



Nexus between teacher retention and selected variables in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Kenya

Shadrack Kamundi

kamushed@yahoo.com

University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya

<https://doi.org/10.51867/asarev.3.1.8>

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teacher retention and selected institutional factors in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Kenya, including school administration, socio-economic status, motivational strategies, wage administration, and religious commitment. Using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, the study found that most variables had a significant positive relationship with teachers' intention to remain in school, except wage administration, which was not statistically significant. Motivational strategies and school administration emerged as the strongest predictors of retention. The findings indicated that teachers' intention to remain in school had a significant positive relationship with school administration ($r = 0.481, p < 0.01$), motivational strategies ($r = 0.488, p < 0.01$), socio-economic status ($r = 0.273, p < 0.01$), and religious commitment ($r = 0.300, p < 0.01$), while wage administration showed a weak and non-significant relationship ($r = 0.182, p > 0.05$). Regression analysis further revealed that motivational strategies and school administration were the strongest predictors of teacher retention. The final regression model showed that motivational strategies ($\beta = 0.333, p < 0.05$) and school administration ($\beta = 0.319, p < 0.05$) significantly predicted teachers' intention to remain in school, jointly explaining 30.2% of the variance in teacher retention (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.302, F = 21.960, p < 0.001$). The study concludes that both organizational and spiritual factors significantly influence teacher retention in SDA secondary schools. It recommends strengthening motivational systems and administrative support structures while maintaining the faith-based values that enhance teacher commitment and retention.

Key words: East Kenya Union Conference (EKUC), Secondary Schools, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Teacher Retention

I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention remains a persistent and globally recognized challenge in education systems, as high teacher turnover disrupts instructional continuity, weakens institutional culture, and negatively affects student achievement (Mohammad, 2022). Schools that are unable to retain qualified teachers often experience declining performance, increased recruitment costs, and instability in curriculum delivery, all of which undermine educational quality and long-term system effectiveness. Consequently, teacher retention has become a central concern in educational policy and school leadership research worldwide.

The challenge is often more pronounced in private and faith-based educational institutions, where employment conditions are shaped not only by economic and organizational factors but also by spiritual values, mission-driven expectations, and institutional identity. In such contexts, teacher retention is influenced by a complex interplay between intrinsic motivation, religious commitment, leadership practices, and material working conditions (Becker, 1993; Bennell, 2004). Unlike public school systems where standardized employment structures may dominate, faith-based schools often rely heavily on mission alignment and personal commitment to sustain workforce stability.

In Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) secondary schools in Kenya, teacher retention is shaped by a unique institutional framework that integrates academic excellence with spiritual mission. These schools emphasize holistic education grounded in religious principles, where teaching is often viewed as both a profession and a calling. As a result, teachers' decisions to remain in service may be influenced not only by wages and working conditions but also by their religious conviction and perceived spiritual purpose within the institution (White, 1903; Mutune & Orodho, 2014).

Despite this strong spiritual foundation, SDA schools in Kenya are not exempt from retention challenges. Issues related to school administration, socio-economic disparities, motivational strategies, and wage administration continue to affect teacher stability and performance. In particular, variations in infrastructure, resource availability, recognition systems, and compensation structures may undermine institutional effectiveness and reduce teachers' long-term commitment (Choudhary, 2025). At the same time, religious commitment may serve as a stabilizing factor that offsets some of these structural limitations by strengthening teachers' sense of calling and mission alignment.

Understanding the relationship between these variables and teachers' intention to remain in service is therefore essential. Such understanding provides valuable insights for policy formulation, institutional management, and the



development of sustainable retention strategies that balance both material and spiritual dimensions of teacher motivation in faith-based educational settings.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Teacher retention remains a major challenge affecting the stability and effectiveness of education systems, particularly in private and faith-based schools where both institutional conditions and spiritual values influence staff commitment. In Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) secondary schools in Kenya, teacher retention is still a concern despite the strong religious mission that frames teaching as a calling and ministry. These schools continue to experience challenges related to school administration practices, socio-economic limitations, motivational strategies, and wage administration, which may negatively affect teacher satisfaction and long-term commitment. Although religious commitment is expected to enhance teacher loyalty, the extent to which it offsets these structural and financial challenges remains unclear. Therefore, there is limited empirical evidence on how these factors collectively influence teachers’ intention to remain in SDA secondary schools in Kenya, creating a need for this study.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the retention trend of teachers in secondary schools of EKUC from the year 2008 to 2015?
2. To what extent do teachers intend to remain in school?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by the Expectancy Theory, which posits that individuals’ motivation and subsequent behavioural outcomes are shaped by their expectations that effort will lead to performance and valued rewards. In this context, teacher retention in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Kenya is conceptualized as the dependent variable influenced by a set of institutional, economic, motivational, and spiritual determinants. The independent variables include school administration (leadership practices, communication, and participation in decision-making), school socio-economic status (availability of teaching and living resources), wage administration (salary structures, timeliness, and benefits), motivational strategies (recognition, professional development, and incentives), and religious commitment (spiritual calling and alignment with faith-based mission). The framework assumes that when teachers perceive supportive administration, adequate socio-economic conditions, fair remuneration, effective motivation systems, and strong spiritual alignment with the institution’s mission, their intention to remain in service increases. Conversely, weaknesses in these factors reduce job satisfaction and increase turnover intention, thereby affecting overall school stability and performance outcomes.

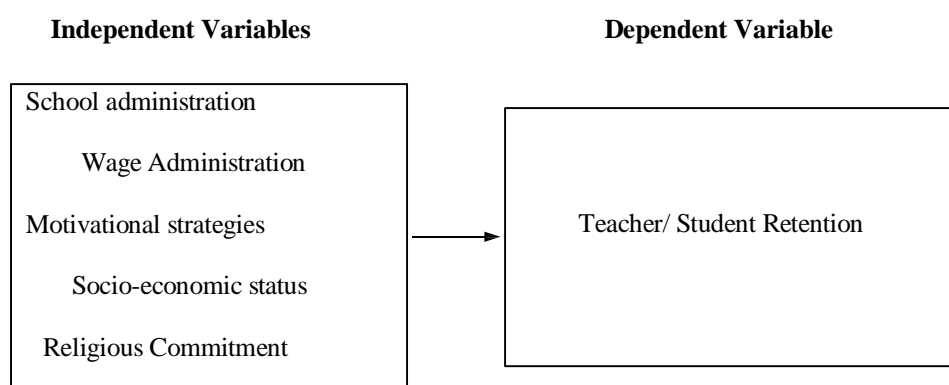


Figure 1
School Retention Model

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 School Administration and Teacher Retention

School administration plays a fundamental role in shaping teachers’ workplace experiences and retention decisions. Effective leadership practices such as participatory decision-making, clear communication, workload management, and supportive supervision have been consistently linked to higher teacher satisfaction and retention (Lynch, 2010). Administrators who involve teachers in school governance foster a sense of ownership and professional



respect, which strengthens organizational commitment. Conversely, authoritarian leadership styles, lack of transparency, and inadequate support systems contribute to teacher dissatisfaction and turnover intentions.

Becker (1993) emphasizes that administrative support is a key non-monetary determinant of teacher retention, as it enhances job satisfaction and professional engagement. Similarly, Bennell (2004) argues that school leadership quality is one of the most important predictors of teacher motivation in developing country contexts, where structural constraints are common. In faith-based schools, administrative leadership is further expected to align with institutional values, reinforcing both professional and spiritual dimensions of teacher commitment.

2.2.2 Socio-Economic Status of Schools and Teacher Retention

The socio-economic status of schools significantly influences teacher retention through its impact on working conditions, infrastructure, and resource availability. Schools with adequate physical facilities, teaching materials, housing, and transport support tend to retain teachers longer due to improved working environments and reduced financial strain (OECD, 2018). In contrast, under-resourced schools often experience higher turnover as teachers seek better conditions elsewhere.

Bennell (2004) highlights that poor infrastructure, lack of teaching resources, and inadequate staff welfare provisions are major drivers of teacher attrition in low-income contexts. In many developing countries, socio-economic disparities among schools create unequal working environments that directly affect teacher morale and commitment. In faith-based institutions, socio-economic challenges are often compounded by reliance on tuition fees and donations, which may limit consistent investment in staff welfare and infrastructure.

2.2.3 Motivational Strategies and Teacher Retention

Motivation is widely recognized as a central determinant of teacher retention. Motivation can be intrinsic, arising from personal satisfaction and professional fulfillment, or extrinsic, driven by rewards such as salary, recognition, and career advancement opportunities (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). Studies indicate that teachers who experience both forms of motivation are more likely to remain in the profession and demonstrate higher levels of commitment.

Effective motivational strategies include recognition of performance, opportunities for professional development, supportive supervision, and fair workload distribution. According to Becker (1993), such non-financial incentives are often more sustainable in enhancing retention than salary alone. Bennell (2004) further notes that in many African education systems, teacher motivation is strongly influenced by school-level management practices rather than national-level policy interventions. In faith-based schools, motivation is also reinforced by mission alignment and spiritual purpose, which can enhance teachers' emotional attachment to their institutions.

2.2.4 Wage Administration and Teacher Retention

Wage administration remains a traditional determinant of teacher retention, although its influence varies across contexts. Adequate and timely remuneration is essential for ensuring job satisfaction and reducing turnover intentions. Delayed salaries, lack of salary progression, and inequitable pay structures often contribute to dissatisfaction and attrition among teachers (Lynch, 2010).

However, empirical findings are mixed regarding the relative importance of wages compared to non-monetary factors. Ali (2017) argues that while salary is important, it is not always the primary determinant of retention, especially where intrinsic motivation is strong. Similarly, Richardson and Watt (2016) highlights that working conditions and professional support may outweigh financial incentives in influencing teacher decisions to remain in a school. In faith-based institutions, wage administration is further influenced by organizational policies, including the use of church resources such as tithes, which may create variations in compensation structures across schools.

2.2.5 Religious Commitment and Teacher Retention

Religious commitment is a distinctive factor in faith-based education systems and plays a significant role in teacher retention. In SDA schools, teaching is often perceived as a calling and a form of ministry, which enhances teachers' intrinsic motivation and loyalty to the institution. This sense of spiritual purpose strengthens teachers' resilience and commitment even in the face of financial or structural challenges.

White (1903) emphasizes the concept of education as a spiritual mission, where teachers are viewed as partners in divine service. Similarly, Mutune and Orodho (2014) observe that teachers in mission schools often remain in service due to shared spiritual values and a strong sense of belonging. Religious commitment therefore functions as an internal motivational force that reinforces retention by aligning professional duties with spiritual identity and purpose.



III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the concurrent mixed methods research design. In this design, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected. Thereafter, the data collected are mixed concurrently. In this study, quantitative data was collected using questionnaires while qualitative data was collected using interviews. The target population was the twenty Seventh-day Adventist Church maintained Secondary Schools in EKUC. The unit of analysis was eleven secondary school principals, ninety-eight teachers, five education directors and, eleven chairpersons of the school boards of management (BOM). The school principals' manner of administration could influence the retention, while the education directors make the policies which are responsible for retaining teachers in school. The SDA church maintained secondary schools were targeted because they struggle with retaining teachers. Teachers quit the church employment for TSC and other employments. Cluster sampling technique was used to get the samples. In this sampling technique, the target population was divided into five clusters (principals, teachers, education directors and, board chairpersons). Samples were obtained from each of these clusters.

The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires for teachers. Interview schedules were organized for education directors, the school BoM chairpersons, the principals and teachers for triangulation. Observation schedule was also organized. This targeted the school infrastructure and generally all what goes on in the school. The school learning facilities and the behavior of teachers in school was also captured here. The other instrument used was the tool for document analysis to collect data for 8 years.

Ninety-eight (98) teachers were required to fill the provided questionnaire, but the eleven principals, five education directions and eleven BoM chairpersons were subjected to interviews. The researcher conducted interviews to the school principals during the visit after the questionnaires were administered, filled and returned. All the chairpersons and education directors were interviewed. Whereas four chairpersons were interviewed in their offices, seven were interviewed over telephone discussions. At the same time, three education directors were interviewed in their offices while the rest (two) were through telephone interviews. Those interviewed through telephone discussions could not be reached by the researcher, at the time of data collection. Some teachers (three per school) were also interviewed for triangulation purpose. Observations were also done during the visits in schools. Documentary analysis method was also used to gather information on the turnover trends of teachers for eight years. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Documentary analysis was done on records about teacher retention. Content analysis was done on responses from interviews and in open-ended questions to identify the emerging themes.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Relationship between Teacher Retention and Independent Variables

The researcher investigated the relationship between teacher retention with each of the independent variables: school administration, school socio-economic status, motivational strategies, wage administration and religious commitment. To this, Pearson correlation and multivariate regression were carried out. The findings obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlations (Teachers' Responses)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. School Administration	1				
2. School Motivational Socio-economic Strategies	.273**	1			
3. Wage Administration	.488**	0.182	1		
4. Religious Commitment	.300**	.481**	0.074	1	
5. Intention to Remain	.481**	0.007	0.003	—	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a positive and significant relationship between teachers' intention to remain and all the predictors except wage administration. Herein, a Pearson correlation (r) value of 0.182, $P > 0.05$ was obtained between intention to remain in school and wage administration. In all the other predictors, positive and significant relationships were obtained (School Administration ($r = 0.431$, $p < 0.05$); Socioeconomic Factors ($r = 0.273$, $p < 0.05$); Motivational Strategies ($r = 0.488$, $p < 0.05$) and; Religious Commitment ($r = 0.300$, $p < 0.05$)).



Based on the correlation results obtained, four of the null hypotheses of the study were rejected. As such, it can be concluded that the School administration, motivational strategies, socio-economic factors and religious commitment affected teachers' intention to remain in school.

There was no significant relationship between wage administration and teachers' intention to remain. As such, the null hypothesis that wage administration did not have significant contribution to teachers' intention to remain was accepted. These findings show that wage administration may not be a major contributor to teachers' intention to remain in school. These findings disagree with McLaurin et al. (2009) that salary related issues were important determinants to teachers' decision to remain in schools.

These findings also corroborated with the work of Mbwiria (2010) that the commitment of school administrators to teachers' job satisfaction, which includes giving them manageable workload is key to their retention. Teachers also tended to agree that there was an upward and downward communication in the schools between teachers and the administration. This was vital since the opinion of teachers could be easily heard and incorporated in school operations. This echoes the findings of Bennel (2004) and those of Morice and Murray (2003) that motivating teachers through numerous strategies make them cultivate an attitude of staying longer in school and in the profession. However, teachers in the SDA schools within EKUC stated that their level of motivation was very low. This could be a contributing factor to their low retention.

Teachers in Seventh-day Adventist church schools seem to be willing to remain in the schools but lack motivation. As a result, they developed a feeling that they were of less importance in the church system. Lack of motivation lead to a feeling of job insecurity. Because of this, they opt to quit.

These findings were also in line with McLaurin et al. (2009) who discovered that salary related issues are important determinants to teachers' decision to remain in schools. Pertaining to religious commitment, the findings are in support of Mutune and Orodho (2014) that teachers, in church school often remain in school as a means of serving God.

4.2 Best Predictors of Teacher Retention

The study sought to find out the best predictors of teacher retention. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.488a	0.238	0.23	0.73615
2	.562b	0.316	0.302	0.70117

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational strategies

b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational strategies, School administration

In these regression models, Adjusted R Squared values of 0.23 and 0.302 were obtained for step 1 and 2 respectively. 23% of the variance in teachers' intention to remain is accounted for by motivational strategies while 7.2% is accounted for by school administration.

The multiple correlation coefficients between teachers' intention to remain in school and motivational strategies and school administration is .562.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	16.274	1	16.274	30.031	.000
1 Residual	52.024	96	0.542		
1 Total	68.298	97			
2 Regression	21.593	2	10.796	21.960	.000
2 Residual	46.706	95	0.492		
2 Total	68.298	97			

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to remain

b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational strategies

c. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational strategies, School administration

**Table 4***Regression Coefficients*

Model	Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	Constant	1.480	0.599		2.470	0.015
	Motivational strategies	0.259	0.109	0.488	5.705	0.000
2	Constant	0.988	0.289		3.421	0.001
	Motivational strategies	0.408	0.119	0.333	3.429	0.001
	School administration	0.325	0.099	0.319	3.289	0.001

Dependent Variable: Intention to remain

In the two models significant F-test values of 30.031, $p < 0.05$) and 21.96, $p < 0.05$) were obtained in the two models. This shows that there was a positive and significant relationship between each of the two predictors (motivational strategies and school administration) and intention to remain by teachers. This supports the prior findings from Pearson correlation that showed significant contribution of the two variables to teachers' intention to remain.

Additionally, significant standardized Beta coefficients were obtained. This means that the coefficients obtained in the regression model can be used to predict the level to which motivational strategies and school administration influences the intention of teachers to remain in school.

Basing on the findings obtained, the model testing the strength of the relationship between the two predictors (motivational strategies and school administration) and teachers' intention to remain was fitted.

The fitted model equation was:

$$Y = 0.988 + (0.408 * \text{Motivational Strategies}) + (0.325 * \text{School Administration})$$

Seeing that the standardized B coefficients obtained in model 2 were significant ($B = .333$, $t = 3.429$, $p < 0.05$) and ($B = .319$, $t = 3.289$, $p < 0.05$), it is evident that betterment of motivational strategies and increase in the supportiveness of school administration by 1 unit each would lead to the increase of the intention of teachers to remain in school by about 0.333 and 0.319 units respectively. These findings are in agreement with Becker (1993) who stressed the vital role played by administrators in enhancing teachers' retention in schools.

4.3. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that teacher retention in SDA secondary schools is primarily driven by non-financial and institutional factors rather than wage administration. Motivational strategies emerged as the strongest predictor of retention, suggesting that recognition, professional development opportunities, and supportive working conditions are critical in encouraging teachers to remain in service (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). Similarly, effective school administration characterized by participatory leadership, clear communication, and workload management significantly enhances teachers' commitment.

The weak and non-significant relationship between wage administration and teacher retention contrasts with conventional assumptions that salary is the primary determinant of job retention (Howey, 2016). This finding suggests that in faith-based educational settings, intrinsic motivation and institutional culture may outweigh financial incentives in shaping teachers' decisions to remain in service.

Socio-economic conditions of schools also play a role, although to a lesser extent. Schools with inadequate infrastructure and limited resources negatively affect teacher morale and stability (Mbwiria, 2010). Religious commitment, however, remains a significant factor, reflecting the unique context of SDA schools where teaching is often perceived as a calling and a form of ministry. Teachers who identify strongly with the religious mission of the institution are more likely to remain despite structural challenges.

These findings align with Becker (1993), who emphasized the importance of organizational support and working conditions in teacher retention, and reinforce the argument that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors must be considered in understanding teacher retention in faith-based institutions.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that teacher retention in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Kenya is significantly influenced by motivational strategies and school administration, which are the strongest predictors of teachers' intention to remain in service. Socio-economic conditions and religious commitment also contribute positively to retention, although to a lesser extent. Wage administration, however, does not significantly influence teacher retention in this context, indicating that financial incentives alone are insufficient to determine retention outcomes in SDA schools.



5.2 Recommendations

The findings suggest that teacher retention in faith-based schools is primarily sustained through a combination of effective institutional management and strong intrinsic religious motivation. Strengthening motivational systems and improving administrative support structures is therefore essential for enhancing teacher stability and reducing turnover in SDA secondary schools.

REFERENCES

- Ali, E. M. (2017). *Teachers, motivation and job satisfaction in secondary schools of Assosa Zone, Benishangul Gumuz Regional State*.
- Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Bennell, P. (2004). *Teacher motivation and incentives in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia*. Knowledge and Skills for Development.
- Choudhary, V. (2025). Compensation as a catalyst: Exploring its impact on employee retention and organizational sustainability in private universities. *International Journal of Economic Practices and Theories*, 360–381.
- Gultekin, M., & Acar, H. (2014). Motivation in educational settings: A conceptual review. *International Journal of Instruction*, 7(2), 1–14.
- Howey, K. (2016). Intrinsic motivation and learning outcomes in secondary education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 101–109.
- Lynch, D. V. (2010). *The effect of involvement in decision making on teacher retention* (Doctoral dissertation, East Carolina University).
- Mafini, C., & Dlodlo, N. (2014). The relationship between extrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and life satisfaction amongst employees in a public organisation. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 40(1), 1–13.
- Mbwiria, R. (2010). Leadership practices and teacher retention in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 1(2), 15–24.
- McLaurin, J. R., Smith, M., & Brooks, L. (2009). Compensation and teacher retention: Evidence from public schools. *Journal of Education Finance*, 34(3), 222–239.
- Mohammad, A. (2022). *Teacher turnover: Building high trust schools* (Doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University).
- Morice, D., & Murray, M. (2003). Teacher incentives and motivation in developing countries. *Comparative Education Review*, 47(2), 243–265.
- Mutune, J., & Orodho, J. A. (2014). Teacher motivation and retention in Kenyan mission schools. *Journal of Education and Policy Studies*, 6(3), 45–59.
- Richardson, P. W., & Watt, H. M. (2016). Factors influencing teaching choice: Why do future teachers choose the career? In J. Loughran & M. L. Hamilton (Eds.), *International handbook of teacher education: Volume 2* (pp. 275–304). Springer.
- White, E. G. (1903). *Education*. Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- White, E. G. (1943). *Counsels to teachers, parents, and students*. Review and Herald Publishing Association.