlett Chi-square = 9311.88, $p < 0.001$) and separately to heterosexual (KMO = 0.845, Bartlett Chi-square = 8023.92, $p < 0.001$) and homosexual teachers (KMO = 0.811, Bartlett Chi-square = 7351.43, $p < 0.001$), to ensure the same factorial validity in each case. In each case, one factor emerged with an eigenvalue > 1.0 and a significant interpretive value: Total sample (Factor 1 = *Teachers' Resilience*, explaining 62.15% of the total variance with loadings from 0.421 to 0.589), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Teachers' Resilience*, explaining 61.19% of the total variance with loadings from 0.404 to 0.543), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Teachers' Resilience*, explaining 59.02% of the total variance with loadings from 0.401 to 0.532). The one factor had good internal consistency index: Total sample (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.821$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.792$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.784$]). The affinities (according to Pearson's correlation coefficient r) of the score of each question by each factor with the sum of the scores of the remaining questions of the same factor (corrected item – total correlation) were considered satisfactory: Total sample (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.39$ to $r = 0.52$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.42$ to $r = 0.59$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.38$ to $r = 0.55$]).

5) *Work meaning*: Teachers' sense of work meaning was measured using the Greek version (using the back-and-forth translation method) of the meaning/cal-

ling scale of the spiritual leadership inquiry (Fry et al., 2005). The scale includes three related statements (e.g., “The work I do is meaningful to me”). These statements reflect the factor “Work meaning”, with good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$; Fernandes et al., 2019). The statements are answered on a 5-point Likert type scale (from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*).

Testing the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, a principal component analysis using the Varimax-type rotation was applied to the total sample (KMO = 0.894, Bartlett Chi-square = 4928.04, $p < 0.001$) and separately to heterosexual (KMO = 0.843, Bartlett Chi-square = 2582.18, $p < 0.001$) and homosexual teachers (KMO = 0.829, Bartlett Chi-square = 2409.23, $p < 0.001$), to ensure the same factorial validity in each case. In each case, one factor emerged with an eigenvalue > 1.0 and a significant interpretive value: Total sample (Factor 1 = *Work meaning*, explaining 64.92% of the total variance with loadings from 0.558 to 0.632), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Work meaning*, explaining 62.11% of the total variance with loadings from 0.542 to 0.629), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 = *Work meaning*, explaining 60.49% of the total variance with loadings from 0.538 to 0.611). The one factor had good internal consistency index: Total sample (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.815$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.808$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [$\alpha = 0.783$]). The affinities (according to Pearson’s correlation coefficient r) of the score of each question by each factor with the sum of the scores of the remaining questions of the same factor (corrected item – total correlation) were considered satisfactory: Total sample (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.59$ to $r = 0.65$]), Heterosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.57$ to $r = 0.62$]), Homosexual teachers (Factor 1 [from $r = 0.51$ to $r = 0.58$]).

2.3. Procedure

First, the study received an approval by the Institute of Educational Policy of the Greek Ministry of Education (Protocol No.: Φ43/115/2298/Γ1, 23/03/2023), in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. The study, which was not funded, was conducted online through an electronic platform, where teachers’ responses were charged automatically. This platform ensured the concealment of respondents’ computer IP address. The link of the online questionnaire was posted on different educational sites asking elementary school teachers to respond to it and/or forward it to their colleagues. The link included an informed consent form and subsequently the scales of the variables under study. The completion of the questionnaire lasted approximately 15 minutes. The above procedure was applied to pilot (April-May 2023) and main phase of the study (October 2023-January 2024), ensuring all the ethical rules regarding voluntary, anonymous and confidential participation in the study.

2.4. Data Analysis Plan

Without any missing cases different statistical analyses were applied to the present

study. For all analyses, a priori power analysis of sample size was performed, using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007), with power ($1-\beta$) of 85%, medium effect ($f=0.05$), and an alpha error of probability $\alpha = 0.05$. Differences in the intention to quit between heterosexual and homosexual teachers (Hypothesis 1) was investigated via an independent sample *T*-test (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 2.59$, Critical $t = 1.52$, $Df = 89$, Actual power: 0.84, required sample per group: $N = 140$). Although it was not included in the research goals of the present study, it was also examined, via independent sample *T*-test, if there were differences between heterosexual and homosexual teachers regarding perceived colleague support (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 1.87$, Critical $t = 1.98$, $Df = 85$, Actual power: 0.84, required sample per group: $N = 140$), school belonging (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 2.09$, Critical $t = 1.49$, $Df = 77$, Actual power: 0.84, required sample per group: $N = 140$), teachers' resilience (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 2.11$, Critical $t = 1.72$, $Df = 80$, Actual power: 0.84, required sample per group: $N = 140$), and work meaning (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 2.28$, Critical $t = 1.99$, $Df = 78$, Actual power: 0.84, required sample per group: $N = 140$). To investigate the dyadic relationships among the variables involved Pearson (Pearson r) correlations was performed (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 2.12$, Critical $t = 1.58$, $Df = 82$, Actual power: 0.85, required sample: $N = 142$). Finally, to examine the interaction between school-based (colleague support, school belonging) and individual contributors (teachers' resilience, work meaning) to teachers' intention to quit (Hypotheses 2a - 2b), path analysis of the data (using the Mplus program with the Maximum Likelihood method) was used. First, a series of preliminary analyses of multiple regressions were performed to test the dyadic predictive relationships between the variables (Noncentrality parameter $\delta = 3.12$, Critical $t = 2.47$, $Df = 48$, Actual power: 0.85, required sample: $N = 142$). After the check of the skewness and kurtosis values of the variables, which were smaller than $|3|$ and smaller than $|10|$, respectively (Kline, 2004), the assumptions of normality were met.

3. Results

3.1. Differentiations of the Variables between Heterosexual and Homosexual Teachers

The results showed that there is a significant difference regarding the intention to quit their profession between the two teacher subgroups, $t(59) = 3.45$, $p = 0.001$. Specifically, based on **Table 1**, homosexual teachers seemed to mention their intention to quit to a greater extent, compared to heterosexual teachers. Regarding the rest of the variables, it was also found that there is a significant difference between the two teacher subgroups regarding perceived colleague support, $t(83) = 2.99$, $p = 0.001$, school belonging, $t(81) = 4.21$, $p = 0.001$, and teachers' resilience, $t(81) = 2.57$, $p = 0.001$. Specifically, homosexual teachers seemed to feel less supported by colleagues, less belonged to their school, as well as less resilient about their profession, compared to heterosexual teachers (**Table 1**). Finally,

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the variables between heterosexual and homosexual teachers.

Variables	Teacher subgroups			
	Heterosexual		Homosexual	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intention to quit	3.34	1.02	4.01	0.93
Colleague support	4.08	0.52	2.23	0.83
School belonging	4.32	1.24	2.81	0.85
Resilience regarding profession	5.38	1.05	3.44	0.49
Work meaning	3.87	0.93	3.81	0.99

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

work meaning was not differentiated between heterosexual and homosexual teachers, $t(58) = 1.03$, $p = 0.059$.

3.2. Correlations among the Variables

The correlation analyses were performed for the total sample as well as separately for heterosexual and homosexual teachers. The results revealed a similar pattern of correlations in each case. Specifically, in each case, there was a positive correlation between colleague support and school belonging (from $r = 0.43$, $p = 0.003$ to $r = 0.59$, $p = 0.001$), as well as between teachers' resilience and work meaning (from $r = 0.35$, $p = 0.032$ to $r = 0.47$, $p = 0.005$). Similarly, there was a positive correlation between teachers' resilience and work meaning (from $r = 0.32$, $p = 0.037$ to $r = 0.55$, $p = 0.002$). Furthermore, school-related (colleague support, school belonging) and individual factors (teachers' resilience, work meaning) were positively correlated with each other (from $r = 0.41$, $p = 0.008$ to $r = 0.53$, $p = 0.002$). Also, school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) were negatively correlated with teachers' intention to quit (from $r = -0.23$, $p = 0.034$ to $r = -0.49$, $p = 0.005$). Accordingly, individual factors (teachers' resilience, work meaning) were negatively correlated with teachers' intention to quit (from $r = -0.27$, $p = 0.024$ to $r = -0.38$, $p = 0.003$).

3.3. The Structure of the Relationships among the Variables

The path analyses were run after controlling for the effect of teachers' demographic variables (gender, age, years of working experience). The results showed that the path models had good fit indexes for both, heterosexual, $\chi^2(94, N = 151) = 4389.14$, $p > 0.05$ (CFI = 0.996, TLI = 0.948, RMSEA = 0.061, SRMR = 0.051) (explaining 64% of the variance of intention to quit, **Figure 2**) and homosexual teachers, $\chi^2(91, N = 144) = 3822.82$, $p > 0.05$ (CFI = 0.993, TLI = 0.941, RMSEA = 0.063, SRMR = 0.053) (explaining 61% of the variance of intention to quit, **Figure 3**).

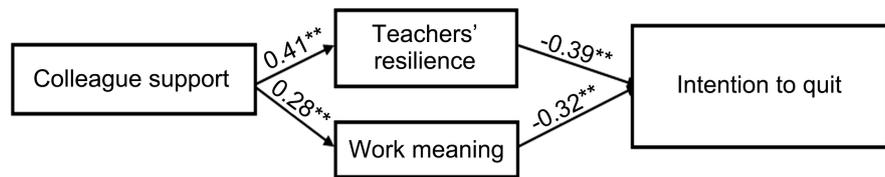


Figure 2. Schematic representation of the path model for intention to quit among heterosexual teachers. Note 1: The values on the arrows are standardized coefficients of the model. The following correlation was included in the model but not depicted in the Figure for clarity reasons: Teachers' resilience—Work meaning = 0.51**; Note 2: ** $p < 0.01$.

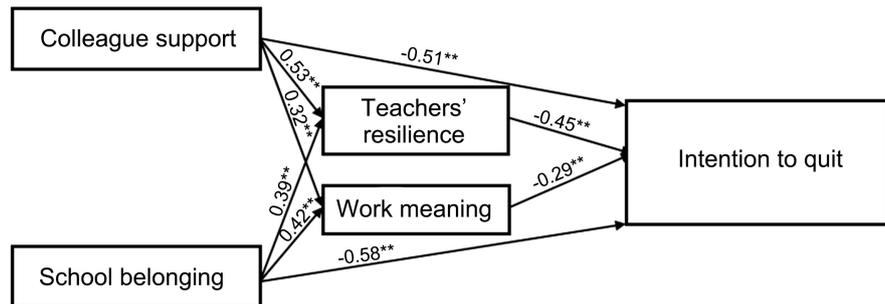


Figure 3. Schematic representation of the path model for intention to quit among homosexual teachers. Note 1: The values on the arrows are standardized coefficients of the model. The following correlations were included in the model but not depicted in the Figure for clarity reasons: Colleague support—School belonging = 0.55**, Teachers' resilience—Work meaning = 0.49**, Note 2: ** $p < 0.01$.

According to **Figure 2**, in the case of heterosexual teachers, teachers' resilience ($Z^2 = 3.43$, $p = 0.01$), and work meaning ($Z = 3.59$, $p = 0.01$) fully mediated in a positive way the relationship between their perceived colleague support and their intention to quit.

Based on **Figure 3**, in the case of homosexual teachers, teachers' resilience and work meaning only partially mediated the relationship between the school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) and their intention to quit. Specifically, teachers' perceived colleague support and school belonging seemed to contribute directly and negatively to teachers' intention to quit ($beta = -0.42$, $p = 0.001$ and $beta = -0.51$, $p = 0.001$, respectively). At the same time, perceived colleague support and school belonging seemed to contribute not only directly but also indirectly to teachers' intention to quit through the positive mediating role of teachers' resilience ($Z = 3.84$, $p = 0.002$ and $Z = 3.42$, $p = 0.003$, respectively). Similarly, perceived colleague support and school belonging seemed to contribute not only directly but also indirectly to teachers' intention to quit through the positive mediating role of work meaning ($Z = 2.42$, $p = 0.003$ and $Z = 2.15$, $p = 0.003$, respectively).

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate comparatively intention to quit between

² Z = standardized normal distribution value.

heterosexual and homosexual elementary school teachers. At the same time, the role of school-related (school belonging, colleague support) and individual contributors (teachers' resilience, working meaning) in their intention to quit was co-examined, through an explanatory mediation model, for both teacher sub-groups.

The results showed that homosexual elementary school teachers' intention to quit their profession was expressed to a greater extent, which was above average (based on the 7-point answering scale), compared to heterosexual teachers. This finding supports Hypothesis 1 and related studies, which mention that homosexual teachers tend to perceive their working environment (school) as less comfortable, supported, and trustful, experiencing sometimes stressful emotions (Lee, 2019; Smith et al., 2008). Within this context, it could be stated that teachers of non heterosexual sexual orientation could be considered a vulnerable group prone to the development of negative feelings/experiences regarding their working environment and, therefore, prone to thinking about quitting their profession in the future. Therefore, like teachers belonging to other minority groups, such as teachers of color (Marx et al., 2023), homosexual teachers are also likely to experience discrimination issues in the school community. This conclusion could be enhanced by the fact that the participating homosexual teachers mentioned a lower sense of school belonging (e.g., feeling accepted), colleague support (feeling supported) and resilience regarding their profession (feeling optimistic about work-related problems), compared to heterosexual teachers. In general, based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), homosexual teachers' above average intention to quit could be seen as an important risk factor for the actual abandonment of their profession in the future.

Despite the more favorable working conditions (e.g., closer interpersonal relationships with students/colleagues, more manageable students' behaviors) that usually concern elementary education, compared to secondary education (Touloupis, 2021), it seems that at least for homosexual teachers this is not the case. It is likely that this is related, to some extent, to the fact that in the Greek school community (where the present study was conducted) (Argyri, 2021; Nikolakopoulou, 2021), as well as in other countries (Aguirre et al., 2021; Hall & Rodgers, 2019), stereotypical and homophobic perceptions on sexual diversity are still largely preserved by the teaching personnel.

Furthermore, the results of the path analyses revealed both similarities and differentiations in the patterns of relationships among the variables involved between heterosexual and homosexual teachers. First, for both teacher sub-groups it was found that the individual factors (teachers' resilience, work meaning) seemed to positively mediate the relationship between the school-related factors (colleagues support or school belonging) and teachers' intention to quit their profession. In other words, perceived school-related factors seemed to contribute to teachers' intention to quit via their resilience about their job and their perceived work meaning. This finding is in line with Hypothesis 2b, regarding

the positive mediating role of these intrapersonal factors (teachers' resilience, work meaning) in the relationship between school-related factors and intention to quit, not only for heterosexual teachers (as it was expected), but also for homosexual teachers. Furthermore, this finding supports other related studies, which, although do not examine teachers' resilience and work meaning as mediators (as in the present study), however, these studies could imply the mediating role of these variables. Specifically, these studies conclude that teachers' resilience and work meaning could be perceived both as outcomes of school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) (Koçak, 2021; Li & Li, 2024; Park & Song, 2018; Suryaratri et al., 2020) and as negative predictors of teachers' intention to quit (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Converso et al., 2018; Heleno et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2021).

It is, therefore, implied that teachers' resilience and work meaning could be considered as underlying psychological mechanisms which explain how school related-factors, such as perceived colleague support or school belonging, may contribute to intention to quit for both heterosexual and homosexual teachers. This possible explanation supports the interpretative framework of the SCT (Bandura, 2002), according to which variables related to the school environment (colleague support, school belonging) interact with intrapersonal factors (academic boredom) contributing to the development of intended behaviors (intention to quit).

Furthermore, some differentiations should be mentioned between the path models for both teacher subgroups. For example, it should be highlighted that for heterosexual teachers only perceived colleague support (as a school-related factor), and not school belonging, proved a significant indirect contributor to their intention to quit. It is likely that acceptance issues (such as those related to the items of the School Belonging Scale) do not preoccupy heterosexual teachers as strongly as homosexual teachers in their daily school routine. It seems that interaction with colleagues who offer educational support (colleague support) matters more for heterosexual teachers' resilience, for their perceived work meaning and therefore for their possible intention to quit in the future. In contrast, for homosexual teachers both school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) proved indirect contributors to their intention to quit. Considering that homosexual teachers often have negative experiences with their working climate, as well as with the support (colleague support) and the acceptance (school belonging) they receive from their colleagues (Lee, 2019; Smith et al., 2008), we could partially explain why both colleague support and school belonging proved strong indirect contributors to homosexual teachers' intention to quit.

The above possible explanation could also be applied to the fact that, only for homosexual teachers, both school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) proved not only indirect (via the partial mediating role of teachers' resilience and work meaning), but also strong direct contributors to their intention

to quit. This finding, although reflects previous related research conclusions (López et al., 2020; Merida-Lopez et al., 2022; Vekeman et al., 2017), does not support Hypothesis 2a concerning the direct contribution of school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) to intention to quit for heterosexual teachers (as it was expected), but it does for homosexual ones. It could be stated that a working environment that reflects support (colleague support) and acceptance/connectedness (school belonging) matters for homosexual teachers to such an extent, that these two factors have the potential to contribute directly (not only indirectly) to their thoughts/intentions to quit in the future.

4.1. Conclusion

The present study concludes that homosexual teachers' intention to quit is above average and it is expressed to a greater extent, compared to heterosexual teachers. Furthermore, in the relationship between school-related factors (colleague support, school belonging) and teachers' intention to quit, teachers' resilience and work meaning proved full mediators in the case of heterosexual teachers and partial mediators in the case of homosexual teachers.

4.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The findings of the present study should be interpreted cautiously due to specific limitations. First, the findings concern elementary school teachers from Greece and, therefore, they are not considered generalizable to other countries or levels of education. Also, the correlational nature of the study does not allow conclusions about causal relationships among the variables involved. Furthermore, the path analyses included specific school-related and individual contributors, without considering other possible factors explanatory of teachers' intention to quit. Finally, the restriction to the quantitative methodology via self-report questionnaire could lead to socially acceptable responses without enlightening other more qualitative aspects of the issue.

However, the above limitations could trigger new research ideas. Future studies with longitudinal data from other countries could offer safer conclusions and more generalizable findings. Furthermore, studies which co-examine through path models other possible contributors could explain more holistically teachers' intention to quit for both subgroups. Finally, the utilization of a mixed research methodology could reveal teachers' in-depth experiences regarding the issue studied for both subgroups.

4.3. Contribution of the Study

The study contributes at a theoretical and applied level. First, the study explores the issue of intention to quit profession in the under-investigated teacher minority group of those with homosexual sexual orientation. At the same time, the comparative investigation of this issue between heterosexual and homosexual teachers significantly enhances the international literature. Furthermore, apply-

ing the framework of the SCT, the study reveals differentiated mediation models which, through the interaction of known but under-investigated school-related and individual contributors, could explain multifacetedly intention to quit for both teacher subgroups.

Also, within practical implications, the findings imply the necessity to strengthen underlying psychological factors in the school context, which are considered protective of teachers' intention to quit and primarily for those who belong to sexually minority groups. Specifically, more systematic experiential prevention and awareness actions, supervised by psychologists and/or counselors, regarding practices for a sexually inclusive education could be implemented for the teaching personnel and school principals in elementary education. These actions could emphasize strengthening issues of interpersonal relationships, acceptance and resilience among school personnel. In this way, school-related and individual factors may be empowered and, therefore, teachers' intention to quit in the future may be weakened. Finally, this proposed sexually inclusive perspective, which could also be applied to teachers' undergraduate studies, could also benefit social-emotional adjustment to school of student of sexually minority groups.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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