

Intervention Strategies for Teacher Turnover Intention in Lira City, Uganda

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Abstract The purpose of this study was to explore the intervention strategies for turnover intention among teachers in Lira City, Uganda. In this study, we used qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design. A total of 68 participants were selected using simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique irrespective of their gender and qualifications. These participants included full-time primary school teachers, head teachers and city officials from the Department of Education. Data was collected with the aid of an Interview guide and a Focus Group Discussion Guide. Analysis was done using NVivo version 15. The research question was explored using Thematic Analysis. Findings revealed that, teacher turnover intention can be reduced through salary enhancement, workload balancing, improving the welfare and conditions of service, supporting professional development, provision of merit based promotion and addressing career mismatch. It was then concluded that teaching as a profession needs to be revamped not only in the line of career path development but also in the domain of welfare, economic perspective and psychological contentment. Based on the field findings and conclusion, we therefore recommend that; teachers' salary, contingent rewards and other fringe benefits should be enhanced, school administrators need to be fair and considerate to teachers, teachers should be accorded the highest status, awarded publicly and respected to enhance societal perspective, social and physical environment of schools should be made appealing, attractive and conducive for both teachers, professional development should be promoted, promotions should be based on merit and students ought to be motivated to pursue a professional career that align with their intrinsic passions and capabilities, rather than succumbing to external influences or societal expectations.

Keywords Intervention Strategies, Reduce, Turnover Intention, Teachers

1. Introduction

To prevent adverse effects of turnover intention and actual turnover within the teaching profession, it is very imperative for schools to retain high-quality teachers and indispensable for educational institutions in general to address the concerns of their employees. This is because teachers' contributions towards students' learning and development of human capital worldwide is highly significant and worth acknowledging [1,2,3,4,5,6,7]. Besides, it is not only vital to recruit competent teachers but to retain them as well [8,9], for teacher retention has a significant impact not only in students' nonacademic spheres such as mental health and emotional well-being but also academic achievement which is the major goal for all educational institutions [10,11,12,13, 14]. Owing to the trepidation of losing competent and talented teachers, some schools have invested a lot in order to attract and retain their human resources though teachers' demand to leave still

continues to rise [15,16]. Such demand or intentions may not only imperil students' learning but also serve as an impediment in the achievement of educational and academic goals.

With the increasing rate of job turnover among teachers, there is pressure among employers, administrators, and managers to find new ways of reducing turnover intention and actual turnover. Although scholars and researchers advocate for harnessed remuneration [17,18,19], use of rewards [20,21,22,23], good leadership [24,25,26], and establishment of good working conditions [27,28,29,30] among others, as key measures that can be adopted to squelch job turnover, precluding actual turnover and turnover intention among employees remain formidable. In addition, some employers and administrators are not sensitive and positively responsive to employees' preferences hence there is need to iron out practical intervention strategies that can be emulated by both employers, management and employees to avoid proliferation and ward off the above challenges.

1.1. Intervention Strategies for Turnover Intention

In a study conducted by Muhangi on turnover intention among secondary school teachers in Western Uganda, results show that teachers with higher qualification should be given

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better responsibilities or promoted to minimize turnover intention [31]. Financial remuneration is one of the factors that play a big role in igniting employee motivation and exerts a favorable influence on their productivity and organizational commitment [32]. Therefore, elevated commitment-based compensation strategies should be adopted to minimize employees' propensity to exit the job [33]. The magnitude of remuneration and benefits holds comparable significance because a stable and substantial income fosters a sense of security and drives motivation [34]. This suppresses employees' intention to leave for another career or organisation. However, in Uganda, most primary schools don't provide other benefits and some teachers rely on their salary. While salary significantly impacts living standards, employees attribute considerable importance to compensation and supplementary incentives, which serve as a pivotal motivator for enhancing engagement, fostering commitment, and promoting retention within their roles.

Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagińska investigated "the role of employee relations in shaping job satisfaction as an element promoting positive mental health at work in the era of covid-19" and findings of this study revealed that the cultivation of positive interpersonal relationships among colleagues can significantly boost job satisfaction, which subsequently influences staff performance, work engagement, productivity levels and bolsters employee retention [35]. Service employees, particularly teachers, dedicate a substantial portion of their time to work environments such as schools and offices; thus, fostering strong collegial relationships is a critical element of both social and emotional support. Teachers who have a pleasant and constructive relationship with their colleagues are more likely to feel confident and secured at the workplace. This influences their decision to stay in an institution [35]. Previous research shows that educators who cultivate supportive relationships with their colleagues develop a collective sense of accountability for the institution's development and academic success, alongside heightened job satisfaction, all of which substantially mitigate their intention to leave the organization [36].

A study conducted by Dreer on how to foster meaningful field experiences for teachers in Germany revealed that when institutions or administrators provide enough support, positive emotions are generated, which in turn serve as a robust predictor of job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention [37]. Satisfied in-service teachers are equipped with a range of strategies to cope with stressful circumstances that may arise [38]. For example, they may choose to disregard the challenges presented by the school environment [39], or manage their emotions without resorting to thoughts of resignation [40]. Depending on the individual teacher and the specific context, these strategies may vary in effectiveness especially when addressing the issues at hand and mitigating turnover intention [41]. The success of these approaches often hinges on personal differences and environmental factors.

One other suggestion that has been put forward as a measure of reducing turnover intention is proper implementation of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices [42].

Vermeeren *et al.*, in their research on "HRM and its effect on employee, organizational and financial outcomes in health care organizations" noted that HRM practices should endeavor to address teachers' misgivings so that their attitude towards work or organization is built positively and turnover intentions harnessed [43]. Mawardi further reinforced that human resource managers must implement the suitability of employee competencies so that workers get satisfaction. He added that a satisfied employee does not develop the intention of leaving for another job [44]. It is therefore important for organizations/institutions to be consistent in implementing these practices since it serves as a proof that the organization is concerned about those that contribute to achievement of its goals.

To curb turnover intention, Bryant in his study on ways to improve education noted that better working conditions should be provided to teachers [45]. A healthy working condition breeds satisfaction and suppresses turnover intention [45]. In a study conducted by Ni on "teacher working conditions, teacher commitment, and charter schools," teachers' perceptions of their school's working conditions and environment emerged as the most influential factors in predicting their morale, commitment to their career choice, and intentions to remain in the profession [46]. Fortunately, enhancing the work environment does not necessarily entail expensive repairs or renovations. It can be in any form. In support of the above assertion, a school may not have super facilities or technology but a simple care of personal beliefs or cultural conditions of teachers may create a very conducive working environment for them. Fostering a constructive school culture in which both educators and students feel secure, valued, and respected can act as a foundational element in mitigating turnover intentions [47]. Acknowledging the perspectives of teachers and students, facilitating team-building initiatives, and providing avenues for collaborative decision-making contribute to the suppression of turnover intentions among educators [48]. Pierre *et al.* report on curriculum reform noted that teachers who doubt their ability to make students successful may consider leaving for another job thus empowering them would be an ideal strategy to enhance retention [49]. A report from Harvard on strategies to address shortage of teachers affirms that teachers with low self-efficacy are more inclined to abandon the profession. School districts can mitigate this risk by providing educators with the necessary resources [50] and support services to bolster their self-efficacy and foster success [51]. Torossian asserts that high-quality induction and mentoring programs are the most effective means of enhancing teacher retention [52]. Additionally, offering teachers opportunities to engage in conferences is a valuable strategy for improving teaching skills, boosting self-confidence, and reinforcing their commitment within the workplace.

Educators should receive supplementary support beyond their salary to significantly impact their perception of the professional role [53]. A survey conducted by the Center for Teacher Quality, encompassing responses from 32,000 teachers, revealed that support from colleagues and

administrators is among the most crucial determinants influencing teachers' decisions regarding retention or leaving the profession. Therefore, administrators can play a pivotal role in ensuring job satisfaction and enhancing retention by fostering an environment where teachers feel valued and supported [54]. Educators should be given greater opportunities to voice their perspectives, concerns, and anxieties, while simultaneously acknowledging their contributions and providing robust administrative support [55]. Studies have also shown that involving teachers in decision making, identifying what they want, addressing their needs and motivating them enhances their retention within the career [56]. This is an indicator that a number of stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring staff retentions in schools are addressed.

Apparently, an attempt to prevent turnover intention have been a big area of concern for most of organizations, schools, or companies. Enumerable research have been conducted to explore strategies that can be adopted to prevent turnover intention among teachers and other employees. Several measures have been suggested by different researchers. However, relying on a strategy that worked in other geographical areas to address a challenge in another area may or may not materialize because of variation in culture, structure, level of technology, facilities, and remuneration among others. Hence, exploring practical measures that suit the context of this study may help solve the problem on the ground.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the intervention strategies for turnover intention among teachers in Lira City, Uganda.

2. Methodology

A qualitative research approach and a phenomenological research design were used to explore the intervention strategies for turnover intention among teachers in Lira City.

We targeted 2148 full-time professional primary school teachers from both government and private schools, 146 head teachers from Lira City, and 07 city officials from the department of education irrespective of their gender and qualifications. From this population, we attained saturation after collecting data from a sample of 60 teachers, 05 head teachers and 03 city officials. These teachers were selected from ten (10) schools. Eight (08) face to face interviews with head teachers and city officials were conducted. Ten (10) focus group discussions with six (06) participants (teachers) per group were held. The rationale behind having few participants (teachers) in a FDG was grounded on the point that it; gives participants ample time and opportunity to share their insights and observations about the phenomenon under investigation [57,58,59], favors participants with social anxiety [60], lays a better ground for controlling group members [61], and it is easier to host [62].

Schools were selected by use of stratified and simple random sampling technique. As a measure of ensuring

fairness, schools were divided into strata depending on the common attributes they share i.e. government and private schools. A representative sample that is proportional to the population under study was selected from each stratum using simple random sampling. Specific participants (teachers) were later selected from the sampled schools using simple random sampling. We specifically used lottery methods to select specific teachers who participated in this study. Slips of papers were designed with two words i.e. "Yes" and "No". These papers were folded and put in a container. Participants were asked to pick the random papers and those who landed on a slip of paper with the word "Yes" were considered participants for the study.

Purposive Sampling was used to select head teachers and city officials. This is one of the non-probability sampling techniques where the researcher relies on his or her discretion to choose samples from the population [63] and selections are done based on how much participants conform to the features relevant in the study, the level of proficiency, qualities they possess, and how they are informed about a phenomenon under investigation [64,65]. For the purpose of this study, we selected head teachers and city officials based on their experiences with the teaching profession and how much they are informed about the dynamics within this profession.

Data collection was done by use of an Interview guide and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide. Both tools had two sections that is Section A and B. Section A captured the background information of the participants whereas Section B explored intervention strategies that can be adopted to squelch turnover intention among primary school teachers specifically in Lira City.

Responses from informants on intervention measures was recorded with key areas noted verbatim et literatim. The qualitative data collected was coded using common phrases or words. For effective management of the dataset, inductive approach of qualitative analysis was adopted. Data was exported to NVivo version 15, a Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) and analyzed using Thematic Analysis.

During data collection, participants signed the consent form before participating in the study. Permission was obtained from responsible authorities. Privacy of the participants was well respected. Information provided was kept safe and anonymous. We didn't in anyway use coercive measures during data collection process and provided participants the opportunity to offer their responses voluntarily, without any implicit pressure or prospect of rewards. Contributions of other authors were well acknowledged and cited in the references and presentations of the most findings was generalized.

3. Findings

3.1. Intervention Strategies for Turnover Intention

Participants were asked to elaborate on the intervention strategies that can be adopted to reduce turnover intentions

among in-service teachers. The data obtained are presented in both paraphrased forms and verbatim, with participants represented by the codes ranging from P1 to P6 (i.e. Participant 1 up to Participant 6) according to each Focus Group. Several strategies were suggested. These include:

Salary Enhancement

In chorus, a group of participants said, "Increase our salary" (FGD 2, 2nd April 2024). "The payment we receive for the services we offer is really frustrating" (P4, FGD 2, 2nd April 2024). Such statements indicate high level of discontentment regarding pay among primary school teachers in Uganda. A participant added that if she was in a position with authority, she would ensure that teachers are well paid for the services they offer (FGD 5, 3rd April 2024). All these reveal an urgent need for an enhanced salary for all the teachers if the teaching profession must still retain them.

Workload balancing

A participant emphasized the need to recruit more teachers as a remedy to address work load pressure (P6, FGD 2, 2nd April 2024). It is of no value to develop health related challenges in an attempt to fulfill your job description (P1, FGD 7, 5th April 2024). According to them, one of the greatest challenges in the teaching profession that has triggered turnover intention is too much workload as a result of limited staff. Therefore, recruiting more teachers may help relieve teachers from job stress.

Enhancing the welfare and conditions of service

Field findings show that most teachers have lived and worked under unfavourable conditions, yet the society and government demand a lot from them. A participant noted that "teachers' condition of service is really bad, we are accommodated in horrible houses and the work environment is not appealing" (P6, FGD 2, 2nd April 2024). Another participant emphasized the need to improve teachers' welfare right from accommodation. This may help reduce turnover intention (P1, FGD 5, 3rd April 2024). Still related to welfare, another participant proposed that teachers should be given extra allowances and other contingent benefits (P5, FGD 8, 4th April 2024). This is an indicator that most schools do not offer other incentives to their teachers. Based on the findings, it can be deduced that teachers' welfare is a critical factor, and when effectively addressed, turnover intention may not manifest.

Enhancing promotion opportunities

In a corresponding observation, a participant (P4) underscored the absence of advancement opportunities and recognition, remarking, "...there are no authentic promotion within the education sector, particularly in primary schools. Regardless of one's academic credentials, the salary structure remains the same" (P4, FGD 3, 2nd April 2024). This is disheartening. Statements like "teachers should be promoted upon completion of another level of career development" (P3, FGD 7, 3rd April 2024). "I pursued a degree in 2014, but I am still a classroom teacher. I regret spending money to obtain this

degree" (P5, FGD 3, 2nd April 2024) highlight a profound discontent with the profession. This deeply reveals a toxic atmosphere within the teaching profession, where an educator would wish to seek solace and mental peace, disregarding potential financial gains. Collectively, these insights accentuate the critical necessity for a comprehensive reassessment of teachers' promotional opportunity.

Support for Professional Development

The field findings revealed that teacher turnover intention can be reduced by creating avenues for career advancement. A participant noted that schools administrators make it hard for them to go for further studies (2nd April 2024). That why they intent to leave for other careers where there are opportunities for advancement. According to P1, supporting teachers' professional development may play a big role not only in improving job satisfaction, performance and but also suppressing the development of turnover intention (FGD 5, 3rd April 2024). This implies teachers should be given opportunities to access free professional development. This may serve as a motivating factor and suppress turnover intention.

Addressing Career Mismatch

A participant noted with a tone of bitterness that parents and educational institutions need to address career mismatch. The propensity of sending children for careers that do not tally with their abilities, interest, skills and knowledge should stop (P5, FGD 8, 4th April 2024). A participant noted that he joined teaching profession because of the influence of his parents. Statements like "why am I even teaching? This is not where my talents fit..." (P3, FGD 7, 4th April 2024) show high level of discontentment with the teaching profession that need to be addressed. This implies students should be allowed to pursue a career that aligns with their interest and ability.

Furthermore, observations from interviews with key informants further consolidated the above findings. According to the responses from the key informants, improving salary structures, offering better welfare services, using good administrative styles, giving room for career development and promotion, reducing job stress by addressing workload issues were raised as key intervention strategies that can create a more supportive and satisfying work environment, thereby reducing turnover intentions among teachers. All these suggestions clearly indicate that there are flaws that need to be filled for teachers to remain focused within teaching profession and if not addressed education department might lose a number of competent teachers.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that salary enhancement is a critical strategy that must be adopted to reduce turnover intention among teachers. Many participants expressed the need for salary increment as a measure of motivating teachers. This aligns with earlier findings by previous scholars, where

monetary compensation was identified as a key factor in employee motivation and retention. For instance, Alam and Asim in their study on the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention among nurses in Karachi, found out that higher pay significantly impacts productivity and commitment [32], Lee et al. added that elevated commitment-based compensation strategies diminish employees' propensity to exit the organisation or institution [33]. The magnitude of remuneration and benefits holds comparable significance because a stable and substantial income fosters a sense of security and drives motivation [34]. Although financial incentives can attract teachers, they may not be enough to retain them for a long-term. This suggests that while salary increment are crucial, there are other factors outside salary that may still trigger turnover intention among teachers irrespective of the magnitude of the salary. Therefore school administrators have other roles to play in addition to enhancing salary for teachers.

Participants also suggested that recruiting more teachers to reduce workload. The findings underscore that teachers face excessive workloads due to limited staffing, which leads to job stress and eventually turnover. This echoes findings from previous studies, such as those by Sahito and Vaisanen who identified workload reduction as an effective strategy for lowering stress and turnover intention [66]. However, the emphasis in the findings on recruiting more teachers specifically to balance workloads provides a more targeted approach to addressing the issue, which is not as explicitly detailed in the literature.

The findings also indicate that improving teachers' welfare and conditions of service can be a good strategy to reduce turnover intention. This is supported by the findings of earlier researcher such as Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagińska who found that job satisfaction is influenced by supportive work relationships and good welfare provisions [35]. Moreover, Ermeling and Yarbro highlighted the importance of social support in reducing turnover intentions. The findings expand on this by emphasizing tangible welfare improvement in areas like better housing and allowances, which are specific concerns raised by the participants [67]. Thus, providing both financial and non-financial incentives may serve as a key to retention.

In this study we found out that offering career advancement opportunities and promotions to teachers, could help reduce turnover intention. This aligns with Podolsky et al whose research finding indicate that better preparation for classroom realities leads to higher teacher retention [68]. The findings reinforce the literature but highlight a specific need for automatic promotions and study leave policies, providing more practical examples of how career development initiatives could be implemented. It is also consistent with findings from a study conducted by Muhangi among secondary school teachers in Mbarara city, Uganda who found out that teachers with higher qualification should be given better responsibility or promoted to help minimize turnover intention [31].

Some participants expressed an intrinsic love for teaching, despite the challenges, which motivated them to stay in the

profession. They emphasized the need to address career mismatch among teachers to prevent the development of turnover intention. This is supported by literature from a study conducted by Pietarinen and Haverinen, and observed that intrinsic motivation can reduce turnover intentions [39]. Those with a "calling" for teaching, referred to as "born teachers," are more likely to stay, while those who see it as a last resort or "made teachers" may leave regardless of favorable conditions. This distinction between types of teachers is not widely discussed in the literature, providing a fresh perspective on understanding retention based on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations.

Finally, the importance of setting up a strong relationships among colleagues and administrative support as a measure of suppressing turnover intention came out clearly in the findings. Participants also suggested that school administrators should use effective leadership styles that foster the spirit of humanity among colleagues. This may help in reducing turnover intention among teachers. This findings concur, with results from a study conducted by Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagińska and found out that good relationships enhance job satisfaction, thereby reducing turnover [35]. Furthermore, Ermeling and Yarbro advocate for opportunities for teacher collaboration as a retention strategy, which is reflected in the current findings [67].

5. Conclusions

Based on field finding, we therefore conclude that teaching as a profession needs to be revamped not only in line with career path development but also in the domain of welfare, economic perspective and psychological contentment. This can be achieved through:

Improving teachers' salary, providing contingent rewards and other fringe benefits to enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention. Responsible stakeholders should review and address the flaws in teachers' salaries. Teachers should be given other benefits such as health insurance, free professional career development, and housing allowances among just like other prestigious professions. This may serve as a motivating factor and reduce turnover intention.

Improving the welfare and work environment of teachers. The environment in which we work plays a pivotal role in augmenting job satisfaction and mitigating turnover intention. Both social and physical environment of learning institutions should be made appealing, attractive and conducive for teachers and learners. Therefore, providing better learning environment and social support may help in reducing turnover intention among teachers.

Effective recognition of teachers to enhance societal respect. In other countries, teachers are accorded the highest status, well paid and respected. To create a feeling of prestige within this profession and foster community respect for teachers, there is need to recognize their contributions publicly through awards and policies that boost morale and retention should be enhanced. This may help in reducing turnover intention.

Application of good leadership styles. In terms of leadership, school administrators need to be fair and considerate to teachers. The propensity of using school resources with egoistic intention may worsen the situation. Teachers' voices and request should be heard and considered. Application of equity and equality when using school resources should be adhered to. This may help in creating a spirit of transparency and motivate teachers.

Promoting professional development and enhancing promotions. There is need to offer accessible study leave opportunities for teachers. Promotion should be based on merit. Similarly, paying teachers based on their qualifications may not only help in boosting the moral for professional development within the teaching profession but may also in reducing turnover intention.

Preventing career mismatch. There are instances where students enroll for courses that are not within their scope of interest and aptitude as a result of external pressures. This should be avoided. Students ought to be motivated to pursue a professional career that align with their intrinsic passions and capabilities, rather than succumbing to external influences or societal expectations to enhance satisfaction, prevent frustration, reduce turnover rate and turnover intention.

6. Limitations

In this study, we focused at only primary school teachers within Lira City yet there could be teachers in secondary schools, technical institutes, and other institutions of learning who could be experiencing turnover intention. Additionally, this study was bounded within education sector hence limiting the sample scope. This was seen as a limitation because there could be other sensitive sectors whose employees are also experiencing such sentiments. Besides, some respondents were not available in time of data collection. This delayed the researchers and the process of data collection as a whole.

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