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Salary Administration And Teacher Retention In Private Secondary Schools In Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between salary administration and teacher retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of correlational type. The population comprised all private secondary school teachers in the state, while a sample of 393 teachers was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Salary Administration and Teacher Retention Questionnaire (SATRQ). The instrument was validated by experts in its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.79. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that teacher retention were low, salary administration were very low too. The salary administration measured in terms of salary structure, timeliness of payment, and pay equity have significant positive relationship with teacher retention in private secondary schools. Specifically, timely payment of salaries and equitable compensation were found to significantly influence teachers' decision to remain in their schools. The study further indicated that poor salary administration practices contribute to teacher dissatisfaction and high turnover rates. Based on the findings, it was concluded that effective salary administration is a critical determinant of teacher retention. The study recommended that private school proprietors should implement fair, competitive, and timely salary systems to enhance teacher retention and ensure stability in the school system.*

Background of the Study

A teacher is a professional responsible for facilitating learning, imparting knowledge, and shaping the intellectual and moral development of students. Teachers play a crucial role in the transmission of knowledge, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing values that contribute to personal and societal growth. They serve as role models, mentors, and guides, ensuring that students acquire not only academic knowledge but also essential life skills (OECD, 2019). The effectiveness of teachers directly influences students' academic performance, career choices, and overall personality development. Therefore, ensuring that teachers remain stable, satisfied, and retained in schools is essential for educational sustainability and development (Ingersoll and Strong, 2021).

Teachers play a pivotal role in achieving education goals and objectives, which include fostering knowledge acquisition, character development, and preparing students for future societal responsibilities. According to Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2020), teachers contribute to students' academic success by creating structured learning environments, developing instructional materials, and employing effective teaching strategies. Additionally, Adeleke, Akudoh, and Adeleke, (2024) added that teachers influence students' cognitive and emotional development by instilling discipline, curiosity, and lifelong learning habits. Without dedicated teachers, educational institutions would struggle to meet their objectives, leading to diminished student performance and societal underdevelopment.

Retaining qualified and experienced teachers is a crucial task for the stability and effectiveness of educational institutions. Teacher retention ensures continuity in instruction, enhances student learning and fosters a positive school climate. According to Podolsky *et al*. (2019), high teacher turnover disrupts instructional continuity and negatively affects students who are at the receiving end. Retaining teachers helps maintain institutional memory, reduces recruitment costs, and enhances student-teacher relationships. Furthermore, experienced teachers serve as mentors to new teachers, fostering a culture of collaboration and professional growth within the school community (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, 2019). Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to teacher retention is essential for improving the overall quality of education.

The significance of teacher retention is numerous and far-reaching. Retaining teachers could reduce the financial and administrative burden associated with recruiting and training new staff in secondary schools. According to Ronfeldt *et al.* (2018), schools with stable teaching staff experience higher student achievement levels compared to those with frequent staff turnovers. Also, consistent teacher retention fosters strong teacher-student relationships, which could contribute to improved student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Additionally, a stable teaching workforce could enhance the overall school climate, promoting collaboration among teachers and the administration. Schools with high teacher retention rates may better positioned to implement long-term instructional strategies and maintain institutional values (Kraft, Marinell, and Yee, 2016).

Conversely, the failure to maintain teacher retention could leads to several negative consequences within the school system. High turnover rates may disrupt the learning process, as students must continually adjust to new teaching styles and expectations. Research by Darling-Hammond, *et al.* (2018) highlights that frequent teacher turnover contributes to lower student performance, especially in private schools where resources for professional development and teacher support may be limited. Additionally, teacher

attrition places a strain on the remaining staff, increasing their workload and leading to burnout. This cycle of turnover further exacerbates the problem, making it difficult for schools to maintain quality instruction (Sorensen and Ladd, 2020). Researchers have worked on variables such as motivational factors and teachers' socioeconomic factors as variables that could improve teacher's retention, but the problem persist. Author (2022) identified teachers' personal factors, salary administration, job enrichment, and institutional leadership as variables that could have significant impact on teachers' retention, in this study, salary administration and job enrichment are considered as variables that could address the problem of teacher's retention if properly practice in private schools.

Salary administration is one of the critical determinants of teacher retention, particularly in private secondary schools where employment conditions often differ from those in the public sector. Salary administration refers not only to the amount of pay teachers receive but also to the structure, equity, and timeliness of remuneration. When teachers perceive that their salaries are fair, competitive, and regularly disbursed, they are more likely to remain committed to their schools. Conversely, poor salary administration often leads to dissatisfaction, low morale, and eventual turnover. So, a critical factor in teacher retention is salary administration, which encompasses several elements, including salary structure, timeline of payment, pay equity, compensation, and communication (Sutcher, *et al.,* 2019). The elements of salary administration would be adopted as sub variable of salary administration as they may significantly impacts teacher retention in private schools.

Salary structure may be described as the framework within which teachers' pays are determined based on qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities. salary structure plays a major role in influencing retention. Schools with clear and competitive pay structures may attract and retain qualified teachers, while those with irregular or below-market pay may struggle with high attrition. Teachers often compare their earnings with peers in other schools or sectors, and inequitable pay may trigger a desire to leave. A well-defined salary structure would provide clarity and transparency, ensuring that compensation is aligned with teachers' expectations and organization standards (Bryson, *et al.,* 2019). This indicates that when teachers perceive their salaries as competitive and fair, they are more likely to remain in their jobs and positions. However, in many private secondary schools, salary structures seem to be inconsistent, leading to dissatisfaction among teachers and high turnover rates (Adeleke and Akere, 2023). Establishing a clear, fair and equitable salary structure for teachers can enhance job satisfaction, motivation and encourage teachers' retention.

The timeline of salary payment is another crucial factor that could influence teacher retention in secondary schools. Timely and regular salary payments ensure financial stability, reducing stress and uncertainty among teachers. Delays in salary payments could contribute to low morale and reduced commitment among teachers and may discourage teachers to stay in such an organization. In private secondary schools, where financial resources may be unstable, inconsistent salary payments can lead to frustration and job dissatisfaction. Ensuring prompt salary disbursement can enhance teachers' trust in the administration, improve their overall job and encourage teachers to retain teaching job (Taris and Schaufeli, 2020).

Pay equity is another salary administration variable that could significantly shapes teachers' retention in private schools. Pay equity could be described as the fairness of compensation among teachers performing similar roles and possessing comparable qualifications and experience could encourage teachers' retention in secondary schools. Equity in wages may fosters trust and cohesion among the teaching staff, reducing feelings of resentment, distrust and dissatisfaction in secondary schools (Greenberg, 2020). When teachers feel that their workload, qualifications, and years of experience are not adequately reflected in their pay, they perceive inequity, which reduces job satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, transparent salary scales that recognize experience and merit would encourage teachers to remain longer in the system but perceived salary disparities can lead to lower motivation levels and increased turnover rates. Private schools that prioritize pay equity by implementing structured salary scales and addressing discrepancies are more likely to retain their teachers and maintain a positive work environment.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of teacher retention in private secondary schools has persisted over the years, which has undermined the stability of the teaching workforce and the overall quality of education. This is manifest from frequent exits of teachers that have created a cycle of instability, where newly recruited staff often leave within a short period, making continuity in instructional delivery difficult. The extent of the problem is evident in the declining tenure of teachers, with many serving for only two to three years before transferring to public schools, seeking employment abroad, or leaving the profession entirely for better-paying sectors. This instability has limited the ability of private schools to retain experienced staff, thereby reducing the quality of instruction and negatively affecting student outcomes.

The persistence of low teacher retention could carry serious implications for the education sector. It disrupts students' academic progress, weakens teacher–student relationships, and increases the financial and administrative burden of repeated recruitment and training. In addition, schools with high turnover rates risk losing their reputational value, thereby reducing parents' confidence in their capacity to deliver quality education.

Although, some private school proprietors have attempted to address this problem through in-service training, incentive packages, and flexible work conditions, such interventions are often poorly structured, inconsistently implemented. Consequently, the problem persists. There appears to be a dearth of studies on salary administration (salary structure, pay equity, timeliness) and job enrichment (compensation and communication) as variables that could improve teacher retention in private secondary schools. This gap informed the present study, which investigated whether salary administration and job enrichment would influence teacher retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of salary administration, job enrichment on teachers' retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study will;

i. examine the extent teachers' retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State,
ii. assess the fairness of salary administration in private secondary school in Akwa Ibom State,
iii. the relationship between staff salary administration (salary structure, timeline of payment, pay equity) and teacher's retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study.

i. What is the extent of teachers' retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
ii. How fair is the salary administration in private secondary school in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis

This hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 levels of significance.

There is no significant relationship between staff salary administration (salary structure, timeline of payment, pay equity) and teacher's retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of correlational type to examine the relationship between salary administration, job enrichment, and teachers' retention without manipulating the variables, as they naturally occur in schools. The population comprised 22,453 private secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State, while a sample of 393 teachers was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique involving the selection of 30% of Local Government Areas, 10% of schools, and 20% of teachers. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled *Salary Administration and Teachers' Retention Questionnaire (SATRQ)*, consisting of 35 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by three experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.79, indicating adequate reliability. Data collection was carried out with the assistance of trained research assistants who ensured ethical standards and high response rates. The collected data were analyzed using percentages, mean, and standard deviation to answer research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the extent of teachers' retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Extent of Teachers' Retention in Private Secondary Schools

S/N	Teachers' Retention Intention	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I plan to stay in this school for a long time.	389	1.94	1.03	Low
2	I feel valued by the school management.	389	1.72	1.14	Low
3	My work is mostly appreciated by the school management, which makes me stay in this school.	389	2.03	1.13	Low
4	I have good opportunities for career growth and professional development in this school.	389	2.60	0.97	Moderate
5	The work environment in this school makes me want to continue working here.	389	1.98	1.12	Low
6	I have a good relationship with my colleagues, which makes me enjoy working here.	389	2.59	1.09	Moderate
7	The work condition is fair and does not make me think of leaving.	389	2.08	1.17	Low
8	I receive regular support and feedback from the school management, which makes me stay.	389	1.72	0.94	Low
9	The job security in this school is strong enough to encourage me to remain here.	389	1.82	0.73	Low
10	I would recommend this school as a good place for teachers to work.	389	2.04	1.16	Moderate
	Grand Mean		**2.05**		Low

The result presented in Table 4.1 highlights the extent of teachers' retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The overall grand mean of 2.05, which falls within the low range, indicates that teacher retention is generally poor in these schools. Specifically, most of the items assessed reflect low levels of intention to remain, such as feeling valued by school management (Mean = 1.72), receiving regular support and feedback (Mean = 1.72), and perceiving job security (Mean = 1.82). Similarly, aspects such as appreciation of teachers' work (Mean = 2.03), fairness of work conditions (Mean = 2.08), and willingness to stay long-term in the school (Mean = 1.94) all fall within low levels.

However, some areas showed moderate retention influences. For instance, teachers indicated moderate satisfaction with career growth and professional development opportunities (Mean = 2.60), collegial relationships (Mean = 2.59), and their willingness to recommend the school as a good workplace (Mean = 2.04). These moderate indicators suggest that while professional development and peer relationships provide some motivation for retention, the lack of strong management support, job security, and appreciation undermine overall teacher retention.

This aligns with the work of Eze and Okafor (2019), who reported that poor wages lead to high staff turnover in private schools in Nigeria. Another possible reason could be limited job enrichment. In many private schools, teachers are not given extra responsibilities or opportunities to grow. This lack of professional growth can reduce motivation and job satisfaction. According to Ofoegbu (2021), when teachers are not challenged or involved in decision-making, they are more likely to leave their jobs. Despite these challenges, some teachers choose to stay. This could be due to a lack of better options or because they find personal fulfillment in teaching.

Research Question 2: How fair is the salary administration in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Fairness of Salary Administration in Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom

S/N	Salary Structure	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The salary I receive is fair compared to my workload in this school.	389	2.52	0.84	Fair
2	My salary is paid on time every month without delay.	389	2.01	0.91	Unfair
3	The school provides salary increases based on performance.	389	1.92	0.56	Unfair
4	The salary structure in my school is competitive compared to other private schools in the area.	389	2.18	1.16	Unfair
5	My salary is based on my job experience.	389	2.51	0.73	Fair
	Mean		**2.23**	**0.84**	**Unfair**
	Timeline of Paymnt				
6	My salary is always paid on the agreed date each month.	389	1.86	0.81	Unfair
7	There are no delays in salary payment in my school.	389	2.81	1.10	Fair
8	The management informs teachers in advance if there will be a delay in salary payment.	389	1.72	1.16	Unfair
9	My school has a consistent salary payment schedule.	389	2.74	1.14	Fair
10	The management makes effort to pay as soon as possible.	389	3.54	0.16	Very fair
	Mean		**2.534**	**0.874**	**Fair**
	Pay Equity				
11	Teachers in my school receive salaries that match their qualifications.	389	1.98	.56	Unfair
12	There is no disparities in my salary compared to other teachers.	389	2.48	1.16	Unfair
13	Teachers receive equal pay for the same job in my school.	389	2.56	0.74	Fair
14	Teachers in my school are paid fairly compared to teachers in other private schools.	389	2.72	0.54	Fair
15	Salary increases in my school are based on clear criteria.	389	2.01	.51	Unfair
	Mean		**2.35**	**0.702**	**Unfair**
	Grand Mean		**2.38**		**Unfair**

The analysis in Table 4.2 reveals teachers' perceptions on the fairness of salary administration in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The results reveal mixed opinions across the three dimensions assessed salary structure, timeline of payment, and pay equity.

For salary structure, the weighted mean of 2.23 with a standard deviation of 0.84 indicates that teachers generally perceive the salary system as unfair. Although some items such as fairness of salary compared to workload (Mean = 2.52) and salary based on job experience (Mean = 2.51) were rated fair, critical aspects such as timely payments (Mean = 2.01), performance-based increases (Mean = 1.92), and competitiveness with other private schools (Mean = 2.18) were viewed as unfair.

Regarding the timeline of payment, the weighted mean of 2.53 with a standard deviation of 0.87 suggests a perception of fairness in salary administration. Interestingly, while issues such as salary being paid on the agreed date (Mean = 1.86) and advance notice of delays (Mean = 1.72) were rated unfair, items like consistent salary schedules (Mean = 2.74) and management's effort to pay as soon as possible (Mean = 3.54) received higher ratings, raising the overall perception to a fair level.

For pay equity, the weighted mean of 2.35 with a standard deviation of 0.70 shows that teachers generally perceive salary equity as unfair. While there were fair assessments regarding equal pay for the same job (Mean = 2.56) and fairness in comparison with other schools (Mean = 2.72), concerns remain with qualifications not being adequately reflected in salaries (Mean = 1.98) and lack of clear criteria for salary increases (Mean = 2.01).

Finally, the grand mean of 2.38 indicates that overall, teachers in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom perceive the administration of salaries as unfair. This implies that while certain aspects such as payment timelines show relatively better ratings, issues of salary competitiveness, performance-based increases, and equity in relation to qualifications continue to undermine salary administration in private secondary schools.

The result is in line with the finding of Asogwa and Ogechukwu (2017) that that found out that inconsistent income sources often lead to irregular salary payments in private schools. Another reason may be the lack of a standard salary structure. Unlike public schools, private schools are not bound by government wage policies. This gives school owners the freedom to decide what to pay. Sadly, some use this freedom to underpay teachers. Ejiogu and Ndubuisi (2020) noted that poor salary structures are common in private schools and contribute to low staff morale. Some school owners also fail to review salaries regularly. With rising living costs, stagnant wages can frustrate teachers. Nwachukwu and Onah (2018) found that when salary increases do not match inflation, job satisfaction drops. Despite the challenges, a few schools still manage their salary systems well. They value their teachers and see fair pay as a way to retain good staff. These schools help raise the overall rating of salary administration to a moderate level.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between staff salary administration (salary structure, timeline of payment, pay equity) and teacher's retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3 Correlation Matrix on the Relationship Between Staff Salary Administration and Teachers' Retention

Variables		Teachers' Retention	Salary Structure	Timeline of Payment	Pay Equity
Teachers' Retention	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	389			
Salary Structure	Pearson Correlation	.776**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	389	389		
Timeline of Payment	Pearson Correlation	.791**	-.580**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	389	389	389	
Pay Equity	Pearson Correlation	.648**	229**	-.433**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	389	389	389	389

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 4.4 presents the correlation between salary administration components (salary structure, timeline of payment, and pay equity) and teachers' retention in private secondary schools.

The analysis shows that salary structure has a strong and positive relationship with teachers' retention ($r = .776$, $p < .05$). This suggests that when teachers perceive the salary structure as fair and rewarding, they are more likely to remain in their schools. Similarly, the timeline of payment demonstrates the strongest positive correlation with teachers' retention ($r = .791$, $p < .05$). This indicates that prompt and consistent payment of salaries is a critical factor influencing whether teachers stay or leave. Delays in salary disbursement likely reduce teachers' job satisfaction and increase turnover intentions. The results also reveal a significant and positive relationship between pay equity and teachers' retention ($r = .648$, $p < .05$). This means that when teachers feel that their salaries are equitable compared to their colleagues with similar qualifications and experience, they are more inclined to remain in the system. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between staff salary administration (salary structure, timeline of payment, pay equity) and teacher's retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between staff salary administration (salary structure, timeline of payment, pay equity) and teacher's retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The result corroborates the finding of According to Okwu and Adigwe (2018), timely and adequate salary payment plays a major role in keeping teachers in private schools. Another reason could be that good salary administration makes teachers feel respected and valued. It shows that the school management cares about their welfare. This can improve morale and reduce the chances of teachers leaving. Ekanem and Etim (2020) found that teachers who are satisfied with their pay tend to be more loyal and committed to their schools. Also, schools with clear salary structures and regular reviews of pay help build trust. Teachers in such schools are more confident about their future. This was

supported by Okpara and Nwankwo (2017), who reported that schools with organized wage systems experience lower teacher turnover.

Conclusion

The study concluded that salary administration influences the teacher retention in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. It was therefore concluded that teachers who are paid fairly and on time are more likely to stay. This implies that the level of teacher's retention private secondary schools is determined by the extent to which school administrators administer staff salary (salary structure, timelines of payment and pay equity) fairly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

i. Private school owners are encouraged to improve more on teacher retention as it was established to be low among private school in the State.
ii. Private school owners are encouraged to be fair in their salary administration as it was established that teachers are experiencing unfair salary administration in the area of structure, timeliness and pay equity. This will help to reduce the rate at which they leave the schools.
iii. The Ministry of Education should monitor private schools to ensure fair treatment of teachers and encourage policies that promote teacher welfare and retention.

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