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Influence of Leadership Style and Security-Related factors On Teachers' Attrition among Public Secondary Schools in North-East Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of job-related variables such as Leadership styles and Security-Related Factors on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, while two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study population consisted of 1,274 teachers from 98 public secondary schools. A sample of the study was 254 teachers representing 20% of all the teachers from 19 secondary schools representing 20% of the school population. Job-Related Variables and Teachers' Attrition Questionnaire (JRVTAQ) was used for data collection. It was validated by three experts, with a reliability coefficient of 0.91 using Cronbach Alpha. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions and the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness-of-fit was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that leadership and security-related issues have significant negative influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. The study concluded that there is significant negative influence of job-related variables on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that principals and other educational authorities should promote effective and participatory leadership practices with the school system to create a supportive and motivating work environment for teachers so that they could feel among and maintain their job.

Keywords: Job-Related Variables, Teachers' Attrition, leadership & security-related issues

Introduction

Teachers are one of the most essential resources in every educational system, as they play a central role in transferring knowledge, skills, socio-cultural values, and societal norms to younger generations. The achievement of educational goals and the overall success of schools largely depend on having enough qualified teachers who are committed and stable. Recognizing the vital roles they serve, teachers are expected to be sufficiently motivated through suitable incentives, supportive working conditions and opportunities for professional development to remain in the profession (Ofoyeju, Akpotu, & Egwunyenga, 2022). Despite their importance, teacher attrition has become a major global challenge that continues to weaken the quality and stability of educational systems in both developed and developing nations. In the United States, for example, many teachers leave the profession within their first five years, creating ongoing shortages in the teaching workforce (Shen, 2021; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). Reports also show that about 8% of teachers in the U.S. leave the profession each year, while another 8% transfer between schools (Kasau, Kaloki, Kitto, Mutinda, Jeremiah & Kasau, 2016). This turnover appears to have interrupted instructional continuity, negatively impacted students' academic performance and raised costs for schools due to the need to recruit, hire and train newly engaged teachers. Similar teacher attrition trends are seen in European countries such as Britain, Sweden, and Germany, as well as in New Zealand, where shortages of qualified teachers have become an increasing concern (Ofoyeju et al., 2022). In Asia, countries like Bangladesh and Nepal also face significant teacher attrition caused by low pay, poor working conditions and limited opportunities for career growth (Vignesh & Sarojini, 2018).

In Africa, including Nigeria, teacher attrition is equally alarming, particularly in public secondary schools where factors such as poor leadership practices, insecurity, irregular payment of salaries and inadequate professional development opportunities have contributed to the increasing exodus of teachers from the profession (Vignesh & Sarojini, 2018). This persistent departure of teachers appears to have reduced the pool of qualified and experienced personnel in schools, thereby weakening the quality of teaching and learning, disrupting students' academic progress and threatening the overall effectiveness of the educational system. Consequently, attrition may be viewed as the gradual reduction in the number of individuals in a group, organization or system over time, usually occurring naturally rather than through deliberate removal



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(Nweke, Mailumo, Pinga & Obasi, 2024). In schools, teachers' attrition refers to the process whereby teachers leave their teaching positions either through transfer to other schools or complete withdrawal from the teaching profession (Nweke, Mailumo, Pinga & Obasi, 2024). Teacher attrition is often examined in relation to teacher shortages and the consequent loss of valuable skills, experience and institutional knowledge required for effective school functioning (Odingi & Kizito, 2023). Understanding the phenomenon of teacher attrition is therefore critical because it has far-reaching implications for educational systems, including the continuous need to recruit and train large numbers of teachers annually to replace those who exit the profession (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014). In public secondary schools, teacher attrition has increasingly become an issue of serious concern due to its adverse implications for educational quality and school effectiveness. In Nigeria, particularly in Benue North East Senatorial District, the rate at which teachers leave public secondary schools appears to reflect the growing trend recorded in many parts of the country, with both the number and proportion of teachers exiting the profession increasing over the years (Ofoyeju, Akpotu & Egwunyenga, 2022). According to Madumere-Obike and Nwabueze (2018), the rising rate of teacher attrition seems to be influenced by several job-related variables, including poor leadership practices, insecurity, delayed payment of salaries, availability of alternative employment opportunities, lack of professional development programmes, delayed promotions, inadequate administrative support, difficult working conditions, poor remuneration and limited opportunities for career advancement. These challenges appear to discourage teachers from remaining in the profession, thereby contributing to high turnover rates that disrupt students' learning and negatively affect overall school performance. In public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, teacher attrition appears to continue to persist despite efforts by the government and school administrators to improve teachers' welfare and working conditions. Factors such as principals' leadership practices and increasing security challenges appear to further worsen the situation, leading to a continuous loss of experienced teachers and posing a serious threat to the quality and effectiveness of secondary education in Benue North East Senatorial District and other parts of Nigeria.

Leadership refers to the process through which school administrators guide, influence and support teachers and other staff to achieve organizational goals, promote professional growth and enhance overall school effectiveness (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020). In the school setting, leadership goes beyond issuing directives to include the creation of a shared vision, the cultivation of trust, and the development of a supportive organizational climate that enables teachers to perform effectively. Literature consistently shows that when principals adopt effective leadership practices, particularly those that are supportive, participatory and transformational, teachers tend to experience greater job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Leaders who provide clear direction, communicate expectations effectively, recognize teachers' efforts and involve them in decision-making processes help to build a positive school climate characterized by trust, collaboration and mutual respect (Bush, 2019; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020). In such environments, teachers often feel valued and professionally empowered, which strengthens their sense of belonging, improves their instructional practices and reduces their intention to leave the profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Conversely, when school leadership is poor, characterized by authoritarian decision-making, inadequate communication, favoritism and lack of professional or emotional support, teachers are more likely to experience frustration, low morale and disengagement. Such negative leadership conditions undermine teachers' motivation and commitment, weaken their attachment to the school and increase their likelihood of considering withdrawal from the profession (Ofoyeju, Akpotu & Egwunyenga, 2022). In a nutshell, the above review highlights that the quality of principals' leadership as well as the security situation of the environment may shape teachers' attitudes, emotions and behaviours, thereby influencing whether they remain committed to their duties or gradually exit the teaching profession.

Security-related issues refer to conditions in which individuals or communities are exposed to threats to life, property and general well-being arising from violence, crime or broader social instability (United Nations Children's Fund, 2022). In Nigeria, insecurity is commonly expressed through banditry, kidnapping, insurgency and communal conflicts, all of which create unsafe environments for both teachers and students. In the educational sector, such insecurity has become a significant job-related factor contributing to teacher attrition in public secondary schools, as many teachers become unwilling to remain in, or accept postings to, areas where their personal safety cannot be assured (World Bank, 2021). Persistent exposure to insecurity often disrupts normal school operations, forces occasional or prolonged school closures and places teachers at risk of abduction or physical harm. These conditions tend to reduce teachers' job satisfaction, weaken



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their sense of security and diminish their commitment to the teaching profession. Consequently, some teachers opt to request transfers to safer locations, migrate to urban centres with relatively stable security conditions, or leave the profession entirely to another sector. This movement of teachers from insecure areas contributes to acute shortages of qualified personnel, which in turn undermines instructional quality, disrupts learning continuity and negatively affects the overall development and effectiveness of education in affected regions. The persistent and growing exit of qualified teachers from public secondary schools poses a serious threat to the stability, quality and overall effectiveness of secondary schools in the Benue North East Senatorial District of Nigeria. This alarming trend not only disrupts instructional continuity but also places an unsustainable burden on the government through repeated recruitment, induction and training of replacement/ newly recruited teachers. More critically, frequent teacher turnover weakens student-teacher relationships, lowers instructional quality and ultimately undermines students' academic performance and educational outcomes. Despite the strategic importance of teachers to national development, issues such as weak leadership practices and insecurity appear to be pushing competent teachers out of the system. If this situation persists unchecked, it may further erode public confidence in the secondary school system and widen existing educational inequality gaps in Benue North East Senatorial District. It is against this background that this study investigated the influence of job-related variables on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers remain one of the most critical components of any educational system, serving as the backbone for effective teaching and learning. However, in Nigeria, there continues to be a persistent concern about inadequate teacher supply in public secondary schools, and preliminary observations suggest that schools in Benue North East Senatorial District may not have sufficient teachers to ensure effective instructional delivery. This situation appears to be worsening due to a rising rate of teacher attrition, driven largely by job-related factors such as ineffective leadership by school principals and prevailing security challenges. These conditions seem to be pushing many teachers to leave the profession in search of more stable, rewarding and safer working environments both within and outside the country. There is also growing concern among teachers, parents and School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) members about the quality of leadership in many secondary schools. Many principals appear not to involve teachers in decision-making processes, while poor communication practices and weak emotional support systems seem to further strain staff morale. In some cases, principals appear unable to adequately motivate teachers, especially in situations of salary delays or non-payment, leading to frustration and declining commitment. As a result, many teachers appear to be exploring alternative employment opportunities outside the teaching profession, thereby intensifying the problem of attrition in the study area. Furthermore, insecurity has become a serious threat to the teaching profession in several communities within the district. Reports of kidnapping, harassment and attacks on both teachers and learners by unknown armed groups have created fear and instability in the school environment. In some instances, such insecurity has led to the displacement or tragic loss of teachers, forcing many others to relocate to safer areas in search of security and better livelihood opportunities. These persistent challenges have not only demoralized teachers but have also contributed to the continuous loss of experienced and qualified personnel, thereby reducing the quality of education and undermining the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of job-related variables on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in the area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of job-related variables on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in the Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the influence of leadership on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.
2. ascertain the influence of security-related issues on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of leadership on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?



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2. What is the influence of security-related issues on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Leadership has no significant influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.
2. Security-related issues have no significant influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted in public secondary schools within the Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria, employing a descriptive survey research design. The study population consisted of 1,274 teachers from 98 public secondary schools. A sample of 254 teachers, representing 20% of all teachers from 19 secondary schools, which in turn represented 20% of the school population, was selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure (purposive sampling, proportionate stratified sampling, and simple random sampling techniques). The Job-Related Variables and Teachers' Attrition Questionnaire (JRVTAQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A included items on respondents' personal data. Section B was split into two clusters: Cluster I (Items 1-5) focused on leadership and teachers' attrition in public secondary schools, while Cluster II (Items 6-10) addressed security-related issues and teachers' attrition in public secondary schools. The instrument was validated by three experts: two from the Department of Educational Foundations (specializing in Educational Management) and one from the Department of Mathematics and Science Education, all within the Faculty of Education at Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. Subsequently, the instrument underwent a trail test for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in coefficients of 0.91 which is considered sufficiently high for the instrument to be reliable for the study. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions and the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of fit was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions. A Mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision-making. Items with a Mean score of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed, while any item with a Mean score of less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. Chi-square goodness of fit was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule is that if $P < 0.05$ level of significant is low, the hypothesis is rejected, but if $P > 0.05$ level of significant is high, the hypothesis is not rejected. Chi-square was chosen for the test of hypotheses because it is a non-parametric statistical tool that shows the influence of two categorical variables on one another.

Presentation of Results

The data were analyzed and interpreted in response to the research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the influence of leadership on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Influence of Leadership on Teachers' Attrition in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Item No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Teachers are more likely to leave when they are not involved in school decision-making.	250	110	76	39	25	3.12	0.99	Agree
2	Poor communication between principals and teachers increases teachers' intention to transfer.	250	90	110	30	20	3.18	0.93	Agree
3	Teachers tend to leave schools where principals do not support them during challenges such as salary delays.	250	112	84	28	26	3.14	0.99	Agree



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4	Teachers are discouraged when their efforts are not recognized by school administrators.	250	108	90	29	23	3.16	0.96	Agree
5	Perceived unfair treatment by principals increases teachers' desire to transfer or resign.	450	103	98	28	22	3.22	0.91	Agree
Cluster Mean							3.16		Agree

Source: Research Fieldwork (2026)

Table 1 indicates the Mean response values of item 1-5 as 3.12, 3.18, 3.14, 3.16 and 3.22 with the corresponding Standard Deviation values of 0.99, 0.93, 0.99, 0.96 and 0.91 respectively. All the mean response values are above the Mean score benchmark of 2.50. This implies that the respondents agreed that they considered leaving their current school due to poor leadership, lack of leadership support contributes to their leaving the profession and school leadership demoralizes their retention on the teaching job. The respondents also agreed that they are more likely to leave school with ineffective leaders and if leadership improved, they would be more committed to staying. The cluster Mean Score value of 3.16 is found to be above the Mean score benchmark of 2.50. This shows the influence of leadership on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of security-related issues on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Influence of Security Related Issues on Teachers' Attrition in Public Secondary Schools in North Central, Nigeria

Item No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
26	Fear of personal harm reduces teachers' willingness to remain in their postings.	250	105	87	36	22	3.14	0.97	Agree
27	Communal clashes around schools influence teachers' decision to transfer.	250	96	80	33	38	3.09	1.06	Agree
28	Reports of kidnapping of teachers increase their intention to leave the profession.	250	101	77	39	33	3.10	1.04	Agree
29	Lack of security personnel in schools increases teachers' fear and dissatisfaction.	250	115	77	29	29	3.11	1.02	Agree
30	Continuous insecurity in schools forces teachers to seek alternative employment elsewhere.	250	92	90	33	34	3.10	1.04	Agree
Cluster Mean							3.11		Agree

Source: Research Fieldwork (2026)

Table 2 indicates the Mean response values of item 26-30 as 3.14, 3.09, 3.10, 3.11 and 3.10 with the corresponding Standard Deviation values of 0.97, 1.06, 1.04, 1.02 and 1.04 respectively. All the mean response values are above the Mean score benchmark of 2.50. This implies that the respondents agreed that frequent security threats in the school environment make them consider leaving their jobs, fear of attacks around the school discourages them from continuing to work their school and kidnapping, increase their intention to leave the teaching profession. The respondents also agreed that lack of adequate security measures in schools compels them to look for employment elsewhere and concern for their family safety due to insecurity leads to their intention to leave teaching job. The cluster Mean Score value of 2.94 is found to be above the Mean score benchmark of 2.50. This shows the influence of security-related issues on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.



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Hypothesis 1: Leadership has no significant influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square Test of the Influence of Leadership on Teachers' Attrition in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	X ²	P	Decision
SA	104	62.5	3	82.512 ^a	0.000	Significant.
A	92	62.5				
D	31	62.5				
SD	23	62.5				
Total	250					

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Table 3 shows the chi-square calculated value of 82.512^a at 3 degrees of freedom; P=0.000 is less than 0.05. With this result, the null hypothesis, which states that leadership has no significant influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria, was therefore rejected. This shows that leadership has significant negative influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Security-related issues has no significant influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-square Test of the Influence of Security-Related Issues on Teachers' Attrition in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	X ²	P	Decision
SA	103	62.5	3	84.944 ^a	0.000	Significant.
A	82	62.5				
D	34	62.5				
SD	31	62.5				
Total	250					

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Table 4 shows Chi-square calculated value of 84.944^a at 3 degree of freedom; P=0.000 is less than 0.05. With this result, the null hypothesis, which states that security-related issues have no significant influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria, was therefore rejected. This shows that security-related issues have significant negative influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study shows that leadership has significant negative influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. This means that the teachers considered leaving their current school due to poor leadership, lack of leadership support contributes to their leaving the profession and school leadership demoralizes their retention on the teaching job. Also, teachers are more likely to leave school with ineffective leaders and if leadership improved, they would be more committed to staying. This finding agrees with the finding of Yani, Kusen and Khair (2020) which shows that there is significant influence of principals' application of leadership styles on teachers' attrition in public junior high school in Indonesia. This finding also agrees with that of Shah and Burke (2019) which indicates that top management leadership has significant influence on teachers' job mobility in private secondary schools in Juja, Kiambu County, Kenya. The researcher confirms that poor leadership increases teachers' intention to leave teaching profession because when they are not views recognized or they are not carried along in decision or policy making process they most likely intend to leave their teaching job. The second finding of the study shows that security-related issues have significant negative influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. This means that the teachers agreed that frequent security threats in the school environment make them consider leaving their jobs, fear of attacks around the school discourages them from continuing to work my school and kidnapping, increase their intention to leave the teaching profession. They also agreed that lack of adequate security measures in schools compels them to look for employment elsewhere and concern for their family safety due to insecurity



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leads to their intension to leave teaching job. This finding agrees with the finding of Jato (2021) which indicates that there is significant negative influence of insecurity on the management and administration of secondary schools in secondary schools in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The finding also agrees with the finding of Obiechina, Abraham and Nwogu (2018) which shows that school environmental insecurity has significant negative impact on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The researcher observes that this finding is a demonstration that an insecure school environment can scare teachers away. This means that when there is insecurity in the school environment, teachers may not be will to stay for safety purpose and this may lead to increase rate of teachers' attrition in the school system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that job-related variables exert a significant negative influence on teachers' attrition in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. This indicates that persistent issues such as poor leadership practices and security-related issues are increasingly pushing teachers out of the profession. The continued presence of these conditions suggests a troubling trend of teacher disengagement and exit, which may be steadily weakening the stability and effectiveness of public secondary schools in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals and other educational authorities should promote effective and participatory leadership practices with the school system to create a supportive and motivating work environment for teachers so that they could feel among and maintain their job.
2. Government, school management and communities should strengthen security measures around schools and communities to ensure the safety of teachers and encourage them to remain in the teaching profession.

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