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Capabilities and work functionings of special education teachers in Namibia

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Orientation: Special schools cannot execute their mandate if teachers lack emotional well-being and meaning in their work, perform poorly and quit their jobs.

Research purpose: This study aimed to investigate the work capabilities of Namibian special education teachers and the effects thereof on their functionings.

Motivation for the study: The capability approach offers a framework to study employees' capabilities. No studies have been found regarding Namibian special education teachers' capabilities and functionings.

Research approach/design and method: A convenience sample (n = 200) of Namibian special education teachers participated in the study. The Capability Set for Work Questionnaire, Work and Meaning Inventory, Negative Affect Scale, Performance at Work Questionnaire and Intention to Leave Questionnaire were administered.

Main findings: A lack of the following capabilities presented the highest risk for the sustainable employability of teachers: earning a good income, involvement in important decisions, contributing to something valuable and developing new knowledge and skills. Teachers with a range of capabilities (compared with limited capabilities) found their work more meaningful, rated their performance more highly and were less inclined to think about leaving their jobs.

Practical/managerial implications: Managers should focus on implementing interventions that address four capabilities: earning a good income, involvement in decision-making, contributing to the creation of something valuable, and knowledge and skills to deal with disabilities.

Contribution/value-add: This study contributes to knowledge regarding the capabilities of special education teachers that affect their functionings.

Keywords: capabilities; meaningful work; performance; intention to leave; special education; teacher; Namibia.

Introduction

Special education teachers play a crucial role in fostering educational environments that meet the diverse needs of all students in society while promoting social justice (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Peyton et al., 2021). However, because of the restraining contextual factors in countries, districts, communities and schools, these teachers' functionings do not rely solely on their competence (Okkolin et al., 2018). According to Okkolin et al. (2018), no teacher will function[1] effectively and sustainably without adequate resources, regardless of how passionate, committed and competent he or she might be. In this regard, Omede (2011) cited inadequacies in staffing, a lack of assistive technology and a lack of budgetary allocation as threats to the quality of special education in Africa. However, as Van der Klink (2019) argues, capabilities (not just resources) are critical for teachers to function effectively and sustainably. Therefore, an appropriate goal would be to expand teachers' capabilities to choose to be and do things they value (Sen, 1999).

While empirical research has been carried out on the functioning of teachers in Namibia, such research focused on meaningful work and intentions to leave (Janik & Rothmann, 2015), burnout (Louw et al., 2011), factors contributing to attrition (Amutenya, 2016) and work engagement

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1. In this context, the term function refers to an individual's ability to do work, whereas functionings, as defined by the Capability Approach, are the individuals' beings and doings that translate into specific achievements (meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave).

(Murangi & Bailey, 2022) in regular schools. These studies did not focus on special education teacher capabilities as conceptualised in the capability approach (CA; Sen, 1999; Van der Klink et al., 2016). Capabilities are opportunities to achieve functionings that individuals find valuable (Sen, 1999, 2009). The CA provides a basis for assessing equity in capabilities, that is, freedoms to achieve people's values and goals (Sen, 1999), rather than equality in the means or resources (Van der Klink, 2019). The capabilities and functionings of special education teachers are vital for their sustainable employability (Van der Klink et al., 2016).

Special schools cannot fully execute their mandate if the teachers lack emotional well-being and meaning in their work, perform poorly and quit their jobs (Peyton et al., 2021; Rothmann & Cooper, 2022). If teachers resign, it leads to a loss of capabilities, negatively affects staff members' morale, and results in high costs for the education department (Peyton et al., 2021). Furthermore, capabilities are more than skills; they imply the opportunity for, and freedom of, an individual to convert resources into achievements. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, only one study focused on teacher capabilities, well-being, performance and retention (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022). Therefore, research is needed regarding the capabilities and functionings of special education teachers in the Namibian context.

Theoretical perspectives
Capabilities

The CA, conceptualised by Amartya Sen (1999, 2009), offers a relevant framework to evaluate a broad spectrum of facets relating to individuals' performance and well-being (Robeyns, 2017). It is an ethical framework that argues that, in social justice or what constitutes a good society, more focus should be on supporting the capabilities of all individuals (Sen, 2009). Capabilities and functionings are two major related, yet distinct elements of the CA. Firstly, an individual's capabilities represent the freedom he or she has to pursue ways of being and doing that are meaningful to him or her (Robeyns, 2017). The CA postulates that individuals' capabilities are determined mainly by their freedom (Sen, 1999). Secondly, functionings entail individual beings and doings (Robeyns, 2017). As such, a person's functioning refers to his or her conditions and undertakings (Robeyns, 2017). An individual's capabilities reflect the person's unique combination of functionings (Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2017). Nussbaum (2011) mentions that capabilities represent the sum of functionings a person is capable of achieving.

Van der Klink et al. (2016) applied the CA as the theoretical underpinning for developing a sustainable model of employability. They argued that occupational health psychology must undergo a paradigm shift to enable employees to see their work as fulfilling and valuable rather than burdensome (Van der Klink, 2019). Consequently, workers should be seen as active participants in determining what is valuable in their work and what matters. From a capability perspective, employees who value their work and are enabled to achieve will want to continue working, resulting in sustainable employability (Van der Klink et al., 2016).

Individuals' identification of work values illustrates their freedom to choose from various values that they find meaningful and impact their work. Therefore, identifying capabilities is crucial for constructing a capability set for work that all individuals should possess and enjoy (Van der Klink, 2019). Sen (1999) asserts that public scrutiny of individual values is essential, as adaptive preferences can form in unfavourable circumstances. This implies that individuals will have unique capabilities depending on the context and circumstances in which they find themselves. As a result, he is unwilling to identify individuals' capabilities as a part of their capability set (Claassen, 2018). While Sen (1999) suggests that objective evaluations are essential to identify values, Hirai (2021) emphasises that the CA is inaccurate in reflecting on individuals' lives based on subjective values. Therefore, in contrast to Sen's (1999) reluctance to identify values, Nussbaum (2011) proposes that securing individual values starts with a capability list, which implies that it is possible to ask people about their values and achievements (DeHaan et al., 2016; Hirai, 2021).

Abma et al. (2016) found that seven non-ranked work values comprise the capability set for work. These work values are using knowledge and skills, developing knowledge and skills, involvement in important decisions, meaningful contacts at work, setting own goals, earning a good income and contributing to something valuable. Abma et al. (2016) argue that work values become capabilities if employees find them important at work and are enabled and able to achieve them. A capability set is a collection of options available to facilitate a range of valued functionings (Sen, 2009). Research by Abma et al. (2016) and De Wet and Rothmann (2022) indicates that a set of work capabilities rather than a single capability is crucial for effective employee functioning.

Functionings

The CA postulates that functionings are the individuals' beings and doings, which translate into specific achievements (Sen, 1999, 2009). This study focused on four functionings: experiences of meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave. These four functionings represent positive and negative individual and organisational outcomes, which are essential for employees and organisations (Fouché et al., 2017; Janik & Rothmann, 2015, Moller & Rothmann, 2019). Negative affect (an element of emotional well-being) and meaningful work (an element of psychological well-being) represent individual outcomes. Job performance and intention to leave represent outcomes that affect individuals and organisations.

Meaningful work encompasses more than what individuals' work means to them (Steger et al., 2012). In their definition of meaningful work, Steger et al. (2012) consider three dimensions: psychological meaningfulness, meaning-making

and greater-good motivation. Individuals experience psychological meaningfulness when they feel that the work they do matters. Making meaning through work implies that work could be the primary source of meaning in life for some individuals. Therefore, meaningful work can help people better understand themselves and their world. Finally, greater-good motivation concerns how one can impact others and make a positive difference. Work capabilities might be associated with meaningful work, such as the development of knowledge and skills, involvement in important decisions, building and maintaining meaningful contacts at work and contributing to something valuable (see Fouché et al., 2017).

Individuals with high levels of negative affect are less likely to be enthusiastic and excited (Porath et al., 2012). Anger, sadness, anxiety, boredom, frustration and guilt are all examples of *negative affect*, which refers to emotions caused by negative responses to events. Affective experiences are associated with the satisfaction of human needs (Rojas & Veenhoven, 2013). Therefore, negative affect might result from a lack of capabilities, such as earning a good income (which satisfies basic needs), involvement in decision-making (which satisfies autonomy needs), maintaining meaningful work relationships (which satisfies relatedness needs). Individuals who experience negative affect focus on their distress and avoid negative outcomes (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Thus, they have difficulty in interacting with others, exploring their surroundings and developing competencies.

Job performance is a measure of how well individuals perform the duties and responsibilities of their jobs (Kessler et al., 2003). Teachers are regarded as the backbone of any education system and are pivotal in learner performance and school effectiveness (Durrani, 2019). Work capabilities such as using existing knowledge and skills, developing new knowledge and skills, setting own goals, involvement in important decisions and earning a good income might impact job performance (Abma et al., 2016). Studies have shown that school management support, training and development (Durrani, 2019), poor co-worker relations, insufficient resources, insufficient autonomy at work and poor remuneration negatively impact teacher performance (Amutenya, 2016).

The loss of qualified special education teachers in sub-Saharan Africa is worrying (Pitsoe & Machaisa, 2012). A high teacher turnover negatively affects school staffing and learners' performance (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Therefore, strategies that reduce turnover intention to maintain a quality workforce are needed (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Earlier research (e.g. March & Simon, 1958) has emphasised the importance of desirability and ease of movement in and out of an organisation as factors influencing the decision to leave an organisation. However, even the most comprehensive turnover models overlooked important antecedents of turnover (Hom et al. 2020). *Intention to leave*, which is a predictor of actual turnover (Kassing et al., 2012), refers to an employee's estimate of the probability that he or she will leave his or her job or organisation soon (Vandenberg &

Nelson, 1999). A lack of work capabilities might lead to intentions to leave, especially if individuals do not value their work or do not have the opportunities to achieve what they value in their work (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022). In this regard, Vittek (2015) found that a lack of mentoring and induction programmes, limited resources and large class sizes influenced special education teachers' intention to leave.

The current study

Despite the adopted policy on special education in Namibia, namely the *Sector Policy on Inclusive Education* (Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education, 2013), its implementation is still lacking. Moreover, research on the capabilities and functionings of special education teachers in Namibia is lacking. This study is the first in Namibia to research the capabilities and functionings of special education teachers using the CA as a framework. This study, therefore, aimed to identify the work capabilities of special education teachers, that is, valued aspects of their work that were enabled and achieved, and to investigate the effects of such capabilities on four functionings: experiences of meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave.

Based on the review of the given literature, the following hypotheses are set:

Hypothesis 1: The seven capabilities are positively associated with the capability set for work.

Hypothesis 2: Work capabilities are positively associated with meaningful work.

Hypothesis 3: Work capabilities are inversely associated with negative affect.

Hypothesis 4: Work capabilities are positively associated with job performance.

Hypothesis 5: Work capabilities are inversely associated with intentions to leave.

Methods
Research design

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to conduct quantitative research. Cross-sectional studies can illuminate relationships between variables and allow alternative explanations of such relationships to be ruled out (Spector, 2019).

Participants and setting

Teachers from special schools, special classes in mainstream schools and inclusive schools in Namibia ($N = 300$) were targeted in this study, because they teach learners with special needs (i.e. disabilities) in either educational option. The term *special education teacher* was adopted in this study to refer to teachers who teach learners with disabilities in special schools, special classes in mainstream schools and inclusive schools. The research population was spread across seven regions: Khomas, Caprivi, Kavango, Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati and Erongo. A total of 208 teachers working in

special education agreed to participate in the study, but only 200 surveys could be used in the data analysis.

As depicted in Table 1, more female special education teachers (68.5%) than males (30.5%) participated in the study. In addition, most participants fell into the age group of 31–40 years, followed by those aged 20–30 years. Most participants had 4–13 years of experience in teaching.

Measuring instruments

The Capabilities for Work Questionnaire (CWQ; Abma et al., 2016) measured capabilities. The CWQ measures three components of each capability: work values, enablement and achievement. The seven values are as follows: (1) use of knowledge and skills; (2) development of knowledge and skills; (3) involvement in important decisions; (4) building and maintaining meaningful contacts at work; (5) setting own goals; (6) earning a good income and (7) contributing to something valuable. For each value, participants were asked whether (1) they regard it as important (seven items, e.g. 'It is important for me to be able to use my knowledge and skills in my work'), (2) their work environment offers them sufficient opportunities to do it (seven items, e.g. 'I have enough opportunity in my work to use my knowledge and skills') and (3) they were able to succeed in realising it (seven items, e.g. 'I regularly succeed in using my knowledge and skills in my work'). Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much so*). Although it was not possible to assess the reliability of individual items of the CWQ, Matthews

TABLE 1: Characteristics of participants (*N* = 200).

Demographic	Grouping	*N*	%
Gender	Male	61	30.5
	Female	137	68.5
	Missing values	2	1.0
Age group (*N* = 190)	20–30 years old	49	24.5
	31–40 years old	69	34.5
	41–50 years old	44	22.0
	51–60 years old	22	8.0
	60+ years old	16	8.0
Teaching experience	Less than 1 year	7	3.5
	1–3 years	30	15.0
	4–13 years	93	46.5
	14–24 years	51	25.5
	25 or more years	15	7.5
	Missing values	4	2.0
Years at current school	Less than 1 year	15	7.5
	1–2 years	42	21.4
	3–10 years	85	42.5
	11–20 years	39	19.5
	21 or more years	8	4.0
	Missing values	11	5.5
Highest teaching qualification	Grade 12	19	9.5
	Diploma	47	23.5
	Postgraduate	34	17.0
	Diploma	59	29.5
	Degree	19	9.5
	Honours degree	15	7.5
	Master's degree	7	3.5
	Missing values	-	-

et al. (2022) concluded that single items do accurately and reliably represent constructs. The omega reliability of the CWQ was 0.77 in this study, which is in line with the reliability of 0.77 reported by De Wet and Rothmann (2022). Gürbüz et al. (2022) confirmed the convergent, predictive and incremental validity of the CWQ in a longitudinal study.

The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI; Steger et al., 2012) was used to measure meaningful work. The WAMI measures the following dimensions: positive meaning (four items, e.g. 'I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning'), meaning-making through work (three items, e.g. 'I view my work as contributing to my personal growth'), and the greater-good motivations subscale (three items, e.g. 'The work I do serves a greater purpose'). Participants rated the items on a scale from 1 (*absolutely untrue*) to 6 (*absolutely true*). A reliability score of 0.93 was obtained for the total score, and subscale reliability scores ranged from 0.82 to 0.89. The construct validity of the WAMI was supported in a study by Steger et al. (2012).

Negative affect was measured using the Negative Affect Sub-scale (NAS) of the Flourishing-at-Work Scale (FAWS, Rothmann et al., 2019). The scale consists of three items (e.g. 'During the past month at work, how often did you feel upset?'). Participants rated the items on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). A study by Redelinghuys (2016) confirmed the NAS's construct validity and reliability ($\rho = 0.75$).

Job performance was measured using the Work Performance Questionnaire (HPQ; Kessler et al., 2003). The HPQ consists of 11 items that measure performance during working hours in the past 4 weeks (e.g. 'How often was your performance higher than most workers on your job?'). The participants rate the items on a scale ranging from 0 (*a total lack of performance*) to 10 (*no lack of performance*). According to Kessler et al. (2003), the HPQ is a reliable and valid measure of self-rated work performance. This study obtained an omega reliability coefficient of 0.91 for the HPQ.

The Turnover Intention Scale (TIS; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000) was administered to measure the intention to leave. The TIS consists of three items (e.g. 'If I were completely free to choose, I would leave this job'). The participants rate the items on a scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Moller and Rothmann (2019) found support for the construct validity of the TIS and reported a reliability coefficient of 0.83 for the scale for a sample of managers in South Africa.

Research procedure

The data collection phase in 2021 lasted almost 10 months because of the restrictions imposed in Namibia as a result of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. There was minimal to no physical contact with the school principals and secretaries. As a result, permission to conduct research was requested via electronic platforms such as emails and

calls or postal services. The study used electronic and hard-copy (printed) surveys. The online survey platform yielded a low response rate of 4%. Therefore, the researcher relied on courier services to return participants' hard-copy questionnaires. After collecting the surveys, the responses were captured in Excel, and the data were prepared for analysis.

Data analysis

The SPSS 27 statistical package (IBM Corp., 2021), Mplus 8.7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2022) and JASP (JASP Team, 2021) were used to conduct the analyses. The SPSS 27 (IBM Corp., 2021) was utilised to compute descriptive statistics, correlations, cross tabulations and multiple regression analyses. The measurement models were tested using confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) in Mplus 8.7. Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) was used to estimate different measurement models. The full information maximum likelihood (FIML) method was utilised to deal with missing values. The following model fit statistics were used: the chi-square statistic (the test of absolute fit of the model), standardized root mean residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI).

Single items were used to measure each of the three elements of seven capabilities (i.e. value, opportunity, and achievement – 21 single items in total). Matthews et al. (2022) showed that single-item measures are reliable and valid. The procedure suggested by Abma et al. (2016) was used to compute a summary score for each capability aspect and determine whether a capability was part of the special education teacher's capability set. A capability aspect was included in participants' capability sets if they found the aspect important, were enabled to achieve it, and succeeded. Individuals who found an aspect important (A), but lacked the opportunity to realise it (B) or failed to realise it (C), might demonstrate ineffective functioning. In contrast, individuals who regarded a capability aspect as important, who were enabled to realise it, and who succeeded in achieving it might function well. A capability aspect (range 1–5) was scored as part of the capability set when it was considered important (A = 4–5) and the work environment offered sufficient opportunities (B = 4–5) and made it possible to realise it (C = 4–5). When participants responded as follows, a capability aspect was not considered part of the capability set: (1) the capability was important (A = 4–5), but the workplace was not providing enough opportunities ($B \leq 3$); (2) the capability aspect was important (A = 4–5), but the person could not achieve it ($C \leq 3$); or (3) the workplace offered sufficient opportunities (B = 4–5), but the person could not make use of such opportunities ($C \leq 3$).

Descriptive statistics were computed to describe the data. Omega squared (ω) was used to determine the internal consistency of the scales (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). Omega coefficients higher than 0.70 were regarded as acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Point-biserial correlations were used to study the strength of association between categorical and continuous variables. Pearson correlations were computed to investigate the associations between continuous variables. Finally, standard multiple regression analyses were used to investigate the effects of biographical variables and capabilities on the four functionings.

Latent class analysis (LCA) was employed to study different capability set profiles using Mplus 8.7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2022; Wang & Wang, 2020). Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors in Mplus 8.7 was used to conduct the LCA. The seven capabilities were specified as categorical variables. Different models with varying latent classes were tested. Models were compared based on the values of the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), Akaike information criterion (AIC) and sample-size adjusted Bayesian information criterion (ABIC). In addition to the information criteria, the Lo-Mendell-Rubin test (LMR LR; Lo et al., 2001), adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin test (ALMR) and bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT; Wang & Wang, 2020) were investigated. The entropy value provided insight into the quality of the latent profile analysis. The entropy values can range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better classification (Wang & Wang, 2020). Average latent class probabilities higher than 0.80 are acceptable.

After the capability set (indicated as classes) had been identified, they were related to covariates (i.e. distal variables). Morin et al. (2020) recommend that covariates be included in the analysis only after the optimal unconditional profile solution has been found. The Bolck, Croon, and Hagenaars (BCH; Bolck et al., 2004) method was used to examine how capability set classes were related to covariates (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014).

Ethical considerations

Various regional offices of education in Namibia were approached for permission to conduct research at all special schools in their respective regions. An application was also made for ethics clearance from the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee at North-West University (Ethics number: NWU-00840-20-A4). The researchers waited for permission before commencing the data collection phase and adhered to the rules and conditions of the regulatory ethics bodies in the two countries (i.e. South Africa and Namibia) before, during, and after the data collection phase. Participation in the study required participants to give consent. Participants were assured that their data would be kept confidential and anonymous.

Results
Descriptive statistics

A capability set was rated on three dimensions: (1) value (the importance of the seven work values); (2) opportunity

TABLE 2: Percentages of teacher capabilities.

Capability	Code	Importance	Opportunity	Achievement	Capability	Combined
Use of knowledge and skills	0	5.0	20.8	25.0	34.0	Not capable
	1	95.0	79.2	75.0	66.0	Capable
	MV	0.0	0.0	0.05	0.0	-
Development of knowledge and skills	0	7.5	26.0	27.0	37.0	Not capable
	1	92.5	72.5	72.5	63.0	Capable
	MV	0.0	1.5	0.5	0.0	-
Involvement in important decisions	0	18.5	36.5	39.0	48.0	Not capable
	1	81.5	62.5	60.5	52.0	Capable
	MV	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	-
Building/maintaining meaningful relationships	0	9.5	21.5	27.5	35.5	Not capable
	1	90.5	78.5	72.0	64.5	Capable
	MV	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	-
Setting your own goals	0	4.0	19.0	27.5	33.0	Not capable
	1	96.0	81.0	72.0	67.0	Capable
	MV	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	-
Earning a good income	0	17.5	45.5	50.0	55.0	Not capable
	1	82.5	54.0	50.0	45.0	Capable
	MV	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	-
Contributing to the creation of something valuable	0	8.0	30.0	32.0	38.0	Not capable
	1	92.0	70.0	68.0	62.0	Capable

Code = 0 if the participant's score was ≤ 3; Code = 1 if the participant's score ≥ 4; MV, missing value.

or enablement (whether the participants were enabled to realise the value) and (3) achievement (the extent to which participants achieved the capability). The results are reported in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, most of the *values* were regarded as important to the participants, varying from 81.5% (involvement in important decisions) to 96% (setting own goals). Regarding *opportunity* (enablement of values), the percentages varied from 54% (earning a good income) to 81% (setting own goals). Concerning *achievement*, the percentages varied from 50% (earning a good income) to 75% (using knowledge and skills). The percentages of special education teachers who showed capabilities were the highest for the following dimensions: setting own goals (67%), use of knowledge and skills (66%) and building meaningful work relationships (64.5%). The percentages of teachers who did not show capability were the highest for the following dimensions: earning a good income (55%), involvement in important decisions (48%), contributing to creating something valuable (38%) and developing knowledge and skills (37%).

The point-biserial correlations between the seven capabilities and the capability set were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) as follows: use of knowledge and skills ($r = 0.67$), development of knowledge and skills ($r = 0.68$), involvement in important decisions ($r = 0.68$), building and maintaining meaningful relationships at work ($r = 0.61$), setting own goals ($r = 0.66$), earning a good income ($r = 0.52$) and contributing to something valuable ($r = 0.71$). Each capability influenced the capability set moderately in a positive direction, as demonstrated by the significant correlation between each capability and the capability set. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Predicting functionings from capabilities

Testing the measurement model of distal variables
Using CFA, a measurement model consisting of meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave of special education teachers was tested. The CFA showed acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 266.92$ ($df = 146$), $p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.06 ([0.05, 0.08], $p = 0.03$); CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.91; SRMR = 0.06.

The loadings of the items on their target factors were acceptable (meaningful work: $\lambda = 0.38$–0.84; mean = 0.68; negative affect: $\lambda = 0.55$–0.91; mean = 0.68; job performance: $\lambda = 0.76$–0.90; mean = 0.84; intention to leave: $\lambda = 0.71$–0.96; mean = 0.82), showing well-defined factors corresponding to *a priori* expectations. The association between latent classes and meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave were examined based on the factor scores saved from the measurement model.

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and correlations
Table 3 presents descriptive statistics, omega reliability coefficients and Pearson correlation coefficients for the dependent variables.

The four scales had acceptable reliability coefficients above 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The correlations in Table 3 show that meaningful work was strongly and negatively related to negative affect (large effect). Intention to leave was strongly and negatively related to meaningful work (medium effect). Negative affect was also inversely related to job performance and intention to leave, but both effect sizes were small.

Multiple regression analyses
Multiple regression analyses (see Table 4) were carried out with the capabilities (as measured by the CWQ) and

meaningful work (as measured by the WAMI), negative affect (as measured by the NAS), performance (as measured by the HPQ) and intention to leave (as measured by the TIS).

Table 4 shows that the following capabilities predicted meaningful work: use of knowledge and skills ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.051$), development of new knowledge and skills ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.001$), involvement in important decisions ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.005$), setting own goals ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.009$),

earning a good income ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.003$) and the capability set ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.000$). Hypothesis 2 is therefore accepted. The following capabilities were negatively associated with negative affect: involvement in important decisions ($\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.039$), meaningful work relationships ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.007$), setting own goals ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.006$) and the capability set ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.006$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

The following capabilities were associated with job performance: involvement in important decisions ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), setting own goals ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.010$), contributing to something valuable ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.032$) and the capability set ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.003$). Hypothesis 4 is therefore accepted. Finally, the following capabilities were negatively associated with intentions to leave: use of knowledge and skills ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < 0.001$), development of knowledge and skills ($\beta = -0.17$, $p = 0.015$), involvement in important decisions ($\beta = -0.20$, $p = 0.004$), meaningful relationships at work ($\beta = -0.14$, $p = 0.050$), earning a good income ($\beta = -0.20$, $p = 0.005$) and the capability set ($\beta = -0.25$, $p = 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 5 is accepted.

TABLE 3: Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and Pearson correlations of the functionings.

Variable	ω	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3
Meaningful work	0.89	2.71†	1.05	-	-	-
Negative affect	0.73	2.26‡	1.01	-0.51*	-	-
Job performance	0.91	7.71§	1.44	0.13	-0.19*	-
Intention to leave	0.85	2.28¶	1.06	-0.38*	-0.27*	0.04

Note: Means and standard deviations of scale scores are shown, but factor scores were used to compute correlations.
s.d., Standard deviation.
†, Minimum = 1, maximum = 5.
‡, Minimum = 1, maximum = 6.
§, Minimum = 1, maximum = 10.
¶, $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 4: Multiple regression of capabilities and the capability set on functionings.

Variable	R^2	F ($df = 1, 198$)	p	Beta	s.e.	B	t	p
UKS: MFW	0.02	3.87	**0.051***	0.10	0.05	0.14	1.97	**0.051***
UKS: NA	0.02	2.95	0.087	-0.17	0.10	-0.12	-1.72	0.087
UKS: PERF	0.01	1.74	0.188	0.26	0.20	0.09	1.32	0.188
UKS: ITL	0.06	13.60	**0.000****	-0.47	0.13	-0.25	-3.69	**0.000****
DKS: MFW	0.03	6.84	**0.010****	0.13	0.05	0.18	2.62	**0.010****
DKS: NA	0.02	3.47	0.064	-0.18	0.10	-0.13	-1.86	0.064
DKS: PERF	0.02	3.00	0.085	0.34	0.20	0.12	1.73	0.085
DKS: ITL	0.03	6.06	0.015*	-0.31	0.13	-0.17	-2.46	**0.015***
IID: MFW	0.04	7.98	**0.005****	0.14	0.05	0.20	2.83	**0.005****
IID: NA	0.02	4.31	0.039*	-0.19	0.09	-0.15	-2.08	**0.039***
IID: PERF	0.05	10.57	**0.001****	0.60	0.19	0.23	3.25	**0.001****
IID: ITL	0.04	8.31	**0.004****	-0.35	0.12	-0.20	-2.98	**0.004****
MRW: MFW	0.02	2.99	0.085	0.09	0.05	0.12	1.73	0.085
MRW: NA	0.04	7.33	**0.007****	-0.26	0.10	-0.19	-2.71	**0.007****
MRW: PERF	0.02	2.45	0.119	0.31	0.20	0.11	1.57	0.119
MRW: ITL	0.02	3.90	**0.050****	-0.26	0.13	-0.14	-1.97	**0.050****
SOG: MFW	0.03	6.97	**0.009****	0.14	0.05	0.18	2.64	**0.009****
SOG: NA	0.04	7.68	**0.006****	-0.27	0.10	-0.19	-2.77	**0.006****
SOG: PERF	0.03	6.68	**0.010****	0.51	0.20	0.18	2.59	**0.010****
SOG: ITL	0.01	1.08	0.300	-0.14	0.13	-0.07	-1.04	0.300
EGI: MFW	0.04	9.15	**0.003****	0.15	0.05	0.21	3.02	**0.003****
EGI: NA	0.02	2.94	0.088	-0.16	0.09	-0.12	-1.71	0.088
EGI: PERF	0.00	0.47	0.495	0.13	0.19	0.05	0.68	0.495
EGI: ITL	0.04	8.02	**0.005****	-0.42	0.14	-0.20	-0.28	**0.005****
CSV: MFW	0.02	3.40	0.067	0.09	0.05	0.13	1.84	0.067
CSV: NA	0.00	0.05	0.821	0.02	0.10	0.02	0.23	0.821
CSV: PERF	0.02	4.67	**0.032****	0.42	0.19	0.15	2.16	**0.032****
CSV: ITL	0.01	1.26	0.264	-0.14	0.13	-0.08	-1.12	0.264
Capset: MFW	0.07	14.11	**0.000****	0.04	0.01	0.26	3.76	**0.000****
Capset: NA	0.04	7.84	**0.006****	-0.06	0.02	-0.20	-2.80	**0.006****
Capset: PERF	0.04	8.78	**0.003****	0.13	0.04	0.21	2.96	**0.003****
Capset: ITL	0.06	12.89	**0.000****	-0.10	0.03	-0.25	3.59	**0.000****

Note: Statistical significance bold values for $p < 0.05$.
UKS, use of knowledge and skills; DKS, development of knowledge and skills; IID, involvement in important decisions; MRW, building and maintaining meaningful relationships at work; SOG, setting own goals; EGI, earning a good income; CSV, contributing to something valuable; Capset, capability set; MFW, meaningful work; NA, negative affect; PERF, performance; ITL, intention to leave; s.e., standard error.
*, $p \leq 0.05$; **, $p \leq 0.01$.

TABLE 5: Comparison of different latent class analysis models.

Profile	AIC	BIC	ABIC	LMR LR test *p*-value	ALMR LR test *p*-value	BLRT *p*-value
1-class LPA	1865.68	1888.77	1866.59	n/a	n/a	n/a
2-class LPA	1655.01	1704.48	1656.96	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**
3-class LPA	1631.35	1707.22	1634.35	0.060	0.070	0.000**
4-class LPA	1626.10	1728.34	1630.13	0.150	0.150	0.020*

AIC, Akaike information criterion; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; ABIC, adjusted Bayesian information criterion; LMR LR, Lo-Mendell-Rubin test; ALMR LR, adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin test; BLRT, bootstrapped likelihood ratio test; n/a, not applicable.

*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$.

Associations between capability sets and functionings
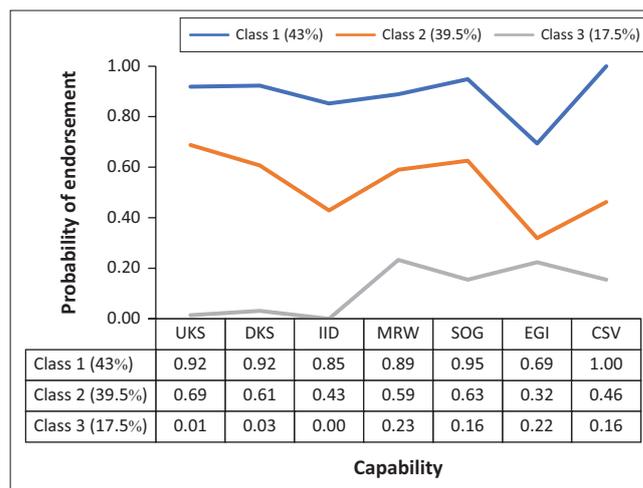
Latent class analysis

Latent class analyses were conducted on the responses of 200 special education teachers. The results of four different models are reported in Table 5.

Class 1 had the following fit indices: AIC = 1865.68; BIC = 1888.77; ABIC = 1866.59. The fit indices showed significantly better fit for Class 2 compared with Class 1 (ΔAIC = 210.67; ΔBIC = 184.29; ΔABIC = 209.63). The LMR LR ($p < 0.001$), ALMR ($p < 0.001$) and BLRT ($p < 0.001$) of Class 2 were statistically significant, indicating that the two-class (compared with the one-class) model fitted the data significantly better. Regarding Class 3, fit indices showed significantly better fit compared with Class 2 on one index (ΔAIC = 23.66). The BLRT ($p < 0.001$) for Class 3 was also statistically significant. One index showed a marginally better fit for Class 4 compared with Class 3 (ABIC = 4.22). The BLRT ($p < 0.001$) for Class 4 was statistically significant. Considering the small percentage of participants in Class 4, it was rejected.

The best log-likelihood value for the three-class model was replicated 42 times. One or more logit thresholds approached extreme values and were fixed to stabilise model estimation in the optimisation. These values implied probabilities of 0 and 1. This was not regarded as a problem, because there was a probability of 0 or 1 of subscribing to the capability in some classes (https://shorturl.gg/rJ3zG).

A total of 86 participants were assigned to Class 1 (43%), 79 participants to Class 2 (39.5%) and 35 participants to Class 3 (17.5%). The average latent class probabilities for the most likely latent class were above the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nagin, 2005), namely 0.85 for Class 1, 0.89 for Class 2 and 0.91 for Class 3. The entropy statistic was 0.75, indicating an acceptable classification (Wang & Wang, 2020). The three latent classes are illustrated in Figure 1.

The three classes in Figure 1 can be described as follows: (1) Latent Class 1: Robust capability set (43%). Six of the seven capabilities in Class 1 had high probabilities of endorsement. Only one capability in this class, namely earning a good income, had a moderate probability of being endorsed. (2)

Capability	UKS	DKS	IID	MRW	SOG	EGI	CSV
Class 1 (43%)	0.92	0.92	0.85	0.89	0.95	0.69	1.00
Class 2 (39.5%)	0.69	0.61	0.43	0.59	0.63	0.32	0.46
Class 3 (17.5%)	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.23	0.16	0.22	0.16

UKS, use of knowledge and skills; DKS, development of knowledge and skills; IID, involvement in important decisions; MRW, building and maintaining meaningful relationships at work; SOG, setting own goals; EGI, earning a good income; CSV, contributing to something valuable.

FIGURE 1: Latent classes of capability sets.

Latent Class 2: Moderate capability set (39.5%). Four of the seven capabilities in Class 2 had moderate probabilities of endorsement. Three capabilities, namely involvement in important decisions, earning a good income, and contributing to something valuable had low endorsement probabilities. (3) Latent Class 3: Weak capability set (17.5%). All seven capabilities in Class 3 had low probabilities of endorsement.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the differences between the latent classes in terms of years in education, years at the school and job tenure. The Wilks' lambda was statistically significant ($\lambda = 0.91$, $F = 2.90$, $p = 0.009$ [$df = 6$, 344]). Tests of between-subjects effects showed that job tenure differed statistically significantly between the three classes ($F = 4.06$, $p = 0.019$). The robust capability class showed less job tenure (mean = 6.49, s.d. = 6.30) compared with the moderate (mean = 9.34, s.d. = 7.10) and low (mean = 9.49, s.d. = 6.49) capability classes.

Latent profiles and distal outcomes

In this study, the automatic BCH approach for estimating the mean of a continuous distal outcome across multiple latent profiles (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014) was used. Auxiliary variables were analysed using the BCH method to estimate their means across classes. Figure 2 shows the differences between the distal variables of the different capability classes.

Statistically significant differences were found between the meaningful work ($\chi^2 = 6.62$, $p = 0.040$), job performance ($\chi^2 = 9.77$, $p < 0.001$) and intention to leave ($\chi^2 = 5.38$, $p = 0.020$) of different capability classes. Further analyses showed that Class 1 (high capability) showed a statistically significantly ($\chi^2 = 5.38$, $p = 0.020$) higher score on meaningful work than Class 3 (low capability). Class 1 (high capability) showed statistically significantly higher scores on job performance than Class 2 ($\chi^2 = 4.11$, $p = 0.040$) and Class 3 ($\chi^2 = 7.85$, $p < 0.001$). Lastly, Class 1 (high capability) showed statistically significantly lower scores on intention to leave than Class 2
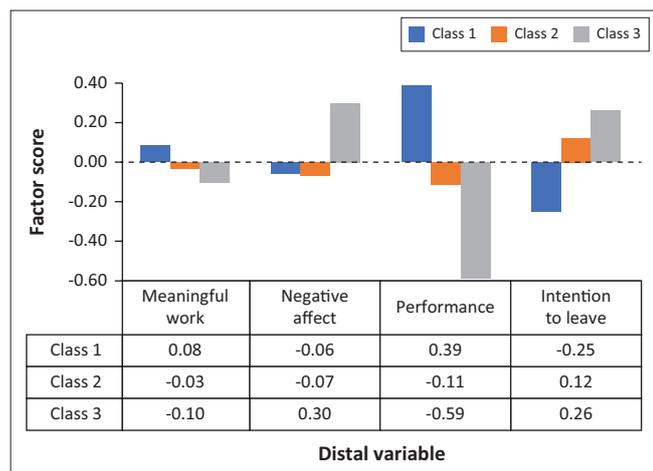
FIGURE 2: Capability classes and scores on functionings.

	Meaningful work	Negative affect	Performance	Intention to leave
Class 1	0.08	-0.06	0.39	-0.25
Class 2	-0.03	-0.07	-0.11	0.12
Class 3	-0.10	0.30	-0.59	0.26

($\chi^2 = 4.55$, $p = 0.030$) and Class 3 ($\chi^2 = 6.41$, $p < 0.001$). Although the overall test for negative affect was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.34$, $p = 0.069$), Class 3 obtained a statistically significant higher score on negative affect than Class 1 ($\chi^2 = 4.84$, $p = 0.028$) and Class 2 ($\chi^2 = 4.31$, $p < 0.038$).

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the work capabilities of special education teachers in Namibia and their effect on four functionings: meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave. A lack of capabilities such as earning a good income, involvement in important decisions, contributing to something valuable, and developing new knowledge and skills could risk the quality of teaching and the sustainable employability of special education teachers in Namibia. While most special education teachers in this study regarded all seven work values as important, a lack of enablement and achievement was reported on various work values, especially on earning a good income, involvement in important decisions and contributing to something valuable.

More than 65% of the special education teachers were capable of setting their own goals, using knowledge and skills, and building meaningful work relationships. However, more than 35% of the special education teachers reported a lack of capabilities such as earning a good income, involvement in important decisions, contributing to creating something valuable, and developing knowledge and skills. The lack of capability to earn a good income might affect the quality and sustainable employability of special school education teachers. Literature reviews on special education teacher retention showed that poor remuneration was one of the key reasons teachers left their work (Peyton et al., 2021; Vittek, 2015).

This study helped to understand the current reality of Namibian special education teachers. It was evident from the national teachers' strikes in 2012 and 2016 (Shapwanale, 2016) that teachers were not happy with their living standards because of poor salary, transport and housing allowances. This study corroborates that special education teachers are

still experiencing significant shortcomings regarding earning a good income. The question that needs to be asked is whether the special education teacher will remain in a perceived low-paying job at the expense of an improved standard of living or whether teachers will seek greener pastures elsewhere. This is detrimental to the special education mandate in Namibia, which functions on the capacity of 300 special education teachers.

Chitiyo et al. (2019) report that Namibian teachers (including special education teachers) pinpointed professional development needs regarding teaching students with disabilities. These needs included learning strategies, behaviour management, instructional methods, differentiating instruction and collaboration with parents. Teachers' lack of the capability to develop new knowledge and skills could imply that they are aware of their developmental needs, but are not afforded the opportunity or the means to engage in development programmes. This lack of capability implies that teachers are not capacitated adequately to deliver quality education effectively and that teachers' sustainable employability is at risk. Moreover, while a large percentage of teachers valued involvement in decision-making, 48% reported that they do not have the capability to be involved in decision-making.

The capability set and different capabilities of special education teachers were associated with the four functionings (meaningful work, absence of negative affect, job performance and low intention to leave) measured in this study. Firstly, the use of knowledge and skills, development of new knowledge and skills, involvement in important decisions, setting own goals and earning a good income predicted meaningful work. These capabilities affect meaningful work, because they promote person-job fit (see De Crom & Rothmann, 2018; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Gürbüz et al. (2022) found that the capability to use knowledge and skills leads to person-job fit. Furthermore, involvement in important decisions allows individuals to express themselves in their jobs, leading to a sense of ownership of and interest in their work, which increases their experiences of meaningful work (Martela et al., 2021).

Secondly, the lack of capability to be involved in important decisions, meaningful work relationships and setting own goals predicted negative affect. Teachers might experience negative affect when their needs are not satisfied (see Rojas & Veenhoven, 2013). Involvement in decision-making and setting goals contribute to satisfying psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). A lack of teacher involvement in important decisions interferes with their autonomy. Using self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) as a theoretical framework, Ebersold et al. (2019) found that a lack of autonomy support predicted negative affect of teachers. Regarding the lack of capability to have meaningful work relationships, Tremmel et al. (2019) found that positive work-related conversations were negatively

related to negative affect. Concerning meaningful relationships at work, Kahn and Heaphy (2014) suggested that demeaning and competitive relationships (which negatively impact meaningful work relationships) result in negative affect. The effect of a lack of capability to set own goals on negative affect is in line with recent findings of Ehrlich (2022).

Thirdly, involvement in important decisions, setting own goals and contributing to something valuable predicted job performance. Chamberlin et al. (2018) found that empowerment transmits the effects of management practices to job performance because of employee voice. Employee voice, which they define as 'discretionary expression of constructive ideas intended to improve or change the organisation' (p. 297), might affect the above-mentioned capabilities. According to Chamberlin et al. (2018), management practices that enhance skills, motivation and opportunities affect the empowerment of employees, which results in better job performance.

Fourthly, using knowledge and skills, developing knowledge and skills, involvement in important decisions, meaningful relationships at work, and earning a good income predicted intentions to leave negatively. The effects of these capabilities on intentions to leave can be explained from perspectives of person-job fit (Gürbüz et al., 2022; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017), psychological availability (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014), and fairness and equity (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022; Van der Klink, 2019; Van der Klink et al., 2016).

The results showed that the seven capabilities were moderately to strongly related to the capability set. Therefore, each capability influenced the set moderately and positively (see Abma et al., 2016; De Wet & Rothmann, 2022; Gürbüz et al., 2022). Moreover, the capability set positively affected meaningful work and job performance and negatively impacted negative affect and intentions to leave. These findings confirm the importance of the capability set for the work functionings of individuals (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022; Gürbüz et al., 2022). From a person-centred perspective, three capability set classes were identified: the robust, moderate and weak capability sets. Special education teachers with a robust capability set were significantly more inclined to experience their work as meaningful than those with a weak capability set. Moreover, teachers with a robust capability set reported significantly better job performance and lower intentions to leave than those with a moderate or weak capability set.

At the basic level, the results of this study help the teacher to understand the various capabilities that have a bearing on their functionings. This will enhance teachers' communication about values, enablement and achievement (as elements of capabilities). The results of this study will aid school management, regional directors and the Ministry of Education to devise strategies that could address capabilities that have been identified as lacking. These strategies could include financial support for teachers to attend professional development workshops in efforts to develop their knowledge and skills, teacher involvement in key decisions at the school and directorate levels, and an increase in teachers' income to improve their standard of living. In that case, special education teachers could experience meaning, perform better, experience fewer negative emotions, and be less inclined to leave work. A focus on capabilities might enhance the sustainable employability of special education teachers in Namibia.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Several limitations were encountered. Firstly, the study utilised a cross-sectional research design to measure the effects of capabilities on functionings. A longitudinal research design is recommended to measure such effects over time. Secondly, a convenience sample of teachers was used in this study. Only 200 of the 300 special education teachers in Namibia participated in the study. Because of the voluntary nature of the study and the demands on teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, recruiting participants proved difficult. Therefore, more data are needed to further enhance the credibility of the findings. Thirdly, this study used an existing validated quantitative questionnaire to identify capabilities (Abma et al., 2016). Following Sen's work (1999, 2009), it is necessary to employ a qualitative design to identify whether there are unique work values in the Namibian context that should be measured.

Fourthly, demographic variables, such as age and gender, were primarily used to describe the sample. Future studies can include demographic variables as correlates of the various functionings (meaningful work, negative affect, job performance and intention to leave). Fifthly, participants' findings were analysed collectively. Future studies should consider possible differences between rural and urban teachers' capabilities, especially because teachers living in urban areas are much closer to development opportunities.

This study has shown that earning a good income, involvement in decision-making, contributing to the creation of something valuable, and knowledge and skills to deal with disabilities seem to be lacking in special education teachers in Namibia. This could inform stakeholders concerning issues that need critical interventions at a regional and a national level. Moreover, involvement in decision-making (at least at the school and the regional level) must be investigated further. This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the capabilities of special education teachers. Qualitative research can help to discover further issues underlying teacher involvement in decision-making.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of capabilities on four functionings (meaningful work, negative affect, job

performance and intention to leave) and attempted to provide insight into the capabilities of special education teachers that are important, but lacking. It can be concluded that special education teachers' capability set, compared with individual capabilities, predicted their functionings better. This highlights the importance of harnessing all teacher capabilities (including use of knowledge and skills, development of knowledge and skills, involvement in important decisions, building and maintaining meaningful relationships at work, setting own goals, earning a good income and contributing to something valuable) in terms of importance, enablement and achievement. Given the lack of research on special education teacher capabilities and functioning in Namibia, this study paves the way for research on optimal teacher functioning.

Acknowledgements

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available here: https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/7yrf9gwk84/1.

Disclaimer

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