



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Determinants of Teacher Attrition in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study examined rates of teacher attrition and the multiple factors influencing teacher attrition in public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2019 with a view to providing empirically-based, lasting solutions to the challenges of teacher attrition in Bayelsa and Delta states, Nigeria. Relying on state teachers' evidence and data, two research questions were posed to guide the study. The population of the study consists of 1563 public secondary school teachers. Using Cochran's formula for sample size determination, 723 teachers were sampled randomly for the study. The structured instrument for the investigation was validated, and its reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha statistical tool. A reliability value of 0.73 was found. Data analysis shows that salary and remuneration are remarkably associated with teachers' exit. Non-monetary motivation is not a sustainable substitute for an improved competitive salary. The study recommends attractive and competitive remuneration and improved teacher conditions of service, among others.

Keywords: Teachers' attrition, rate of teachers' attrition, and reasons for teachers' attrition

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Teachers are known to occupy the foremost position in transmitting knowledge, socio-cultural values, and instructional activities in society, and they enjoy an unbeatable record in transmitting socio-cultural values, among others (Lei, Cui, and Chiu, 2018). However, teachers continuously quit teaching for other occupations, citing a concatenation of reasons (Goldhaber and Theobald, 2022). The teachers' attrition poses major staffing challenges for state legislators, education managers, and school administrators. Teachers' attrition has therefore remained an intractable and fundamental issue confronting education managers and administrators because of the distance it creates between teachers and learners. The teachers' resignations exacerbate staffing issues, creating an intractable imbalance in school systems with unintended consequences (Aeschlimann, Herzog, and Sander, 2019).

Depreciation of the teachers' workforce over time is expected because of attrition. The term 'teacher attrition' describes the gradual loss of teachers from a teacher workforce over time, which may be caused by years of compulsory retirement from service, the attraction of other jobs, transfer of service, secondment to other ministries and parastatals, matrimony, ill health, and death, among other reasons. Teacher attrition is established at the exit of one from the system, irrespective of the reasons, and the vacancy created by the exited teacher is not filled.

There are different reports on the concept of employee attrition and employee turnover (Rissanen, 2017). These terms are used interchangeably to mean the same thing. While some researchers consider the two concepts to be interchangeable, others recognise a distinction. According to Kaur and Vijay (2016), "attrition stands for a gradual reduction of a workforce, as in when workers resign or retire and are not replaced." It is a slow but deliberate reduction in staff numbers that occurs as employees are lost to retirement, resignation, etc., and are not replaced. Employee attrition represents the reduction of staff for voluntary or involuntary reasons.

The attrition rate of teachers describes the number of teachers in a specific education system or sub-system that leave teaching in a given year, expressed in excess of a hundred (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2019). It is the unavoidable and incalculable but normal dwindling of the workforce due to resignations, retirement, sickness, or death. The quit rate is the teachers' exit rate expressed as a percentage of the total number of teachers in the system by year (Schreiner, 2017).

Teachers' attrition rates in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria, are like those in most public schools in other climes, where relative and absolute rates are confirmed to have grown higher over the years (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014; Ofoyeju, Akpotu, & Egwunyenga, 2022). Teachers' exit rates have been confirmed to be higher than their counterparts in most non-teaching professions. Records show that about 30% of education graduates who were engaged to teach abandoned the profession five years later, as opposed to 14% of pharmacists, 19% of nurses and lawyers, and 16% of engineers (Ingersoll, 2014). High rates of attrition in schools create a disequilibrium that threatens teacher effectiveness, school stability, and the quality of education (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Kraft & Papay, 2014; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Teachers' attrition results in a loss of experienced teachers and a selective loss of those with higher academic qualifications and expertise in mathematics and the sciences (Clemens, Klopfenstein, Lalonde, & Tis, 2018; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Related, Fitchett, McCarthy, Lambert, & Boyle (2018) reported that teachers are inadequate and parents are devoting tremendous attention to the quality of schools their children attend. Furthermore, Vignesh and Sarojini's (2018) study showed that teachers' attrition exerts multiple dire consequences on learning facilities and academic systems. It represents a loss of financial resources (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Learning Policy Institute, 2017; and Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). However, this happens if teachers' services are not immediately hired to remedy the situation. Attrition is one of the ways experienced teachers with better qualifications constantly leave the system. Teachers are critically important to learners, especially in primary and secondary learning facilities.

Teaching has remained a low-paying occupation in most countries. This has led to poor retention of teachers, with its attendant challenges (Strauss, 2017; Fitchett, McCarthy, Lambert, and Boyle, 2018; Kolins & Schrager, 2020; Garcia & Han, 2022). Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in media and policymaking attention to teacher issues, followed by a host of teacher agitation and negotiations emphasising the importance of improving their profession as a critical and crucial response factor (Strauss, 2017; Booker, 2019). However, teacher attrition issues have received little attention in Nigeria, specifically in Bayelsa and Delta States.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

It is true that a portion of the teacher workforce in Bayelsa and Delta States experiences attrition, and the only way to maintain a relatively constant number of teachers is to continue hiring to fill the void left by teachers who leave. The Bayelsa and Delta State governments have not employed enough teachers, with the teacher population suffering continuous attrition. This affects every ramification of the system, manifesting itself in the form of teacher inadequacy in different subject areas and school system failure.

Where a teacher's compensation, salary, or take-home pay is poor and not competitive in the presence of growing inflation and a surging cost of living, the marginal propensity to quit teaching becomes high. A combination of pecuniary, personal, school, and external or environmental unfavourable factors may prompt attrition. Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is: What are the reasons that drive teacher attrition in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria?

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on the reasoned action theory propounded by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The theory proposes that individuals pass through a causal chain using their knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and beliefs to make a particular decision and take action. It seeks to explain the link between attitudes and behaviours within the framework of human activity. The theory forecasts individual future behaviours based on their previous attitudes and behavioural intentions. Reasoned Action Theory posits that an individual's resolve to undertake a specific behaviour (like teaching) is a function of the attendant benefits hoped for by performing the behaviour (teaching). Since an individual's resolution to undertake a specific behaviour is based on the attendant benefits hoped for, the implication, therefore, is that if the job fails to meet the teacher's needs in the form of poor and irregular pay and delayed promotions as opposed to expected regular promotions, the teacher may resign from the job if there is an alternative. This is the point of teachers' attrition.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the teacher attrition rate and empirically understand the interacting dynamics, considering the endogenous, peculiar factors of teacher attrition in state-owned academies in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria, with a view to providing lasting, applicable remedies.

2. Method

2.1. Research Questions

Two research questions were posed to guide the study:

- What is the rate of teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States?
- What are the reasons for teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States?

2.1.1. Research Question 1

What is the rate of teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States?

To answer this research question, the percentage was used to determine the rate of teachers' attrition in Bayelsa and Delta States. The result is represented in table 1.

State	Year	Total Number of Teachers	Teachers' Attrition (N)	Rate of Attrition (%)
Bayelsa	2015	5185	999	19.27%
	2016	3806	1379	36.23%
	2017	3746	60	1.60%
	2018	3543	203	5.42%
	2019	3260	283	8.68%
	Total	19540	2924	71.20%
	Mean	3908	584	14.24%
Delta	2015	9561	398	4.16%
	2016	9163	912	9.95%
	2017	12228	396	3.24%
	2018	11832	708	5.98%
	2019	12007	531	4.42%
	Total attrition	54791	2945	27.75%
	Mean	10958	598	5.55%
Both State	2015	14746	1397	9.47%
	2016	12969	2291	17.67%
	2017	15974	456	2.85%
	2018	15576	911	5.85%
	2019	15267	814	5.33%
	Total number of teachers' attrition		5869	41.17%
	Grand mean		1174	8.23%

Table 1: Rate of Teachers' Attrition in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa, Delta, and Both States
Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 1 shows the rate of teachers' attrition between 2015 and 2019 for the states studied. In Bayelsa State, the rate of attrition in 2015 was 19.23%. The attrition rate increased to 36.23% in 2016, fell to 1.6% in 2017, and increased to 5.42% in 2018 and 8.68% in 2019. The mean rate of attrition across the years of study in Bayelsa State is 14.24%.

In Delta State, it shows that in 2015, the rate of teachers' attrition was 4.16%. In 2016, the attrition rate was 9.95%. The rate dropped in 2017 to 3.24% and increased to 5.98% in 2018. It further dropped to 4.98% in 2019. The mean rate of attrition across the years of study in Delta State is 5.55%. Both states of the study recorded an attrition rate of 9.47% in 2015, 17.67% in 2016, 2.85% in 2017, 5.85% in 2018, and 5.33% in 2019, and a mean attrition rate of 8.23%.

A graphic comparison of both states, as shown in table 1, shows that Bayelsa State had a higher attrition rate than Delta State in 2015, 2016, and 2019. Delta State recorded a higher attrition rate in 2017 and 2018. The graph is presented in figure 1.

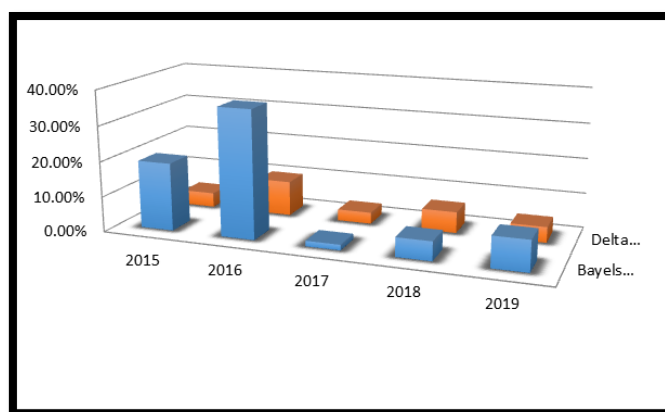


Figure 1: Comparison of Teachers' Attrition Rates between Bayelsa and Delta States

2.1.2. Research Question 2

What are the reasons for teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States?

To answer research question 2, the mean statistical tool was used to determine the reasons for teacher attrition in secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States. Teachers' views were sought and collated. The result is presented in table 2.

Reasons for Teachers' Attrition		Bayelsa State		Delta State		Both Sates	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
PECUNIARY FACTORS							
1	Scant remuneration	3.61*	0.51	3.36*	0.53	3.46*	0.54
2	Poor condition of service outside salary	3.65*	0.48	3.39*	0.57	3.49*	0.55
3	If I could get a higher-paying job, I would leave teaching	1.98	0.73	3.19*	0.52	2.74*	0.84
4	Poor promotion prospect	3.43*	0.51	2.90*	1.01	3.10*	0.90
5	Uniform salary structure for all skills	2.79*	0.70	3.34*	0.56	3.13*	0.67
PERSONAL FACTORS							
6	I don't have as much enthusiasm now as I had when I began teaching	3.54*	0.50	3.46*	0.50	3.49*	0.50
7	Teaching as a springboard to other lucrative jobs	2.56*	0.89	2.52*	0.84	2.53*	0.86
8	Youthfulness of a teacher	2.73*	0.94	1.56	0.50	2.13	0.95
9	There is a collaboration among staff members	3.19*	0.70	1.58	0.50	2.36	1.01
10	The desire of teachers to be with their spouses	3.50*	0.50	3.43*	0.50	3.46*	0.50
SCHOOL FACTORS							
12	Principals' poor support of teachers	3.46*	0.53	3.50*	0.50	3.48*	0.52
13	The heavy workload of teachers	2.91*	0.72	3.50*	0.50	3.28*	0.66
14	Lack or insufficient teaching equipment	3.14*	0.54	3.51*	0.50	3.37*	0.55
15	Workplace and family responsibilities	3.50*	0.50	3.50*	0.50	3.50*	0.50
16	Principal's poor support for career development	2.81	0.69	3.50*	0.69	2.68*	1.03
17	Collaboration among staff members	3.19*	0.70	1.58	0.50	2.36	1.01
18	Students' cultism	3.34*	0.53	3.43*	0.54	2.71*	1.01
19	Unruly students	1.88	0.57	3.44*	0.50	2.86*	0.92
20	Poor relationships with colleagues	2.83*	0.68	1.54	0.50	2.16	0.88
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS							
21	Unaffordable urban environment	3.45*	0.53	3.42*	0.54	3.43*	0.54
22	The insecurity of life and property	3.01*	0.82	3.56	0.52	2.10	0.96
23	Riverine is the location of the school	1.54	0.52	3.40*	0.51	2.71*	1.04
24	Attraction from other sectors	3.49*	0.64	3.11*	0.96	3.25*	0.87
25	Attractions from the private sector	3.47*	0.51	3.23*	0.52	3.31*	0.53
26	Teachers' low esteem in society	3.43*	0.54	3.51*	0.50	3.48*	0.52

Table 2: Teachers' Perception of the Reasons for Teachers' Attrition in Bayelsa, Delta, and Both States

Source: Fieldwork 2019/2020

Key * Significant factors

3. Results

In Bayelsa State, the teachers are of the opinion that pecuniary factors such as scant remuneration (3.61), poor condition of service outside the salaries (3.65), and if I could get a higher paying job, I would leave teaching (2.98), poor promotion prospects (3.43) and uniform salary structure for all skills (2.79) were the reasons for teacher attrition.

The personal factors include:

- I don't have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching (3.54),
- Teaching as a springboard to other lucrative jobs (2.56),
- The desire of teachers to be with their spouses (3.50),
- Youthfulness of a teacher (2.73) and
- Collaboration among staff members (3.19)

School-related causes of teacher attrition were:

- Principals' poor support of teachers (2.81),
- Collaboration among staff members (2.19),

- The heavy workload of teachers (2.91),
 - The lack of or insufficiency of teaching materials (3.14),
 - Students' cultism (3.34),
 - Unruly students (1.88), and
 - Poor relationships with colleagues (2.83)
- Teacher attrition factors in the environment include:
- Expensive urban environment for beginners (4.43),
 - The insecurity of life and property (3.01),
 - Attraction from other sectors (2.51),
 - Attraction from the private sector (3.54),
 - Teachers' low esteem in society (3.43)

According to teachers' perspectives in Delta State, it was accepted that if I could get a higher paying job, I would leave teaching (3.19), poor promotion prospects (2.90), a uniform salary structure for all skills (3.34), and other personal reasons, if I could get a higher paying job, I would leave teaching (3.36), poor condition of service outside salaries (3.39), and poor promotion prospects (2.90) were the reasons for teacher attrition. They are:

- "I don't have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching" (3.48),
- "Teaching as a springboard to other lucrative jobs" (2.50),
- "Youthfulness of a teacher" (2.50),
- The desire of teachers to be with their spouses (3.43)

The others are the same, with reasons given in Bayelsa State. The only difference was the level of acceptance.

In both states of the study, teachers were of the opinion that low pay (3.46), poor working conditions outside of pay (3.49), and if I could get a better-paying job, I would leave teaching. (2.74), poor promotion prospects (3.10), and uniform salary structure for all skills were the reasons for teacher attrition. The personal factors are:

- I don't have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching (3.49),
- Teaching as a springboard to other lucrative jobs (2.53),
- Youthfulness of a teacher (2.36),
- Collaboration among staff members (2.36), and
- The desire of teachers to be with their spouses (3.46)

As a combined state factor, principals' poor support for teachers (3.48), teachers' heavy workload (3.28), a lack of insufficient teaching equipment (3.37), workplace and family responsibilities (3.50), principals' poor support for career development (2.16), collaboration among staff members (2.36), students' cultism (2.71), unruly students (2.86), and poor relationships with colleagues (2.86) were not significant.

External attrition reasons are the unaffordable urban environment (3.43), the insecurity of life and property (2.90), the location of the school (2.71), attraction from other sectors (3.25), attraction from the private sector (3.31), and teachers' low societal esteem (3.48).

4. Discussion and Recommendations

The first research question sought to find out teachers' attrition rates in public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States for five years between 2015 and 2019. The findings showed an average attrition rate of 5.55% for Delta State. Bayelsa had a mean attrition rate of 14.24%, while the average attrition rate for both states was 8.23%. According to the study, Bayelsa State had a higher attrition rate than Delta State in 2015, 2016, and 2019, while Delta State had a higher attrition rate in 2017 and 2018. This finding agrees with that of Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas (2019), who reported that compared to high-performing countries such as Finland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada (where only about 3-4% of teachers leave the country in any given year), the U.S. has a very high attrition rate hovering around 8% and is much higher for starters and teachers in schools and districts with high poverty rates.

Also, Goldhaber & Theobald (2022) reported that the exit rate of teachers from state-run school workforce post-2020–2021 school year (7.3%, first set graduates) surged almost a percentage point from the quit rate after the 2019–2020 academic year (6.4%, second set of bars). Added to the flow of teachers to non-teaching occupations in public learning facilities that surged from 2.0% post-2019–2020 to 2.7% after 2020–2021, the quantum of teacher 'leavers' as defined by federal reports jumped by about 1.6% points, representing about 20% raising the number of teacher quitting compared to the earlier pandemic year. The rates reported in this present study in Nigeria are relatively lower than those in the U.S. The resultant differentials may have been the outcome of disparities in the levels of societal development, which may have had a relationship with the poor fiscal and economic status of the teachers.

Here in Nigeria, Adamu (Adamu, 2010) reported that the rate of teachers' attrition varied from one geographical and political divide to another. In the South-South political division, teachers' attrition is milder, at about 10–15 percent, compared to the northern part, with an attrition rate between 15 and 20% (Adamu, 2010). The variations between the rates obtained in the present study and those reported by Adamu (2010) are probably due to the time period of the study. While the findings of Adamu were reported in 2010, the present study is from 2015 to 2019.

The second research question sought an explanation for teachers' attrition in Bayelsa and Delta States. The findings indicated that for teachers in Bayelsa and Delta States, pecuniary factors exerted a heavy influence on teacher attrition. A study by McDonald, Thorpe, & Irvine (2018) downplayed teacher compensation as a major determinant of employee engagement and productivity. However, a host of studies confirm that adequate teacher compensation is both crucial and critical to retaining, attracting, and sustaining teachers in the occupation (Gray & Taie, 2015; Grissom et al., 2015; Katz,

2018; Podolsky et al., 2019; García, Han, & Weiss, 2022; Ofoyeju, Akpotu, and Egwunyenga, 2022). Wages, salary, and remuneration level are highly crucial and critical for early career teachers' sustenance in their jobs. McDonald, Thorpe, & Irvine (2018) reported that for many teachers, higher wages and easier work are available outside of teaching, accounting for up to 30% of the teacher quit rate. This is consistent with the finding (Mumtaz & Hasan, 2018) that lucrative job opportunities outside the school organisation are a major distraction for teachers, especially the newly employed. This is the likely reason for the reported rate of attrition in this study.

An authority offering higher teacher compensation attracts quality teachers and retains them in schools. Studies have found a link between adequate compensation and employee engagement, resulting in employee retention (Rameshkumar, 2020; Tshukudu, 2020). Moreover, teachers' morale and enthusiasm are more likely to be higher when they are paid more. In reiterating the merits of higher teacher pay, advocates for the pay-for-performance system recommend a surge in teacher compensation to achieve greater productivity as assessed by the educational outcomes of students. However, this study suggests, in line with the study by Nguyen, Pham, Springer, & Crouch (2020), that the general upward review in teacher across-the-board base salary, regardless of student performance or any additional compensation pegged to educational results as practised in Bayelsa and Delta States, has not been linked with higher academic performance.

It is both vital and necessary to note that between the years 2010 and 2019, the economy of Nigeria has been unstable with a growing inflation rate, crashing crude oil prices, currency devaluation, the falling value of money, the rising cost of living, the falling standard of living, the unemployment of teachers, and corruption that have negatively affected the economy despite a six percent rate of growth for the six-year period from 2004 to 2010 (Jaiyeola & Bayat, 2020). The outcome is dissatisfied teachers with no alternative but to remain in teaching, in support of the findings of the New Zealand Post Primary Teacher Association (NZPPTA, 2016) that reported alternative salaries in jobs outside teaching are part of the problem of teachers' attrition.

McDonald, Thorpe, and Irvine (2018) reported that for many teachers, higher wages and easier work are available outside of teaching, accounting for up to 30% of the teacher quit rate. These accounted for the drag force of attraction from other sectors and the private sector. This is consistent with the finding (Mumtaz & Hasan, 2018) that lucrative job opportunities outside the school organisation are a major distraction for teachers, especially the newly employed. This is the likely reason for the relatively low rate of attrition reported in this study. However, contrary to popular findings that beginning teachers' salaries are a major determinant of their retention in the job (Darling-Harmond & Thomas, 2019), the study reported that beginning teachers' pay predicts teachers' quitting; however, compensation and administrative support did as much. This is consistent with the study (Toropova, Myrberg, and Johansson, 2018), which found that scant salaries are the primary reason for teachers' job resignations.

The personal factors are declining enthusiasm, the use of teaching as a springboard to other lucrative jobs, the youthfulness of a teacher, Collaboration among school teachers, and the desire of teachers to be with their spouses.

School-related factors are Principals' poor support of teachers and principals' poor support for career development found in this study as factors of attrition were also reported by Guzmán, Muschard, Gerolamo, Holger, and Rosenfeld (2020). This finding of a lack or insufficiency of teaching equipment supports those of Peter, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz, and Ustinova (2019) and Toropova, Myrberg, and Johansson (2020). According to the report, school conditions significantly influence teachers' desire to resign from teaching. Workplace and family responsibility stress and poor collaboration among staff members have not helped retain teachers. Other reasons for attrition include students' cultism and unruly students.

The findings of this study support those of Richards, Hemphill, and Templin (2018) and Stanley (2018), who reported that stress from the heavy workload and lack of support for teachers remain the primary predictor of teachers' exit from schools and the profession much faster than they can be replaced in England. This finding supports the finding that the number of teachers seeking mental health support has increased by 35%. This finding is also supported by the fact that stress from the heavy workload and burnout are reasons many teachers are quitting or taking time off sick with stress. Annual hiring of teachers to replace those who have left the profession may help to a greater extent.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the rate of teachers' attrition varied with time and year, and it has been increasing over the years. Hence, a surge is anticipated in the upcoming years.

Teachers' resignations are on the rise and are unlikely to decrease any time soon because the major predictors appear to be unaddressed. This inquiry believes that employers of teachers lack what it takes to improve a lot of teachers, and if the employers resolve to address the issue, it will be drastically resolved. Other factors outside the pecuniary factor, such as personal, learning facility, and environmental factors, do not appear to be as powerful as the remuneration-related factors.

6. Recommendations

Following the findings, it is recommended that:

- The Bayelsa and Delta State governments should strive to improve a lot of tutors by improving their salaries and conditions of service.
- The schools should be adequately funded to have well-stocked libraries with recent publications and working internet facilities.
- The schools should retrain principals on teacher-centred school administration practices to provide teachers with the best support possible.

- The schools should employ teachers for subject area vacancies annually and discontinue the practice of employing teachers after a long period.
- Political parties should stop politicising teacher employment.

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