

# An Assessment of the Effects of Employees Turnover Among Private Secondary Schools in Tanzania: A Case of Ilala Municipality

Zayadi A. Msangi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Catholic University of Mbeya, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** Employee turnover constitutes a persistent and costly challenge for private secondary schools, undermining instructional continuity, depleting institutional knowledge, and escalating operational expenditure. Despite its growing relevance, empirical evidence on the effects of employee turnover in private secondary schools in Tanzania remains scarce. This study sought to assess the effects of employee turnover, examine its underlying causes, and identify management strategies for its mitigation in private secondary schools in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. Moreover, the study adopted a qualitative research approach, underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, and employed a descriptive research design. Purposive sampling was used to select 87 participants from five private secondary schools, comprising head teachers, deputy head teachers, academic masters, heads of department, class teachers, and subject teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, self-administered questionnaires, and documentary review. Qualitative data were analysed thematically, while descriptive statistics were applied to quantitative items. The findings indicate that the principal causes of employee turnover include uncompetitive salary packages, inadequate training and professional development opportunities, absence of performance-based promotion, poor working conditions, and insufficient recognition and rewards. The effects of turnover were found to include deterioration of service quality, wastage of organizational resources, loss of experienced staff, increased workload among remaining teachers, and erosion of institutional knowledge. Effective retention strategies identified include competitive compensation and benefits, fair treatment, career development opportunities, employee relations programmes, provision of staff loans, structured exit interviews, and performance-based recognition. Furthermore, School management and policy-makers should institutionalise performance-based promotion systems, invest in continuous professional development, and establish transparent remuneration structures to reduce turnover and improve school effectiveness. This study contributes to the limited empirical body of knowledge on teacher turnover within private secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa, offering context-sensitive recommendations for human resource management in the Tanzanian education sector.

**Keywords:** *Employee Turnover, Teacher Retention, Private Secondary Schools, Tanzania, Human Resource Management, School Effectiveness.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Private secondary schools in Tanzania have expanded rapidly over the past two decades as a consequence of increased demand for secondary education and the government's limited capacity to provide equitable access across all societal strata (Tarkhishvili et al., 2022). These institutions have grown to occupy a significant share of the secondary education landscape, with 158 out of 313 secondary schools in Dar es Salaam being privately owned (Regional Education Officer, Dar es Salaam, 2022). Yet, despite their numerical prevalence, private secondary schools face persistent challenges in human resource management, most notably high rates of employee turnover.

Employee turnover is the voluntary or involuntary departure of employees from an organization, and has been identified as one of the most disruptive and costly phenomena in organisational management (Hom et al., 2017). In the education sector, its consequences are particularly acute: teacher turnover disrupts instructional continuity, destabilises classroom environments, erodes accumulated pedagogical knowledge, and ultimately diminishes the quality of learning outcomes for students (Nguyen et al., 2025; Bhattarai, 2024). Globally, the phenomenon has attracted sustained scholarly attention, with evidence pointing to a complex interplay of compensation-related, organisational, and environmental factors that drive

teachers to leave their posts (Achahbar, 2023; Mabeya et al., 2025).

While research on teacher turnover has proliferated in the global literature, much of it remains anchored in public school contexts, or in healthcare and corporate settings. Studies focused explicitly on private secondary schools in developing countries particularly in East and sub-Saharan Africa are comparatively sparse (Tarkhnishvili et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2025). Tanzania, in particular, presents an under-researched context in which private schools operate under distinct pressures: they are less subject to the standardised protections offered to public school teachers, yet must compete with government schools and other private institutions for qualified staff. Documentary evidence from private secondary schools in Dar es Salaam indicates that teacher turnover increased from 60 teachers in 2022 to 110 teachers in 2023 a trend that signals an urgent need for targeted inquiry.

This study responds to this gap by assessing the effects of employee turnover in private secondary schools in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. It further examines the causes of turnover and investigates management strategies that may effectively reduce it. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To determine the effects of employee turnover in private secondary schools in Ilala Municipality;
- To examine the causes of employee turnover in private secondary schools; and
- To identify strategies that school management can adopt to mitigate the effects of employee turnover.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### ➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This study is grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which distinguishes between hygiene factors such as salary, working conditions, and institutional policies and motivational factors such as recognition, achievement, advancement, and professional growth. Herzberg posited that hygiene factors, when absent or inadequate, generate job dissatisfaction and increase turnover propensity, while motivational factors foster intrinsic satisfaction and retention. This theoretical lens is particularly well-suited to exploring teacher turnover in private secondary schools, where both sets of factors inadequate pay and poor working conditions on one hand, and limited recognition and career advancement on the other have been empirically identified as key determinants of departure decisions (Bhattarai, 2024; Ogbonna, 1993).

Complementing this, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) provides an additional explanatory layer, noting that employees seek to satisfy progressively higher-order needs from physiological and safety needs to esteem and self-actualisation. In private secondary schools characterised by low salaries, job insecurity, and limited professional development, teachers' basic and safety needs are frequently unmet, rendering long-term retention implausible (Boxall & Purcell, 2022).

### ➤ *Employee Turnover in the Education Sector*

Employee turnover in educational institutions has been documented as a multifaceted and sector-specific phenomenon. A recent systematic meta-analysis on teacher turnover (Nguyen et al., 2025) identified three broad categories of predictors: personal characteristics, job-related variables, and contextual factors including school climate and external socio-economic pressures. Critically, the review found that job demands and school climate continue to be among the strongest predictors of turnover intention, irrespective of national context.

Evidence from Nepal indicates that inadequate compensation, limited professional development, and poor working conditions are primary drivers of turnover in private schools, with direct implications for instructional quality and student outcomes (Bhattarai, 2024). A Nigerian study similarly confirmed that job satisfaction indicators including job security, compensation, organisational policies, and career prospects are strongly associated with labour turnover in private secondary schools (Mabeya et al., 2025). These findings highlight that turnover in private education is not merely a human resource concern but one with direct pedagogical and institutional consequences.

In sub-Saharan Africa, research on working conditions in Kenyan secondary schools demonstrates that factors such as excessive workloads, insufficient instructional resources, poor leadership, and student indiscipline contribute to elevated teacher attrition (Mabeya et al., 2025). A study from the United Arab Emirates further established that short-term contracts and high turnover disrupt instructional continuity and negatively impact students' academic performance (Achahbar, 2023), a finding with direct relevance to the Tanzanian private school context.

### ➤ *Effects of Employee Turnover*

The literature consistently identifies several categories of effects associated with high employee turnover. First, turnover degrades organisational performance and service quality. Burke and Cooper (2012) argued that organisations failing to invest in employee development experience elevated turnover, burnout, and quality deterioration. Martin (2005) similarly contended that businesses dependent on human capital such as schools suffer disproportionately when experienced employees exit.

Second, turnover imposes substantial financial costs. Phillips and Edwards (2021) estimated that the direct costs of replacing an employee including recruitment, selection, onboarding, and training can amount to between 50% and 200% of the departing employee's annual salary. In resource-constrained private secondary schools, such costs are particularly burdensome. Ogora and Muturi (2015) documented that high external labour mobility results in wastage of organisational resources, including disruption to established schedules and programmes.

Third, turnover results in the loss of institutional knowledge and human capital a consequence noted across education, healthcare, and business contexts (Park & Min,

2020; Hom et al., 2017). In schools, the departure of experienced teachers creates pedagogical continuity gaps that newly recruited staff take considerable time to bridge (Lee et al., 2011). Fourth, high turnover increases the workload of remaining staff, contributing to burnout, reduced morale, and a cyclical intensification of turnover (Calvin, 2017; Malisa, 2015).

#### ➤ *Causes of Employee Turnover*

The empirical literature identifies compensation inadequacy as the most consistently reported cause of voluntary turnover. Inadequate and non-competitive salaries motivate employees to seek alternative employment, particularly in contexts where salary disparities between institutions are marked (Moeed et al., 2013; Bhattarai, 2024). Armstrong and Taylor (2020) noted that organisations failing to align remuneration with performance and market rates experience higher rates of staff attrition.

Limited access to training and professional development is a second major driver. Employees who perceive their career growth as stagnant are more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere (Ogora & Muturi, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Gibson (2018) and Morris et al. (2020) established that recognition and appreciation are powerful retention mechanisms, and their absence significantly diminishes employee commitment. Poor working conditions encompassing physical infrastructure, workload, and psychosocial safety similarly contribute to turnover (Malisa, 2015; Mbiu, 2019).

#### ➤ *Retention Strategies*

The literature proposes several evidence-based retention strategies. Competitive compensation and benefits packages have been consistently identified as foundational retention mechanisms (Hongvichit, 2015; Calvin, 2017). Organisational justice encompassing fair treatment, transparent promotion practices, and equitable policy application has been shown to significantly reduce turnover intentions (Kreisman, 2002; Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Structured professional development programmes, exit interviews, and performance recognition systems further complement holistic retention frameworks (Bushe, 2012; Lee et al., 2011).

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach within an interpretivist paradigm, complemented by descriptive quantitative measures to form a pragmatic mixed-methods design. A descriptive research design was adopted, as it is well-suited to documenting and explaining social phenomena without variable manipulation. The study was conducted in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, targeting a population of 673 teachers across five purposively selected private secondary schools. Using the Slovin formula at a 10% margin of error, a sample of 87 participants was drawn, comprising head teachers, deputy head teachers, academic masters, heads of department, class teachers, and subject teachers.

Data were collected through three instruments: semi-structured interviews with school administrators, self-administered questionnaires for teaching staff, and a documentary review of institutional records. Instruments were piloted before deployment to ensure reliability and clarity. Qualitative data were analysed thematically following a six-phase framework, while descriptive statistics were applied to quantitative items. Trustworthiness was ensured through source and methodological triangulation, and ethical protocols including informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymity were strictly observed throughout the study.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### ➤ *Effects of Employee Turnover*

##### • *Deterioration of Service Quality*

The study found that high employee turnover significantly deteriorates the quality of educational services delivered in private secondary schools. Academic masters and subject teachers from multiple schools consistently reported that staff shortages resulting from turnover impair the school's capacity to maintain instructional standards. As an academic master at one of the sampled schools observed:

*"High employee turnover diminishes the quality of services offered by our schools. The departure of experienced staff creates gaps that cannot easily be filled, resulting in dissatisfaction among students and parents."* (Academic Master, School B, 2023).

This finding is consistent with Burke and Cooper (2012), who argued that organisations failing to invest in employee development face heightened turnover and a consequent decline in service quality. It further aligns with Martin (2005), who contended that human capital is irreplaceable in service-oriented organisations. Bhattarai (2024) similarly found that teacher turnover in private schools undermines educational quality and student outcomes in developing country contexts.

##### • *Wastage of Organizational Resources*

Respondents consistently identified the wastage of organizational resources as a significant consequence of employee turnover. Teachers and administrators across sampled schools noted that the costs associated with recruiting, selecting, and training replacement staff consume substantial institutional resources, diverting funds from instructional activities. A teacher from School C elaborated:

*"Every time a teacher leaves, the school spends considerable money and time on hiring and training a replacement. This diverts resources that could be invested in improving learning facilities."* (Teacher, School C, 2023).

These findings are corroborated by Phillips and Edwards (2021), who documented that employee replacement costs routinely exceed 100% of an employee's annual salary when indirect costs such as lost productivity and administrative burden are accounted for. Ogora and

Muturi (2015) further noted that high labour mobility disrupts operational schedules and programmes, amplifying resource wastage.

- *Loss of Experienced Staff and Institutional Knowledge*

The loss of experienced teachers was identified as a critical effect of turnover, with far-reaching implications for institutional memory, mentoring capacity, and examination performance. Respondents noted that highly experienced teachers often exit the institution at precisely the moment when their accumulated expertise is most valuable:

*"When experienced teachers leave, they take with them years of pedagogical knowledge and student relationships that new recruits cannot immediately replicate."* (Teacher, School D, 2023).

This is consistent with Lee et al. (2011), who reported that organisations suffer from knowledge depletion as a consequence of labour mobility, reducing their capacity to perform at optimal levels. Park and Min (2020) similarly documented the erosion of human capital as a key indirect cost of employee turnover.

- *Increased Workload on Remaining Staff*

High employee turnover creates increased workload pressures on staff who remain in post, as schools are compelled to redistribute teaching periods and administrative responsibilities among a reduced workforce. A deputy head teacher at School D reported:

*"Teachers in our school are now covering up to twenty-seven periods per week well above the recommended load. This is unsustainable and is causing burnout among our best performers."* (Deputy Head Teacher, School D, 2023).

This finding resonates with Calvin's (2017) study in Nigeria, which showed that increased workloads resulting from understaffing diminish teacher morale and performance. Malisa (2015) similarly argued that workload intensification is a cyclical driver of turnover, as overloaded teachers are more likely to seek employment in better-staffed institutions.

➤ *Causes of Employee Turnover*

- *Uncompetitive Salary Packages*

Inadequate and non-competitive remuneration was the most frequently cited cause of employee turnover across all sampled schools. Head teachers and subject teachers concurred that the salary structures of private secondary schools often compare unfavourably with those of public schools and better-resourced private institutions:

*"Many of our teachers receive salaries that are significantly lower than those offered by government schools or international schools in the city. It is not surprising that they look elsewhere."* (Head Teacher, School B, 2023).

This finding is well-supported in the literature. Moeed et al. (2013) established that compensation adequacy is a fundamental determinant of employee satisfaction and retention. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) similarly argued that organisations failing to align remuneration with market benchmarks experience disproportionately high voluntary turnover.

- *Absence of Training and Professional Development*

The absence of structured training and professional development programmes was identified as a significant pull factor driving turnover. Teachers reported that limited access to in-service training, workshops, and further education opportunities diminishes both their professional identity and long-term career prospects:

*"I have not attended any formal professional development training in over two years. There are no opportunities here to grow as a teacher, so I am considering moving to a school that invests in its staff."* (Teacher, School A, 2023).

Ogora and Muturi (2015) confirmed that training and development opportunities significantly influence teacher retention, with well-trained employees recording higher job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Creswell and Creswell (2018) further argued that professional growth is a critical component of employee engagement and long-term retention.

- *Lack of Recognition and Rewards*

The absence of formal recognition and reward systems was identified as a demotivating factor that erodes employee commitment and accelerates turnover. Teachers reported that despite delivering quality outcomes, their efforts were rarely acknowledged through formal mechanisms:

*"Exceptional performance goes unrecognised. There are no awards, no public acknowledgement, nothing. It demoralises those who work hard."* (Head of Department, School A, 2023).

Gibson (2018) found that a lack of recognition from school leaders significantly discourages teachers from remaining in their posts. Morris et al. (2020) argued that school administrators require strong leadership skills to embed cultures of appreciation, and that recognition programmes are among the most cost-effective retention tools available to school management.

- *Absence of Performance-Based Promotion*

Respondents consistently reported that promotions within private secondary schools are not systematically linked to teacher performance, undermining incentives for sustained effort and commitment. Teachers who deliver exceptional results without corresponding career advancement frequently resolve to seek opportunities in institutions that reward merit:

*"There is no clear promotion pathway here. Seniority counts more than performance, and that is deeply*

*frustrating for teachers who work hard and achieve results."* (Teacher, School C, 2023).

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) established that merit-based promotion systems are strongly associated with employee motivation and retention, and that their absence constitutes a significant driver of voluntary turnover.

- *Poor Working Conditions*

Poor working conditions encompassing inadequate physical infrastructure, absence of welfare facilities, and limited support services were identified as a structural cause of employee turnover. Respondents noted that the provision of accommodation, transport, and healthcare support are perceived as emblematic of institutional care and commitment to staff welfare:

*"Teachers need to feel that the school values them, not just as instruction-delivery machines, but as human beings. Basic welfare provision goes a long way."* (Teacher, School E, 2023).

Malisa (2015) established that attractive working environments are among the most effective strategies for retaining qualified teachers. Mbiu's (2019) study in Kenya similarly found that private school teachers frequently migrate to institutions offering better physical and social working conditions.

➤ *Management Strategies for Mitigating Employee Turnover*

- *Competitive Compensation and Benefits*

Head teachers and administrators across sampled schools recognised the centrality of competitive remuneration in retaining qualified staff. Several schools had introduced performance-linked financial incentives such as additional payments for teachers whose students excel in national examinations, as practical retention mechanisms:

*"We award teachers whose students perform well in national examinations with monetary bonuses. It makes a real difference to their commitment."* (Head Teacher, School C, 2023).

Hongvichit (2015) confirmed that comprehensive compensation and benefits frameworks play a vital role in reducing turnover. Calvin (2017) similarly documented that salary increments and performance bonuses are among the most potent retention tools in sub-Saharan school settings.

- *Fair Treatment and Organisational Justice*

Fair and equitable treatment of all staff was identified as a foundational strategy for building organisational commitment and reducing turnover. Respondents emphasised that perceptions of fairness in workload distribution, disciplinary processes, and administrative decisions directly influence retention:

*"When teachers feel they are treated with respect and fairness; they develop a sense of belonging that makes them reluctant to leave."* (Teacher, School B, 2023).

Kreisman (2002) established that equitable treatment within organisations fosters a sense of belonging, reduces grievances, and lowers turnover rates. Contemporary research on organisational justice further confirms that both procedural and distributive justice perceptions are significant predictors of turnover intention in educational settings (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

- *Professional Development and Career Growth Opportunities*

Providing structured opportunities for academic and professional development was identified as a critical long-term retention strategy. Respondents called for institutional policies that support teachers in pursuing postgraduate qualifications, attending workshops, and accessing short-term in-service training:

*"If the school supported me to advance my education, I would feel invested in and would commit to staying long-term."* (Teacher, School D, 2023).

Lee et al. (2011) argued that professional development investment signals organisational commitment to employee growth and is strongly associated with reduced turnover. Ogora and Muturi (2015) similarly concluded that professional development programmes improve individual and organisational performance, with measurable retention benefits.

- *Positive Workplace Relationships*

Cultivating constructive interpersonal relationships among staff was identified as an important socio-organisational retention strategy. Respondents noted that collegial environments characterised by mutual respect, teamwork, and informal social cohesion reduce isolation and enhance job satisfaction:

*"Schools where teachers support each other and management respects everyone regardless of rank create environments where people want to stay."* (Teacher, School A, 2023).

Mrigo (2014) confirmed that positive workplace relationships are among the most effective non-monetary tools for retaining staff, arguing that social capital at the workplace constitutes a significant source of employee motivation and commitment.

- *Staff Loan Facilities*

The provision of accessible loan facilities with favourable repayment terms was identified as a practical financial welfare strategy that enhances teacher loyalty and tenure:

"Access to a low-interest loan enabled me to address pressing personal financial needs without seeking outside employment. It has made me more committed to this school." (Teacher, School C, 2023).

Baker (2004) and Chaminade (2007) both noted that financial welfare provisions, including staff loans, create enduring bonds between employees and their organisations, reducing voluntary turnover by addressing immediate financial needs.

- *Structured Exit Interviews*

Conducting structured exit interviews with departing staff was identified as an evidence-gathering tool that enables schools to identify systemic drivers of turnover and implement targeted interventions:

"Exit interviews give us insight into the real reasons teachers leave. Without that information, we are guessing. With it, we can make targeted improvements." (Class Teacher, School D, 2023).

Bushe (2012) established that exit interview data, when systematically analysed and acted upon, is among the most proven diagnostic tools for reducing turnover in organisations.

- *Performance Recognition Programmes*

Institutionalised recognition programmes including annual staff awards, certificates of excellence, and formal public acknowledgement of outstanding performance, were identified as low-cost, high-impact retention mechanisms:

"A simple certificate recognising a teacher's contribution goes a long way. It shows they are valued and encourages others to strive for excellence." (Teacher, School B, 2023).

Lee et al. (2011) confirmed that performance recognition increases employee morale and organisational loyalty, thereby reducing external labour mobility. Morris et al. (2020) further argued that recognition-rich school cultures are associated with lower turnover and higher staff engagement.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the effects, causes, and management strategies associated with employee turnover in private secondary schools in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. The findings collectively demonstrate that employee turnover in this context is a multi-causal phenomenon with severe institutional consequences. Uncompetitive remuneration, absence of professional development, lack of performance-based promotion, poor working conditions, and inadequate recognition constitute the primary antecedents of turnover. These drivers converge to produce a deterioration of educational service quality, wastage of organisational resources, loss of experienced staff, increased workloads for remaining teachers, and the erosion of institutional knowledge.

The study further identifies a set of evidence-based strategies competitive compensation, organisational justice, professional development, positive workplace relations, financial welfare provisions, exit interviews, and performance recognition that school management can adopt to reduce turnover and enhance retention. These strategies are not mutually exclusive but are most effective when implemented as part of a comprehensive and institutionally coherent human resource management framework.

The findings contribute to the limited empirical literature on teacher turnover in Tanzanian private secondary schools and offer a contextually grounded foundation for policy and managerial interventions in similar sub-Saharan African educational settings.

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