

INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON TEACHER TURNOVER IN WAJIR WEST SUB COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: *Teacher turnover in Wajir West Sub County, Kenya, has significant implications for the quality of education. This study explores the influence of environmental factors on teacher turnover, focusing on geographical remoteness, climatic conditions, security concerns, and access to basic amenities. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to achieve its objectives. The research targeted key stakeholders, including 3 Wajir West Sub County educational officers, 47 head teachers, 47 deputy head teachers, and 225 teachers. Purposive sampling was employed to select head teachers and deputy head teachers from the selected schools, ensuring a representative sample. Additionally, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select three sub-counties and 225 teachers who participated in the study. Data collection was carried out through the administration of questionnaires. The collected data underwent rigorous analysis using statistical software, including Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 29 and STATA. The study's findings reveal the complex interplay of environmental factors in influencing teacher turnover. Geographical remoteness and challenging climate conditions impact teachers' job satisfaction and retention. Security concerns, including incidents of insecurity and violence, further exacerbate turnover rates. Inadequate access to basic amenities, such as clean water and healthcare, also plays a pivotal role in teachers' decisions to leave the region. The research sheds light on the multifaceted nature of teacher turnover in Wajir West Sub County, Kenya. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach, including policy interventions aimed at improving living conditions, ensuring security, and enhancing infrastructure. These findings provide valuable insights for educational policymakers and stakeholders seeking to retain and support qualified teachers in resource-constrained environments.*

Keywords: *Environmental Factors, Teacher Turnover, Teacher Turnover Factors, Teacher challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher turnover remains a persistent and complicated challenge, exerting a significant influence on educational systems across the globe. Its far-reaching implications extend beyond the immediate disruption of classroom continuity, profoundly impacting educational quality and institutional stability. The retention of skilled and dedicated educators is a recurring concern that echoes not only within the field of academia but also at the highest educational governance rank as a whole, where top-level authorities struggle with the complexity of maintaining a healthy and effective teacher workforce (Ingersoll, 2012). While teacher turnover is often viewed as a sign of failure within the education system, recent research has produced more contradictory perspective evidence (Maithya, 2012). The issue of teacher turnover is not unique to Wajir West Sub County or specifically Kenya as a nation. It is a global phenomenon. Across continents and other nations,

educational institutionals frequently grapple with the challenge of retaining qualified teaching professionals. Samuel and Chipunza (2009) highlight the pervasive nature of this problem, emphasizing that managers and authorities are constantly confronted with the task of retaining employees in various fields, including education.

Contrary to the commonly held belief that teacher turnover is uniformly high and indicative of systemic failure within the education sector, recent studies have offered a more open and approachable perspective (Maithya, 2012). These studies have begun to unravel the complex web of factors that contribute to teacher turnover, recognizing that it varies significantly from one region to another. In many African countries, the phenomenon of teacher turnover is closely associated with environmental-based factors that encompass a wide range of challenges and circumstances. Sub-Saharan nations, including Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, and South Africa, have grappled with the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has contributed to teacher turnover (Coombe, 2002). The devastating effects of this epidemic on the teaching profession have been particularly pronounced, further highlighting the urgency of understanding the multifaceted factors at play.

Beyond the health crisis, various environmental factors exert significant influence. These factors have continued to show variation ranging from insufficient salaries, allowances, inadequate housing, to limited opportunities for career advancement. These challenging factors have led to a substantial teacher turnover from their individual profession (Kamara, 2002). Additionally, economic factors have played a pivotal role in teacher turnover, as demonstrated by the loss of newly-qualified teachers to alternative employment opportunities in countries like Zimbabwe (Mukumbira, 2001). Within this global and continental context of teacher turnover, Wajir West Sub County in Kenya presents a unique set of circumstances. This region grapples with a combination of environmental challenges, including geographical remoteness, climatic unfriendly conditions, security concerns, and access to basic amenities, all of which intersect with the broader issue of teacher retention.

In Wajir West Sub County, Kenya, where various ethnic and religious groups coexist, tolerance is a pivotal factor influencing teacher turnover. The region's socio-cultural diversity demands a harmonious relationship between teachers and the local community to ensure effective teaching and community engagement (Hall, 2012). Tolerance, in this context, pertains to the ability of educators from different backgrounds to work harmoniously within the local community. By educators experiencing lack of tolerance, it has led to feelings of isolation and discomfort. Such sentiments have greatly contributed to a higher likelihood of teachers seeking opportunities elsewhere, thereby increasing turnover rates (Johnson & Birkeland, 2019). Conversely, a tolerant and inclusive environment continues to foster a sense of belonging and acceptance among teachers in this county. According to Johnson & Birkeland (2019), teachers feel valued and respected within the community, when they are shown compassion. They are more likely to remain in their positions, contributing to teacher retention efforts.

Hardship is also another factor resulting to teacher turnover in Wajir West Sub County. This encompasses various challenges that teachers face due to the region's environmental conditions and limited access to basic amenities. These hardships can significantly influence teacher turnover rates (Ong, 2016). Limited access to clean water, inadequate housing, and challenging climatic conditions are common hardships faced by educators in the region. These difficulties negatively affect teachers' quality of life and job satisfaction. Educators who perceive these hardships as insurmountable may be more inclined to leave their positions in search of better living conditions and improved overall well-being (Ong, 2016). Efforts to alleviate these hardships, such as improving infrastructure and providing essential services, are essential for teacher retention in Wajir West Sub County, Kenya.

Security is a critical consideration for every employee in all fields. and it plays a pivotal role in influencing teacher turnover rates. Security concerns can encompass both personal safety and the safety of educators' possessions. Insecurity, including the risk of theft or violence, can lead to increased teacher turnover. Educators who do not feel safe in their working and living environments are more likely to seek employment opportunities in areas with better security measures (Ting, 2017). Ensuring the safety of teachers and their belongings is crucial for teacher retention in regions like Wajir West Sub County, Kenya. Measures to enhance security, such as community policing initiatives and improved infrastructure, can contribute to a safer environment for educators, thereby reducing turnover rates (Ting, 2017).

Tolerance, hardship, and security are integral aspects that shape teacher turnover in Wajir West Sub County, Kenya. These factors interact with the broader environmental conditions and socioeconomic challenges, influencing the decision-making process of teachers. Understanding and addressing these aspects are essential for educational policymakers and administrators in their efforts to improve teacher retention and enhance the quality of education in the region. This research paper endeavors to explore the intricate dynamics of teacher turnover within this specific context. Given this background, the current study intended to examine the influence of environmental factors on educators' decisions to stay or leave Wajir West Sub County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Creswell (2009) defines research designs as plans and the procedures for research that plans the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. This study adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design enables the researcher to describe the state of affairs as they are and report the findings (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). According to Kothari (2016), such design is efficient method of collecting descriptive data regarding the characteristics of populations to justify current conditions and practices. Moreover, descriptive survey allows rapid collection of data from a large sample within the shortest time possible by use of questionnaires.

Target Population

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) target population refers to the entire group of individuals, items, cases or things with common attributes or characteristics. This study covered all counties and primary schools in Wajir County. Wajir County has 8 sub counties and 47 primary schools. Thus the study targeted 3 Wajir West sub county educational officers, 47 Head teachers, 47 Deputy Head Teachers and 225 teachers. The selection of the aforementioned office holders is informed by the fact that the office bearers have teacher's records, both at Sub-County Educational Offices as well as Individual school; also teachers interacted with those who moved out of their schools and therefore have the relevant information required in this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

According to Orodho and Kombo (2002) sampling is the process of collecting a number of individual or objects from a population. The study applied the Yamane (1967) formula for calculating sample size. According to Israel this formulae is used for calculating sample size. In this formula Glen recommended a 95% confidence level and 5% level of precision, thus the sample size will be.

$$= M = \frac{n}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where

n= required sample Size

N= target population

e = level of precision

$$\text{Therefore} = \frac{n}{1+97(.05)^2} = \frac{97}{1+97(.0025)} = \frac{97}{1.24} = 78$$

Thus = 3 Education Officer

= 38 Head Teachers

= 38 Deputy Head Teachers

=225 Teachers

The sample above was arrived at using the formula when deciding on the sample size. Purposive sampling method was used to select the head teachers and deputy head teachers in the selected schools. Simple random sampling was used to select 3 sub counties and 225 teachers who participated in the study

Data Collection Instruments

The study used questionnaires to collect data. Accordingly, to Kothari (2016) questionnaires are usually free from bias, as the answers are in respondents' own words, in addition the instrument has the advantages of saving the much-needed time and are appropriate for the literate educated and co-operative respondents. Four questionnaires were used to collect data, they included: questionnaire for education Officers, head Teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers. The questionnaires consist of three section, section one dealt with demographic description of the respondent, section two seek information on cause of primary teachers turn over in Wajir West Sub County and section three seek views on mitigating measures on teachers turn over in Wajir west Sub-County.

Data Collection Procedure

When the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the university, researcher applied for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Permission was also obtained from respective county directors of education in Wajir County. The researcher proceeded to education offices to administer questionnaires to county education officers and thereafter to every selected school to collect data from the principals, deputy principals and selected teachers.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected it was entered into a computer program, data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 29 and STATA. The two tested the strength of independent variables as well as perform both descriptive and inferential statistics which involved percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviation.

RESULTS

Background Characteristics of the Respondents

The background information of the respondents that were considered by the current study included gender, age, highest level of education, teaching experience, current position, and number of years in current position.

Majority of the respondents were male. (75%) of the respondents who participated in the study were female. The remaining 25% of the respondents were female.

When the respondents were asked to indicate their age bracket, 5% of the respondent were below 25 years, 5% were between 25- 30 years, 15% were between 31-35 years, 20% were 35-40 years, 40% were 41-45, 10% were 46-50 years and 5% were 50 years and above

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of education. This was categorized into the following: O-level, A-level, P1, ATS, Degree, Master, PhD and others Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the respondents per level of education. The respondents indicated their responses in percentage as O level 10.3%, A level 9.1%, P1 37.3%, S131%, ATS 21.1%, Degree 3.0%, 1. Masters 1, %, PhD 0 %, and others 10.6 %

When the respondents were asked to indicate their experience levels. This was categorized into the following; below 5 years, 6 – 10 years, 11 – 15 years, 16 – 20 years and over 21 year. The respondents' responses in percentage are below 5 years 6.1%, -10 years 31.9%, 11-15 years 36.5% and 11-20 years 27.5%

Respondents were asked to indicate their years in the current position. Their responses were categorized as follows; below 5 years, 6 – 10 years, 11 – 15 years and 16 – 20 years. The respondents' responses in percentage are; The respondents' responses in percentage are below 5 years 6.1%, 6-10 years 31.9%, 11-15 years 36.5% and 11-20 years 27.5%

Information on the extent to which Environmental Factors affect Teacher Turnover

Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on the extent to which environmental factors affect teacher turnover. Respondents were expected to choose by picking from the choices provided. Their responses were categorized as follows; great extent, moderate extent and low extent. Figure 1 show their total responses in percentage. Great extent had 51 %, moderate extent had 31% and low extent had 18 %. Environmental factors are a great concern when it comes to teacher turnover.

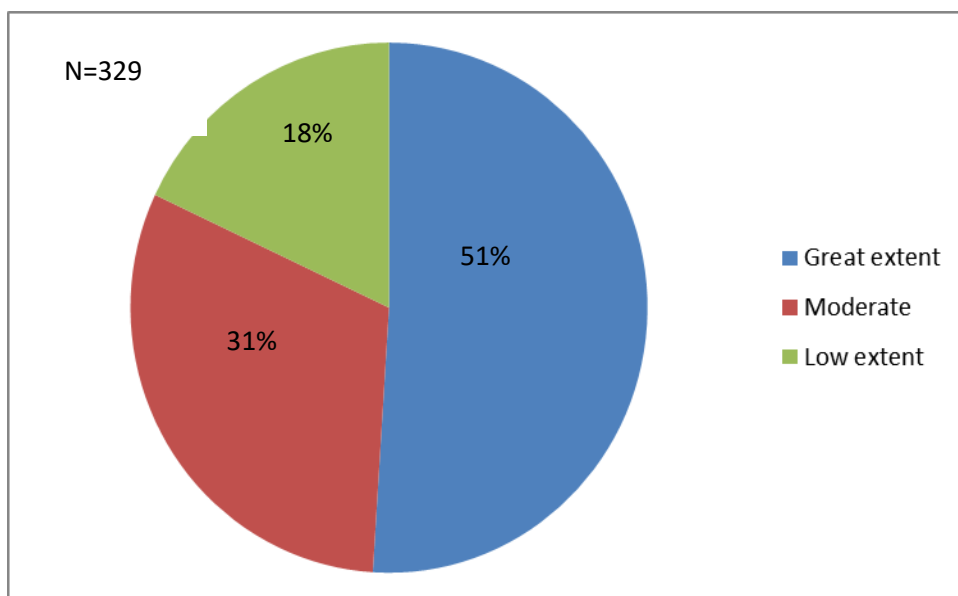


Figure 1: Information on the extent to which Environmental Factors affect Teacher Turnover

According to the findings, 9% of the respondents agreed that the County government of Wajir should consider building more health facilities in the area to reduce the journeys of travelling to the County headquarter for treatment. This will motivate the teachers and the learner and also reduce time lost when travelling for medications in other regions. About 29% of the respondents would like the amount of money given for teachers working in such environment to be increased. This hardship allowance which is given by the government working in hardship areas is considered as a motivation by teachers. The findings also established that there should be more tolerance on religion and culture of the people working and residing in this region. Over 505 of the respondents would like the security in the region to be beefed up. The area is prone to terrorists' attack and there is therefore need to build more security stations and deployment of personnel in the region. Figure 2 below shows this information

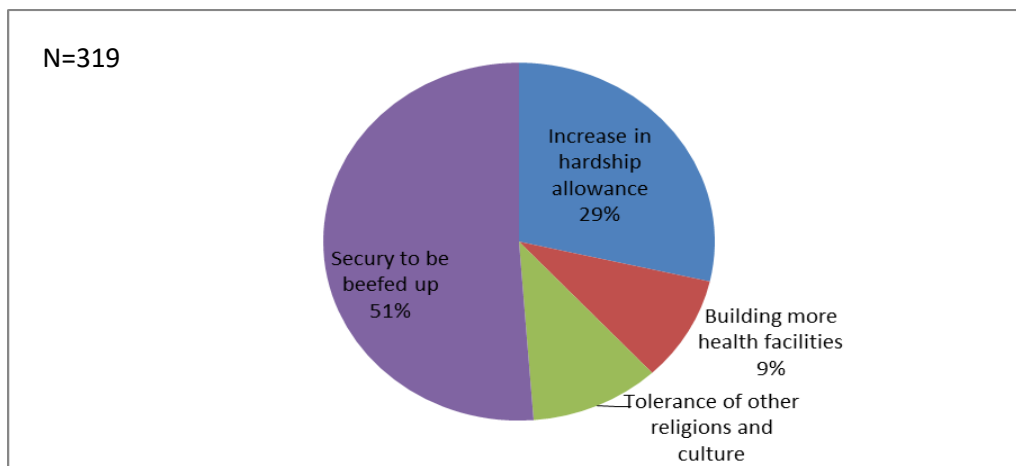


Figure 2: Information on Environmental factors

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive perspective on the intricate challenges and dynamics of teacher turnover within the realm of educational settings. These insights not only corroborate existing research but also expand our understanding of the multifaceted nature of teacher preferences and the intricate web of factors that contribute to turnover rates. In this discussion, we delve deeper into each of the research findings and their implications for the field of education.

Eric's 2013 study underlines a compelling aspect of teacher preferences: the inclination to teach in schools characterized by wealthier student populations and higher academic performance. This preference is not merely a matter of convenience; it signifies the pivotal role that resources, parental involvement, and a conducive learning environment play in fostering teacher satisfaction and effectiveness. When teachers have access to ample resources and support systems, they are more likely to excel in their roles and contribute positively to the educational experience of their students. However, the downside of this preference is the potential exacerbation of educational disparities, where schools in less affluent areas may face difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified educators.

In stark contrast, Okenwa's 2003 research shines a spotlight on the challenges faced by teachers in rural centers, emphasizing the adverse effects of underdevelopment on teacher turnover rates. The rural-urban divide in educational infrastructure is a persistent concern that extends far beyond the boundaries of Wajir County. The lack of resources and educational opportunities in rural areas not only hampers the recruitment of teachers but also contributes to the migration of educators to urban centers in search of better working conditions and prospects. Addressing this rural-urban disparity is imperative to ensure equitable access to quality education across regions.

Wisegeeek's 2012 findings introduce the critical dimension of job dissatisfaction as a driver of high employee turnover, a concept that resonates profoundly within the teaching profession. The observation that dissatisfied teachers are more likely to seek alternative employment opportunities underscores the significance of addressing workplace-related issues. Beyond financial incentives, fostering a nurturing and supportive work environment is essential in retaining educators. Strategies that enhance job satisfaction, such as professional development opportunities, reduced administrative burdens, and mechanisms for teacher input in decision-making, can prove instrumental in this regard.

Boyd's 2005 study reinforces the importance of workplace conditions as a determinant of teacher job satisfaction and retention. It underscores the influence of factors like school policies and classroom dynamics on the career decisions of educators. In essence, teachers who perceive their working conditions as conducive to effective teaching are more likely to stay committed to their profession. Educational institutions must, therefore, pay close attention to creating an environment that empowers teachers to thrive and fosters a sense of ownership over their classrooms.

Lockwood's 2007 research amplifies the significance of the workplace environment, particularly positive interpersonal relationships among staff members, in teacher retention. It underscores the importance of building a collaborative and supportive atmosphere within educational institutions. Positive relationships among teachers, administrators, and support staff contribute not only to a more harmonious work environment but also to enhanced job satisfaction and a reduced likelihood of teacher turnover.

The findings from the study conducted in Wajir County provide a valuable local perspective that aligns with the broader research landscape. The call for improved healthcare access and increased hardship allowances reflects the tangible challenges faced by educators working in remote and challenging environments. These demands, if met, can serve as powerful incentives to attract and retain teachers who are often the lifeline of education in such areas. Furthermore, the emphasis on promoting cultural and religious tolerance speaks to the need for inclusive and respectful environments within educational institutions, fostering harmony among diverse communities. Lastly, the urgent need for enhanced security measures highlights the vulnerability of certain regions to external threats, underscoring the need for a safe and secure teaching environment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate web of factors influencing teacher turnover within educational settings, with a specific focus on the role of environmental factors. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of teacher preferences and their profound impact on educators' career decisions. Teachers' preferences for schools characterized by wealthier student populations and higher academic performance highlight the crucial significance of resources, parental involvement, and conducive learning environments in fostering teacher satisfaction and effectiveness, although they also raise concerns about

exacerbating educational disparities. Conversely, the challenges faced by teachers in underdeveloped rural centers emphasize the urgent need for concerted efforts to bridge the rural-urban educational divide and ensure equitable access to quality education. Furthermore, the link between job dissatisfaction and teacher turnover underscores the imperative of cultivating supportive work environments and addressing educators' concerns to enhance teacher retention, while the importance of workplace conditions, including school policies and classroom dynamics, underscores the necessity for educational institutions to empower teachers and provide the necessary support for effective teaching. These findings culminate in a call for targeted strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced by teachers in different contexts, encompassing equitable resource allocation, enhancements in rural education, measures to boost job satisfaction, and efforts to improve workplace conditions. By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can take meaningful steps towards reducing teacher turnover, thereby fostering a more stable and effective educational environment for students.

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