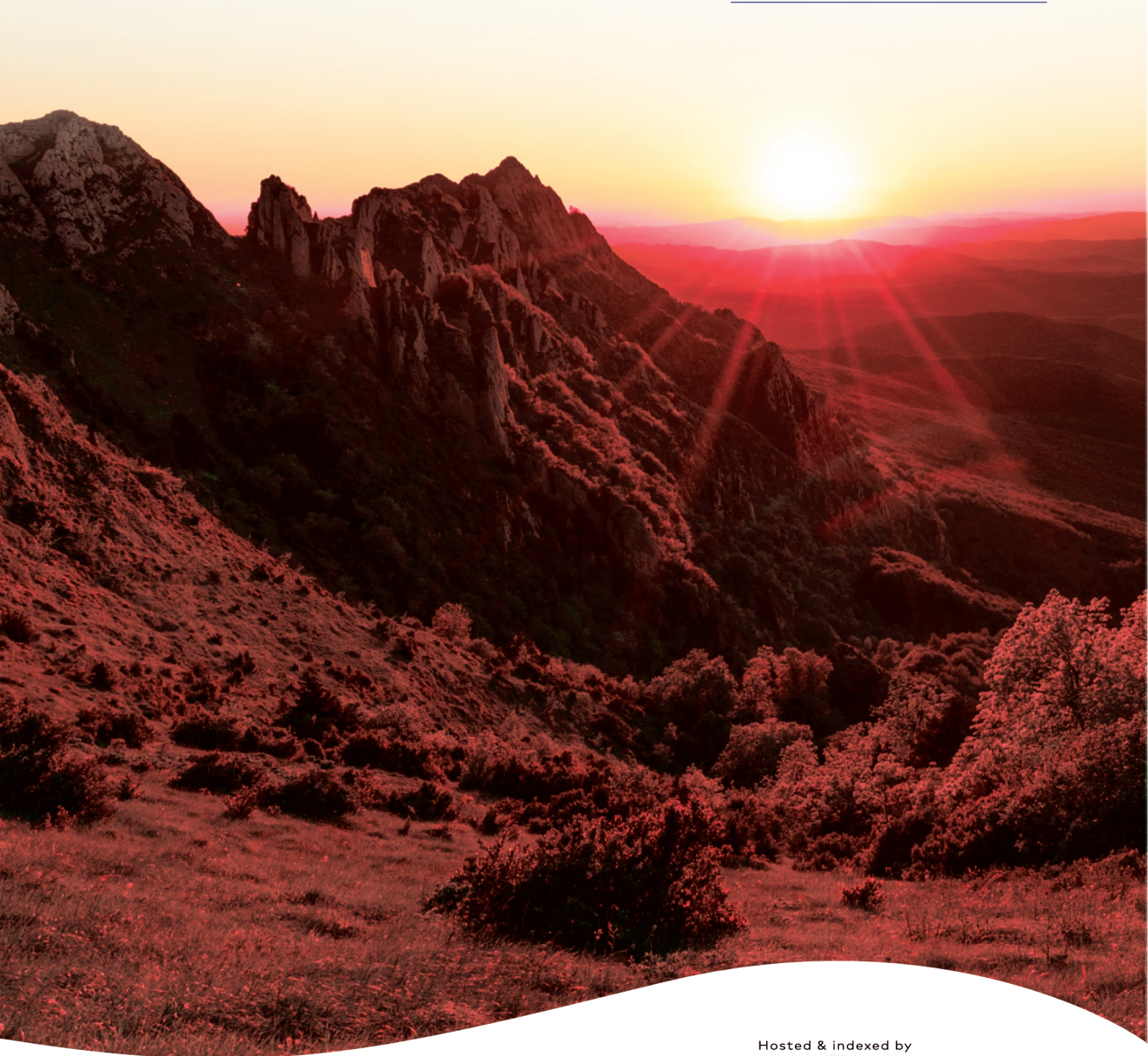


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Determinants of teacher turnover: a case study of private Christian high schools in Harare North, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study investigates the determinants of teacher turnover in five private high schools in Harare North District, sampled through stratified systematic sampling in 2023. The research aims to assess the significance of teacher turnover in efforts to secure, lead, and manage a stable teaching workforce, thereby promoting quality education within private institutions. The concept of teacher turnover is critical to this inquiry, as persistent staff attrition compromises educational standards. The study argues that sustained teacher retention is essential for institutional effectiveness, particularly given the resources invested in teacher welfare and professional development. While numerous international studies have examined the causes of teacher turnover, most focus on public schools, with limited attention paid to private Christian schools. This study addresses that gap by exploring specific economic, organisational, personal, and racial factors influencing turnover in the private sector. Findings indicate that economic variables are the most significant determinant. The study concludes by highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive staff retention policies within Christian private schools to ensure educational continuity and institutional stability.

Key Words: Determinants, teacher turnover, private Christian high schools

Introduction

This study examines the determinants of teacher turnover in private Christian high schools in Harare North District, Zimbabwe. Historically, private Christian high schools were established in Zimbabwe to enhance educational equity and uphold higher academic standards (Day, McLoughlin, Aslam, & Rose, 2014; *The Zimbabwe Mail*, 2017, September 23). A recent report by the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, focusing on Kenya, warned that the privatisation of education is expanding at an alarming rate without sufficient state regulation (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015; *The Zimbabwe Mail*, 2017). Consequently, private institutions are increasingly catering to children from affluent families while compensating for gaps in national education systems.

In Zimbabwe, data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education shows that approximately 5,905 primary and 24,681 secondary schools, serving over 4.3 million learners (*The Sunday Mail*, 2017). Of these, only 58 are private institutions, making competition for employment in these schools particularly intense. Historically, public schools experienced higher teacher turnover, especially from the 1990s to early 2000s. Increased student enrolment necessitates a corresponding rise in the teacher workforce.

Global and regional trends suggest that skilled professionals, including teachers, migrate both within sub-Saharan Africa and overseas in search of improved remuneration and working conditions (Zonika, 2023; Dabrowski, 2020). The literature confirms that teacher migration exerts significant strain on education systems (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; De Nobile, 2017).

Despite offering higher salaries and broader access to education, private schools are often criticised for commercialising education (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015; *The Zimbabwe Mail*, 2017). Additionally, concerns have emerged over high staff mobility, including teachers frequently transferring to other institutions or leaving the profession altogether (Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Holton, 2018; Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 2020). This raises the question: why is teacher turnover so prevalent in well-resourced, economically viable institutions?

While some argue that public school teachers are leaving for 'greener pastures' in the private sector (Biesta, 2016), others, including teachers' unions, blame inadequate support from school boards of trustees. Conversely, in Kenya, private schools, once deemed unnecessary, are now perceived as offering holistic education and character development, attracting families across socioeconomic backgrounds (*The Zimbabwe Mail*, 2017). However, the high rates

of teacher turnover in private schools are cause for concern. In many cases, school boards appear indifferent, neglecting key issues such as recruitment and retention strategies (Brady & Wilson, 2021). Informal consultations with education stakeholders and media sources reveal that poor education quality is not exclusive to under-resourced colleges but extends to elite private schools as well (*The Sunday Mail*, 2017). These concerns also apply to schools within the study area.

The underlying question remains: Why do teachers leave private institutions, particularly those managed by individuals or faith-based trustees under the Education Act (2024, Chapter 25:04)? Many of these schools attract clients through enhanced extracurricular offerings (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; *The Sunday Mail*, 2017), yet no study has identified the determinants of teacher turnover in private Christian high schools in Harare North District.

Emerging evidence suggests that teacher turnover has contributed to implementation challenges related to Zimbabwe's revised curriculum, adopted in 2017. Martin Mapfumo, a teacher at a private college in Harare, noted that most institutions lack adequately trained staff to deliver the updated syllabus (*The Sunday Mail*, 2017). This situation is in direct contradiction to the Education Act (2024, Chapter 25:04), which stipulates that teacher qualifications and experience must be sufficient to ensure quality instruction.

Background

Private Christian schools in Harare Province recruit and appoint teachers who meet the required professional qualifications (Mockler, Hogan, Lingard, Rahimi, & Thompson, 2021; O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). Similarly, qualified college and university graduates are free to seek employment within these private institutions (Rey, Bolay, & Gez, 2020). The expectation from school leadership is that such staff will remain in the posts for a reasonable period. However, the persistent teacher turnover has become a matter of concern, warranting the attention of boards of trustees and school management teams.

Specifically, the concerns lie in the continued trend, observed in Harare North District, where teachers leave their posts prematurely. Instead of serving for a reasonably anticipated tenure, many transfer to other institutions or resign early. This development generally disrupts the functioning of the affected schools, which are left to bear the consequences. Teacher mobility is generally viewed as undesirable, as it compromises educational standards, strains school budgets, and increases operational costs. Furthermore, it undermines strategic

planning within school leadership and has wider social implications for the communities served. In light of these challenges, this study attempts to identify the key determinants of teacher turnover in private Christian schools in Harare North District.

Review Related Literature

This literature review is guided by the study's three research questions and organised under the following sub-themes: (1) Reasons for teacher turnover in private Christian high schools, (2) The impact of teacher turnover, and (3) Organisational practices that may promote teacher retention. The review incorporates both international (macro) and Zimbabwean (micro) perspectives.

Reasons for teacher turnover in private Christian high schools

A contextual understanding of private schools is crucial, as it forms the operational environment for the teachers under study. Private schools, especially in developing countries, play a significant role in providing quality education (Ashley et al., 2014; *World Bank Research Observer*, 2024). However, they also face criticism for perpetuating educational inequity. For instance, private schools in Zimbabwe often charge significantly higher fees, including hidden costs such as uniforms and textbooks, which widens the socioeconomic divide in access to education (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015).

The Association of Trust Schools (ATS) in Zimbabwe comprises elite institutions primarily located in affluent suburbs or former farming estates. These include institutions such as Arundel, Chisipite Senior, Peterhouse, St George's College, and Falcon College (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015). These schools are known for small class sizes (15–20 learners), superior infrastructure, and high academic performance (Ashley et al., 2014). Such conditions may attract teachers; however, high turnover persists, raising concerns.

While private schools are often considered financially viable and professionally attractive, they still experience high rates of teacher attrition. In some cases, financial sustainability is threatened by loss of qualified staff, forcing institutions to raise fees or operate with underqualified personnel (*The Zimbabwean*, 2016). In Sierra Leone, for example, Baum (2018) observed that church-run schools often lack basic administrative capacities, and some require teachers to remit part of their salaries as tithes, an exploitative practice that contributes to dissatisfaction.

At the global level, teacher migration to Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia is widespread. Many teachers exit the profession within their first

three years due to limited professional growth and recognition (*World Bank Research Observer*, 2024; Baum, 2018). Regionally, sub-Saharan African teachers are increasingly relocating to South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana (Wesley, 2018; *The Zimbabwean*, 2016). Reis (2022) contends that the most skilled teachers are also the most likely to leave in pursuit of better opportunities, indicating that brain drain is a quality-selective process. Moreover, Kende and Phalen (2019) observed that poverty concentration within schools correlates with higher turnover rates.

Other scholars argue that teacher turnover is often driven by personal motives that are less observable or quantifiable (Cabrera & Leyendecker, 2017). These may include family obligations, career dissatisfaction, or a lack of alignment with institutional values. The current study thus uncovers these less documented, context-specific determinants in Harare North District.

The impact of teacher turnover in private Christian high schools

High teacher turnover creates numerous administrative and instructional challenges. Mark (2015) and Barrett (2018) note that turnover disrupts continuity, imposes financial costs, and undermines morale among both staff and students. In severe cases, it leads to stress, instability, and lowered performance across the institution. Frisoli (2013) adds that staff mobility hinders schools' ability to maintain a stable and experienced workforce, further compromising teaching and learning outcomes.

In Zimbabwe, the issue was exacerbated in 2016 when the government required civil service teachers working in private and church schools to resign and become fully private sector employees (*The Zimbabwean*, 2016). This decision created uncertainty around funding and employment security. Many parents, already financially strained, were unable to meet increasing fees, and some learners were forced to return to public schools, many of which were themselves under-resourced (*The Zimbabwean*, 2016).

Baum (2018) also observed that some church-affiliated institutions continue to require teachers to give part of their salaries as tithes, raising ethical and legal questions. Notably, while some literature discusses the macro-implications of turnover, there is little empirical evidence on how it affects private Christian schools specifically in Harare North. This gap underscores the need for focused, contextually grounded research.

Organisational Practices to Promote Teacher Retention

While multiple causes of turnover have been documented, studies also identify best practices to improve retention. Ashley et al. (2014) propose that addressing both internal (school culture, leadership, workload) and external (remuneration, policy support) factors is essential. However, studies show that many private schools operate with limited regulatory oversight. According to *The Zimbabwe Independent* (2015), transparency and accountability in fee structures and resource utilisation remain questionable.

Former Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Lazarus Dokora, stated that some private schools are plagued by mismanagement and even corruption, suggesting a need for rigorous audits and stronger governance (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015). UNESCO (2017) recommended that teacher remuneration should align with public sector standards and include access to health insurance, housing, and transport—basic provisions that enhance job satisfaction and reduce attrition.

The lack of institutional transparency, as noted by Azel and Betancourt (2018), further weakens retention. Their work stresses the importance of clear recruitment policies and ethical leadership. Despite these recommendations, limited empirical research has assessed whether private Christian schools in Harare North follow such practices.

In a broader policy context, *The Guardian* (2020) argues for robust engagement between government and the private sector, noting that effective regulation, positive policy alignment, and common purpose are critical to improving teacher retention. While some literature advocates for autonomy in private education, this autonomy must be balanced with standards and accountability.

Methodology

This study was conducted in private Christian high schools located in Harare North District, Zimbabwe, using a descriptive survey design. This design was selected for its suitability in collecting data from a relatively large population within a limited timeframe. The study was positioned within an interpretivist research paradigm, allowing for the collection and interpretation of rich descriptive data to explore participants' subjective experiences.

A qualitative research approach was adopted to gain deeper insights into the determinants of teacher turnover. The target population comprised all teachers and head teachers (including deputies) in Christian high schools within the

district. Both male and female participants were included to ensure gender representation.

Harare North District consists of ten private Christian high schools, with an estimated 400 teachers and 20 school leaders (ten heads and ten deputies). A stratified systematic sampling method was used to select five schools. The schools were coded from 1 to 10, and all schools assigned even numbers were included in the sample.

For the school leadership, a purposive sampling technique was applied, selecting a full census of five heads and five deputy heads from the sampled schools. This approach ensured that leadership perspectives were adequately represented. Additionally, ten teachers were randomly selected from each of the five sampled schools, resulting in a total teacher sample of 50. A coding system was employed to ensure gender sensitivity in the sample distribution.

To ensure instrument validity, a pilot study was conducted in non-sampled private high schools in Harare East District. An interview schedule guide was used for data collection, incorporating both open-ended and closed-ended questions for teachers and school heads. Data was organised, coded, and analysed using descriptive techniques. Qualitative responses from open-ended items were analysed thematically, with emerging themes and patterns categorised and interpreted to address the study's research questions.

Data for this study was collected using both questionnaires and interviews. These demographic characteristics, particularly tenure status, income level, age, and qualifications, were considered integral to understanding the determinants of teacher turnover in the private Christian high schools under investigation.

Results & Discussions

The purpose of this study was to examine determinants of teacher turnover in private Christian high Schools in Harare North District, Zimbabwe. Presentation and discussion of results was according to the sequence of the formulated sub-themes structured as follows: Reasons why teachers in the private Christian high schools change occupations; the impact of teacher turnover in the private Christian high schools; and Best possible organisational practices that may promote teacher retention in private Christian high schools.

Demographic Data

Table 1 shows demographic data of the participants that comprised male/female teachers and head teachers.

Table 1: Demographic data of male/female teachers and head teachers

Participants	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Total
Female Heads	0	0	2	1	2	5
Male Heads	2	2	0	1	0	5
Female Teachers	6	5	6	5	5	27
Male Teachers	4	5	4	5	5	23
Total	12	12	12	12	12	60

n=60

The demographic data reveal a gender imbalance in school leadership positions. In Schools A and B, male heads (n = 4) were predominant, with no female heads represented, highlighting potential gender inequality in management roles. In contrast, Schools C and E were led by female administrators, indicating variability in gender distribution across institutions. Among the teacher sample (n = 50), female teachers (n = 27) slightly outnumbered their male counterparts (n = 23). This gender distribution suggests that patterns of teacher turnover may vary according to gender.

Tables 2 and 3 presents additional demographic findings, including age, gender, educational qualifications, tenure, income level, and leadership versus non-leadership positions.

Table 2: Demographic data of female teachers on age, gender, education status, tenure, income level, managerial and non-managerial positions

School	A	B	C	D	E
Gender-Females	6	5	6	5	5
Age range	25-40	30-55	25-55	25-40	30-60
Education status	Dip. (2), PGDE (2), BED (2)	Diploma, PGDE (2), BED (3)	Dip. (1), PGDE(1), BED (2), MED(2)	Dip. (1), PGDE (2), BED (2),	Diploma, PGDE (1), BED (2), MED (2)
Tenured	4/6	4/5	3/6	4/5	4/5
Income level	Low (4) to Middle (2)	Low (2) to Middle (3)	Low (3)-Middle (2) and High (1)	Low (3) to Middle (1)	Low (2)-Middle (2) and High (1)

School	A	B	C	D	E
Managerial Position	HOD (2)	HOD (2), Senior Teacher (1)	HOD (2), Director (1)	HOD (1)	HOD (2) to Senior Teacher (1)

n=27

Key: HOD-Head of Department; PGDE-Post Graduate Diploma in Education; BED-Bachelor of Education

Table 3: Demographic data of male teachers on age, gender, education status, tenure, income level, managerial and non-managerial positions

School	A	B	C	D	E
Gender-Males	4	5	4	5	5
Age range	30-50	30-55	25-55	30-55	30-60
Education status	Dip. (1), PGDE (1), BED (2),	Dip. PGDE (1), BED (4)	Dip. PGDE (1), BED (2), MED (1)	Dip. PGDE (2), BED (3),	Dip. PGDE, BED (3), MED (2)
Tenured	¾	4/5	3/4	4/5	4/5
Income level	Low (2) to Middle (2)	Low (2) to Middle (3)	Low (1)-Middle (1) and High (2)	Low (2) to Middle (2) and High (1)	Low (2)-Middle (2) and High (1)
Managerial Position	HOD (2)	HOD (2), Senior Teacher (1)	HOD (1), Director (1)	HOD (1)	HOD (1) to Senior Teacher (1)

n=23

Key: HOD-Head of Department; PGDE-Post Graduate Diploma in Education; BED-Bachelor of Education

This section addresses the study objectives related to the causes and impacts of teacher turnover. Analysis of data from Tables 2 and 3 reveal that among the sampled participants, 70.4% of female teachers were tenured, while 29.6% were still on probation. Similarly, 78.3% of male teachers were tenured, and 21.7% remained on probation. Overall, 26% of the total sample were teachers still on probation, indicating that over a quarter of participants had recently joined their respective schools, an important factor potentially influencing turnover trends.

The overall age distribution showed that female teachers tended to fall within a younger age range compared to their male counterparts. School E emerged as having the most experienced and highly qualified teaching staff. Regarding academic qualifications, the distribution was as follows: 10% held Diplomas (5 out of 50), 26% held a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) (13 out of 50), 50% held a Bachelor of Education (BEd.) degree, and 14% held a Master of Education (MEd.). The BEd. was the most common qualification among both male and female teachers.

Income distribution also revealed notable gender differences. Among the female participants, 51.9% were in the low-income bracket, compared to 39.1% of males. 37% of females and 43.5% of males were classified under the middle-income range, while only 11.1% of females and 17.4% of males were in the high-income category.

Factors influencing teachers to change occupation

Using triangulation of data from interview guides and document analysis, the study explored the factors influencing teachers' decisions to change occupation in private Christian high schools. The findings indicate that teacher mobility is largely shaped by organisational conditions, including induction practices, professional development, remuneration, and overall job satisfaction.

Respondents acknowledged that pre-service training and structured school placements in both urban and rural contexts are essential in preparing teachers for diverse teaching environments. However, support systems such as induction and mentorship programmes were inconsistent, which contributed to dissatisfaction, particularly among early-career teachers. At School E, a female teacher with a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) shared:

When I transferred from another school to this current station, I was told to register for a Christian Education Certificate course, which is mandatory. The course runs for six months. So, if I transfer, the school loses both my expertise and the investment made in my training.

This suggests that some schools make financial and professional investments in staff that may not yield long-term returns due to high staff turnover.

Concerns over economic conditions were consistently raised across the sampled schools. At School C, two male teachers with Bachelor of Education degrees from the same university expressed dissatisfaction with:

Bonus pay, streamlined pensions and benefits scheme, competitive salary, and fair salary differentials, among others.

At School D, one male participant stated:

Many teachers are reportedly leaving the profession for greener financial pastures in countries like Britain.

Such responses reflect a pattern also identified in the literature. The World Bank Research Observer (2024), and Baum (2018) reported that limited financial rewards and opportunities for career progression remain among the primary push factors in teacher attrition and migration.

Overall, these findings suggest that economic considerations, especially low salaries, lack of benefits, and poor working conditions, are central to teachers’ decisions to leave their positions or the profession altogether. This underscores the need for institutional reforms, particularly regarding teacher compensation and retention strategies.

Table 4: Teachers’ responses on determinants for turnover

Determinant	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Frequency
Economic	30				60%
Racism	10				20%
Personal		4			8%
Organisational reputation		4			8%
Other	2				4%
Total	42	8	0	0	100%

n=50

Table 4 indicates that 30 teachers (60%) strongly agreed that economic factors were the primary reason for teacher migration. A further 10 respondents (20%) cited racial segregation as a contributing factor in private Christian schools. The data also show that 5 female participants (10%) identified limited involvement in decision-making as their reason for leaving. Additionally, 5 male participants (10%) from Schools A and D attributed their migration to a lack of effective supervision by school management—a view consistent with Kende and Phalen’s (2019) findings on the role of leadership in teacher retention.

Triangulation of interview data from school heads in Schools A, B, and C revealed that 4 out of 10 heads (40%) observed that teachers rarely disclose their true reasons for resigning, instead offering generic or vague justifications

in their resignation letters. This observation supports similar conclusions in the literature by Juang and Chitewere (2020), who noted that internalised motives often go unreported during formal exit processes.

The majority of respondents, 21 males and 23 females, also highlighted student indiscipline and lack of support from school leadership as key factors prompting their departure from previous schools. They reported that such instability disrupted both classroom performance and the broader planning processes in the schools they left behind.

Interestingly, while school heads and deputy heads contended that salary should not be a concern, given that teachers sign employment contracts prior to commencing their roles, 40 teachers (80%) indicated that informal discussions with colleagues during inter-school events (e.g., sports days and conferences) revealed discrepancies in salary and benefits packages. This peer comparison often prompted discontent and ultimately led to teacher migration in pursuit of better incentives elsewhere.

Overall, the findings suggest that economic dissatisfaction was the most statistically significant factor influencing teacher turnover, followed closely by administrative inefficiencies and perceived lack of institutional support. These determinants align with international literature highlighting the interplay of structural and financial issues in teacher attrition (Kende & Phalen, 2019; Juang & Chitewere, 2020).

The impact of teacher turnover in the private Christian high schools

This section addresses sub-theme 2. The study also sought to assess the impact of teacher turnover in the private Christian high schools in Harare North District.

Table 5: Sample of teacher turnover at school E

Duration in Years	Total Number of Males	Total Number of Females	Total Number of Staff who Resigned
2013	3	3	6
2014	3	2	5
2015			0
2016	3	2	5
2017	1		1
2018	5	5	10

Duration in Years	Total Number of Males	Total Number of Females	Total Number of Staff who Resigned
2019			0
2019		3	3
2020	2	3	5
2021	1	7	8
2022	2	5	7
2023	4	4	8
Total	24	34	58

n=50 Average staff compliment per year (50)

The figures presented in Table 4 are both excessive and alarming, signalling a steady decline in the retention of highly skilled, permanent teaching staff. The data reveal that since 2013, at least 58 teachers have left a single institution within a 10-year period, transitioning to other organisations. This high attrition rate highlights the urgent need for systematic and collaborative strategies to manage teacher turnover. As Barrett (2018) asserts, addressing teacher attrition requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders across the education sector, including school leadership.

This study aimed to assess the impact of teacher turnover in private Christian high schools in Harare North District. In these private trust schools, concerns about teacher shortages are becoming increasingly prominent. The employment of temporary staff and the failure to fill permanent posts further reflect this shortage. Barrett (2018) observes that such high turnover disrupts learning processes and compromises school productivity.

Findings from both interviews and document analysis revealed that teacher turnover negatively influences institutional performance and effectiveness, as schools operate as structured organisations with defined production processes. Similar sentiments are expressed by Rey (2020), who argues that turnover places an additional workload on remaining teachers, further affecting school efficiency. Teachers in this study similarly reported that their departure caused planning and logistical challenges at their former schools, consistent with observations made by Kende and Phalen (2019) and Mark (2015). A female deputy head from School D remarked:

Teacher transfers are often unanticipated. They take you by surprise and create administrative burdens. Some heads of department struggle to reorganise staff duties, and the remaining teachers are frequently overloaded.

The interview data indicate that the impacts of turnover include low staff morale, increased student indiscipline, reduced academic performance, and poor examination outcomes. These challenges hinder the school's capacity to sustain quality education delivery. Notably, all heads and deputy heads (n = 20; 100%) from Schools A, B, C, and D agreed that teacher turnover negatively affects curriculum implementation, ultimately leading to a decline in educational standards. These findings reinforce prior literature, which identifies teacher turnover as having ripple effects across the broader school ecosystem (Kende & Phalen, 2019; Mark, 2015).

Furthermore, teachers from all participating schools echoed concerns about low motivation, citing issues such as poor pay, limited benefits, and inequitable salary structures. For instance, three male teachers at School C with Bachelor of Education degrees expressed dissatisfaction with:

Bonus pay, streamlined pensions and benefits schemes, competitive salaries, and fair salary differentials.

These concerns point to persistent challenges related to low remuneration, poor working conditions, and insufficient institutional support. Addressing these factors is essential for retaining high-quality educators and improving teacher satisfaction in the private school sector. Therefore, understanding what attracts teachers to private Christian schools, and more importantly, what sustains their engagement and commitment, is critical for improving retention. At the policy level, school boards must broaden the discourse beyond recruitment, salary scales, and teacher training. Attention must also be given to the holistic dimensions of teacher wellbeing, including workload, autonomy, professional growth, and institutional culture.

Best possible organisational practices that may promote teacher retention private Christian high schools

A key question underlying the search for best practices in teacher retention is how responsible authorities in private Christian high schools can cultivate a cadre of well-motivated teachers with the mindset, competencies, and conditions necessary to deliver quality education. A female administrator from School A suggested:

The Board of Trustees should aim for the development of sound teacher motivation and migration policies across the ATS.

This response highlights the need for uniform policy frameworks across private schools, which could set sector-wide benchmarks for teacher retention

and professionalism. One such approach, also recommended by *The Guardian* (2020b), is the introduction of standardised contractual obligations that require teachers to serve a minimum tenure before transferring to another institution. This would help reduce spontaneous or frequent movement between schools. Similarly, a male school head from School C advocated for greater unity and transparency among trust school authorities, stating:

I suggest that our Trust responsible authorities be united, speak with one voice, and operate transparently to address this challenge of teacher turnover.

However, further inquiry revealed that private Christian schools often operate independently, with each institution developing its own recruitment and retention policies. This decentralised approach results in fragmented practices, undermining collective efforts to manage teacher turnover effectively. These findings are consistent with Azel and Betancourt (2018), who observed a lack of transparency and coordination in recruitment practices across private institutions. Their research stresses the importance of coordinated action and shared purpose among stakeholders in education.

Analysis of school records showed that attractive financial and material conditions of service were frequently cited by teachers as motives for transferring to other institutions. These included better transport allowances, housing, medical support, and teaching resources. In line with UNESCO (2017), such provisions are essential components of effective teacher motivation strategies and should be prioritised by school authorities.

The evidence further underscores the urgent need for stronger governance through monitoring and regulation by boards of trustees. The absence of standardised staff retention policies in many private Christian high schools weakens institutional capacity to maintain workforce stability. As highlighted by Kende and Phalen (2019) and Mark (2015), effective retention requires more than financial incentives, it demands a comprehensive policy environment that supports teacher wellbeing, career development, and recognition.

In summary, the study recommends that boards of trustees develop coordinated policies on teacher motivation, tenure, and support. A unified approach to retention, grounded in transparency, accountability, and adequate working conditions, will enhance the stability and quality of teaching staff in private Christian high schools.

Conclusions

The study concludes that private Christian high schools in Harare North District face significant challenges in retaining qualified teachers, primarily due to organisational and economic constraints. There is a noticeable lack of investment in teacher welfare and professional development relative to the demands placed on staff. Teachers are influenced by various factors when deciding to leave, including racial segregation, economic dissatisfaction, and limited involvement in decision-making. Moreover, many teachers do not disclose their actual motives for departure, making it difficult for management to respond proactively.

Indiscipline among learners and inadequate support from school leadership were identified as key institutional factors contributing to teacher turnover. Importantly, insufficient remuneration emerged as a statistically significant determinant of turnover.

The study concludes that teacher turnover has led to increased reliance on temporary staff and the failure to fill permanent posts, disrupting continuity in teaching and learning. Turnover undermines the performance and efficiency of schools, which function as structured systems with clearly defined operational processes. Additionally, it increases the workload for remaining staff, contributes to planning and logistical issues, and negatively affects teacher morale, learner discipline, academic achievement, and examination outcomes. The study concludes that effective organisational practices promoting teacher retention are lacking in most private Christian schools in Harare North District. Interviews revealed that schools operate independently, with divergent approaches to recruitment, retention, and policy implementation. There is also a notable lack of monitoring and regulation by boards of trustees, and no standardised staff retention policy was observed across institutions. Additionally, boards of trustees have not prioritised critical determinants of turnover such as economic, organisational, personal, and racial factors. Issues of transparency, competition, and disunity among schools hinder the formulation and implementation of cohesive retention policies.

Recommendations

- Schools should regularly conduct institutional self-evaluations and research to identify and address emerging challenges affecting staff stability.
- Confidential evaluation tools and feedback mechanisms should be developed to allow teachers to report concerns anonymously.
- It is further recommended that teacher representation committees or task teams be established to engage school authorities on issues relating to working conditions and professional development.
- Schools should implement structured retention packages, including bonus payments, pension and benefits schemes, competitive salaries, and equitable salary structures.
- There is a need for school authorities to acknowledge and address the systemic challenges faced by teaching professionals, including heavy workloads and poor working conditions.
- Trust school boards should broaden their policy focus beyond recruitment and teacher training to encompass teacher wellbeing, job satisfaction, and professional autonomy.
- Schools are encouraged to adopt internal redeployment mechanisms to minimise instructional disruption when teachers leave unexpectedly.
- Schools should be encouraged to operate with greater policy coherence and unity, guided by shared standards across trust institutions.
- Monitoring and regulatory frameworks must be developed and enforced by boards of trustees to ensure consistency in recruitment and staff development practices.
- Schools should prioritise financial and non-financial incentives, including adequate housing, transport allowances, and medical benefits, as part of a comprehensive teacher retention strategy.
- While recognising the current economic challenges faced by private schools in Zimbabwe, efforts must be made to mobilise resources strategically to improve teacher welfare and institutional stability.

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