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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND THE CAUSES OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NANDI COUNTY, KENYA

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#### Abstract

Employee turnover occurs when employees leave the organization and need to be replaced by new recruits. It can occur through resignation, dismissals and retirement. High employee turnover can be expensive to the organization leading to organizational instability. This paper examines the socio-economic characteristics of employees and the causes of turnover based on a study of selected secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya. A descriptive design was used with simple random sampling technique to select the target schools. From a sample frame of 35 public secondary schools, 186 respondents were selected from a population of 346. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. On employee turnover, results have shown that the level of turnover is low. This is because majority of employees are satisfied with achievements, considered for positions of responsibilities and promotions, have manageable workload, accorded opportunity to grow in the profession, provided with favourable working conditions, receive attractive salary, included in policy making, have adequate internal supervision and build a healthy relationship. Finally, in order to reduce employee turnover the managers of organization should address factors contributing to employee turnover in organizations.

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#### Introduction

Employee turnover is the movement of employees in and out of an organization. It is known to be related to organizational and work environment factors. For instance, a review of the literature shows two distinctions regarding employee turnover. The first is between turnover that is voluntary and involuntary (Fitz-ezn, 1987). In voluntary turnover, an employee initiates cessation of employment through resignations, while with involuntary turnover cessation occurs through dismissals, layoffs, retirements and deaths. Research shows that voluntary turnover is more frequent, most costly and disruptive to the organization, and is the most amenable to curtailment under normal business conditions voluntary turnover is greater than involuntary.

According to Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2002), there is functional and dysfunctional turnover. They argue that functional turnover is necessary in an organization because among other thing it brings in new employees who might have good ideas on how to improve organizational productivity. On the other hand, excessive turnover creates an unstable workforce and increases human resources costs and organizational ineffectiveness and this is referred to as dysfunctional turnover.

The second distinction is that between actual turnover and turnover intention. Actual turnover is a behavioural construct, referring to an employee actually leaving the organization. On the other hand, intentions are cognitive contract and refer to an employee planning to leave. An employee who indicates intent to leave an agency might not actually end up doing so. Alternatively, one who indicates a plan to stay might actually leave on what amounts to a whim (Fitz-enz, 1987).

Related to the argument raised by Grobler *et al.* (2002) on functional turnover, Fitz-enz (1987) further explains that zero turnover is not desirable in an organization because employees who have stayed in the organization for many years generally have higher salaries. Assuming the organization grows at a normal rate and all employees remain, "most employees would soon be at or near the top of their pay ranges and total salary expense would be very high" (Fitz-enz, 1987).

The concept of employee turnover is highly linked to several Human Resource Management (HRM) functions such as motivation, commitment and morale, selection, recruitment, inducting and others. If there is high turnover, it is an indication that there may be problems in other HRM related functions in the organization.

Employee turnover has reduced the quality of teachers available to many schools, potentially causing professional teacher shortage if the most able teachers are the most likely to leave (Douglas & Scott, 2005). On employment and deployment, teacher's perception on the preferred choice of schools and poor working conditions have caused them experience apathy often seen in their low motivation for and duty non-commitment behaviours like tardiness and absenteeism (MOE, 2005).

Employee occasionally express predictive behaviours indicating their displeasure and unwillingness to continue serving as teachers in their current stations, especially through persistent applications of transfers, withdrawal and constant search for other jobs (Douglas & Scott, 2005). A recent study conducted in Sigor District in Kenya indicated that the teachers' turnover in public secondary schools is about 38.16%. As measure to meet the deficit for shortage of teachers, the government incurs a lot of costs in recruitment of large number of fresh graduates and inexperienced teachers from colleges and universities. This scenario has compromised the quality of teaching and learning (Douglas & Scott, 2005).

The Ministry of Education spends considerable funds on personnel recruitment, selection and training of new recruits has resulted in fewer resources available for initiatives to promote staff retention and development for instance pay rise and in-service training. Kenya's population is rising at an alarming rate based on recent statistics and the increase in population will lead to increased demands for education, making it important for Kenya to retain its professional employees in public secondary schools (MOE, 2005).

The high turnover of employees in school organizations in the country is an impediment that stands in the path to realization of national education aspirations as a vehicle for attaining education for all (EFA) and Vision 2030. It is therefore against this backdrop that the study was set to establish the relationship between the level of organizational stability and employee turnover in the selected secondary school in Nandi County.

### **Employee Turnover in Secondary Schools in Kenya**

Within the teaching profession, there are several factors that cause turnover. According to Xaba (2003), the causes of teacher turnover can be attributed to organizational factors. These could be categorized into: commitment to the organization, long term prospects, and job satisfaction. Similarly, Herbert and Ramsay (2003), while acknowledging the fact that decisions about whether or not to enter and remain in teaching are ultimately personal according to individuals' needs and circumstances, they attribute turnover among teachers to several factors such as salaries and incentives, working conditions, induction and professional development and assignments. It is also evident that some of the causal factors cited by Shaw (1999) are similar to those also raised by Herbert and Ramsay (2003). Shaw (1999) adds that factors such as recruitment and selection practices, the work itself, compensation, career opportunities and the work environment contributed to turnover.

### ***Salaries, Incentives and General Working Conditions***

It is widely agreed that poor salary is probably one of the most common causes of high teacher turnover. For instance, Beardwell and Holden (2001) explain that salary of a particular job reflects the beliefs about the worth of job based on scope, level of responsibility, skill requirements, commercial worth and strategic reliance. Taking into consideration that the status of teaching profession has in the past few years, been diminishing, the salary, incentives as well as working conditions have followed suit. A national survey of teachers in Texas USA, carried out by Herbert and Ramsey (2003) indicated that among those dissatisfied with teaching, 61 per cent cited poor salaries, 32 percent poor administrative support, and 24 per cent student discipline problems. It was also argued that schools that have their teacher's higher salaries, adequate administrative support, and experience fewer cases of student discipline the teaching staff are less likely to leave.

Among other points, Schuler and Jackson (1996) state that in assessing how effectively an organization administers its compensation programme, the following major purposes of total compensation have to be kept in mind: (a) attracting potentially qualified employees, (b) motivating employees, and (c) retaining qualified employees. The compensation programme in the education sector of Kenya did not seem to be fulfilling these conditions because they might feel incompetent, hence think of changing their careers. Livingston (2003) claims that among other things underdevelopment and under utilization of a workforce are the major cause of turnover.

The Teachers Service Commission of Kenya (TSC) is mandated to ensure an adequate qualified teaching force to serve in all public schools in the country. Though centrally run from its headquarters in Nairobi it has field units (TSC units) at all district headquarters to bring salaries of teachers in Kenya have been extremely low and irregular compared to those of civil servants. Teachers have on several occasions gone on strike for pay increments and only small percentage increment was implemented. The unmotivated and uncommitted teacher can have serious negative consequences on the learning process of the pupils. The critical factor is that the future of the children is at stake. The teacher contributes much to the educational advancement or regression of the pupils and the remark by Livingston (2003) vividly captures this point when he says most parents are aware that teacher expectations about individual children becomes self fulfilling prophecies because of teacher believes a child is slow, the child will come to believe that, too, and will indeed learn slowly. The lucky child who strikes a teacher as bright also picks up on that expectations and will rise to fulfil it.

### ***Recruitment and Selection Practices***

By comparing the contemporary teachers with those in the past, Obanya (1995) hints at the importance of recruiting those of the right calibre as well as 'setting inappropriate training programs. He mentions that it was not just anybody who could be a teacher in the past. There was some selectivity, based on ability and socially desirable personal characteristics; whether in traditional societies or in the colonial educational system, the education of the teacher was a vigorous affair.

Teacher evaluation was not a once-and-for-all affair, as the wider society monitored teacher on-the-job development. Obanya (1995) attributes the current poor recruitment and selection practices in the education system as contributing to high turnover and other problems because wrong people were employed in the first place. The VSO report stated that due to shortage of teachers, they were compelled to teach subjects of which they were not competent. This could have an impact on the teachers' services closer and to ease communication with the teachers. Among other policy documents, TSC has a code of regulations (COR) for guiding the teachers.

The Teachers Service Commission, among other roles, registers, recruits and appoints teachers; deploys them to deserving public schools in the country; remunerates and transfers them when need arises. Since 2001, a demand driven approach in employment has been adopted contrasting the period before 1998, when teacher employment was supply driven. This new approach is part of the wider national structural adjustment strategy on checking over expenditure in public sector employment. It is aimed at trimming the public budget, as part of the overall national budget, hitherto seen as bloated and a strain on the country's economy. In the approach, the needs of districts and schools are identified countrywide and declared before employment is considered (Nzomo, Kariuki & Guantai, 2001; MOE, 2003).

Fundamentally, no new employment has been undertaken since 1998. What TSC has basically done is to establish and fill the gaps resulting from the normal attrition in order to maintain the countries teaching force at 235,000 (Douglas & Scott, 2005). District Education Board (DEBs) and (BOGs) are mandated to identify interested and qualified candidates and short list them for consideration for employment of teachers at primary and secondary schools respectively. The decision to delegate this sensitive, yet key function to DEBs and BOGs is aimed at making the exercise participatory and accountable at the grass root level and therefore minimize allegations of malpractices such as nepotism, tribalism, political arm-twisting, among other hitherto levelled at TSC. Successful candidates are appointed and directly posted by TSC to specified secondary schools where they are bonded to serve for minimum period of five years before being considered for transfer. This is envisaged to regularize employment as well as help solve the parental challenges of understanding and or overstaffing coexistence in certain areas (World Bank, 2004).

Yet despite the good intentions of TSC, criticisms or shortcomings continue to emerge about the exercise. The exercise is sometimes marred with tribalism and ethnicity and class factors take the centre stage since, MPs and Councillors and other local leaders disregard the TSC recruitment guidelines and set' their own. Other shortcomings

of the approach include allegations that it creates conflicts of interest in relation to professional commitment and personal interest, contributes to in-breeding in the profession, promotes ethnicity and politicizes the profession (MOE, 2005).

#### ***Lack of Administrative Support System***

Due to limited resources, the government has been cutting expenditure in educational administration and management, leading to reduction of the administration department within the Ministry of Education. Taking into consideration that the government has been building more schools and employing more teachers, the reduction in the administration entails that there are serious problems in human resources functions within the organization. Teachers therefore are expected to work hard yet those who can ably handle their welfare are not adequately available. By reducing the administrative component, the government rationale is to empower the school principals so that they can ably handle all the relevant teachers' welfare. Research, however, has revealed that the relationship between teachers and school principals is not desirable because the school principals have not been given the appropriate training.

#### ***Poor Housing and School Infrastructure***

It widely agreed that the immediate working conditions can greatly enhance and enrich an employee's job. However, the Kenyan teachers are subjected to very poor physical working conditions.

After the introduction of free secondary school education in 2003, enrolment increased and there was not appropriate infrastructure to accommodate all the pupils. The increase did not match with teacher capability hence over-stretched the human resources available (MOE, 2005; World Bank, 2004). In some schools, classrooms were too small to accommodate the large number of pupils because they were packed like sardines in one classroom, as many as 60 pupils faced one teacher, yet the recommended ratio is 1:45.

Typically, classrooms were old, dusty and equipped with at most a chalkboard and limited number of desks and chairs. Often, they did not have glasses in the windows, and were vulnerable to prevailing weather conditions: leaky in the rainy season, stifling during hot summer month, and freezing in the cold months. Teachers' housing mirrored this pattern, with teachers frequently inhabiting dwellings that suffered from poor maintenance and infrastructure and lacked electricity; running water, good sanitation and cooking facilities. The negative impact of poor housing cannot be underestimated. Housing conditions have a majority influence on the health, attitudes, opportunities and quality of life of individual and communities. Though not largely supported by studies, it can be deduced that the teachers' motivation, quality of work and commitment can also be largely influenced by their housing conditions.

#### ***Work Overload***

Williams and Robertson (1990) argue that the teaching profession is losing staff in crisis proportions because of heightened stress and the potential stress factors including: meeting deadlines, workload, limited time, continuous change (current), records of achievement and organizational restructuring. Finlayson (2003) observes that in the teaching profession in Scotland, stress is the major cause of ill health, teacher turnover, absenteeism and other related problems which cost the government about 43 million pounds a year. Among other things, the cause of stress among teachers was attributed to the workload, change, conflict at work and pupil discipline. Probably the words by Ruskin (as cited in Finlayson, 2003) are more appropriate to remedy the problem of stress among teachers: that in order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: they must be fit for it; they must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it.

On their part, Jesus and Conboy (2001) argue that in spite of the fundamental importance attributed to teacher motivation, it is a common research finding that teachers present lower levels of motivation and higher levels of stress than other professional groups. They continued by giving the example of Portugal where due to stress problem, less than 50 per cent of those in the teaching profession showed interest of remaining in it.

#### ***Limitations of the Study***

Challenges are inevitable in life and the process of carrying out the study was not complete without them. First, some teachers that were chosen to respond to the questionnaires were suspicious of the reason they were being

chosen while those of other schools were left out. The author was open to the teachers on the purpose of the study and assured the respondents of utmost confidentiality. Secondly, the study was limited in scope to public secondary schools in Nandi Central District, though the findings were generalized to all public secondary schools in the County with similar characteristics. Finally, there were few female respondents in the study which could have influenced their perception on organizational stability and employee turnover.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a descriptive correlational survey combining both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. A descriptive survey is most appropriate for studying user's attitudes, values and beliefs (Sekaran, 2008; Orodho, 2005). The design enabled the author to rapidly collect data with minimum expenditure of effort, time and money and to understand the population from part of it. By using the descriptive correlation survey design the author would obtain precise information about levels of organizational stability and employee turnover and how they are correlated.

The target population comprised 346 professional teachers in 35 public secondary schools in Nandi Central District that are fully established with classes running from Form One to Four (District Education office [DEO], 2010). Using Sloven's formula, 186 professional teachers were the respondents from a target population of 346 professional teachers. The author used the following criteria for selection:

1. Public secondary schools with classes running from Form 1 to Form 4
2. Schools that are boarding and day
3. Teachers with permanent employment
4. Either male or female
5. Teachers with one year experience

The research used stratified sampling procedure to group schools into boarding and day schools. In collecting the data for the study, a standardized questionnaire was employed as the main instrument. The questionnaires comprised three sections: demographic characteristics, level of organizational stability and employee turnover in selected secondary schools in Nandi Central District.

For data analysis, the frequency and percentage distribution were used to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The mean and the standard deviation were used to compute the levels of organizational stability and employee turnover. An item analysis based on the mean scores and ranks would reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the respondents in terms of levels of organizational stability and employee turnover. To interpret the data, the following numerical values and interpretations below were used.

**Table 1: Numerical Values on Likert-Scale**

Mean range	Response mode	Interpretation
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	Very high
2.51- 3.25	Agree	High
1.76 - 2.50	Disagree	Low
1.00 - 1.75	Strongly Disagree	Very low

The multiple correlation coefficients were used to test the hypothesis of no significant relationship at 0.05 level of significance. The coefficient of determination of R<sup>2</sup> was computed to determine the influence of the dependent variable on the independent variable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Characteristics

The table below summarizes the results of the study on the demographic characteristics of employees in selected secondary schools in Nandi Central District.

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage -(0/0)
Age		
20-39 years (early adulthood)	123	66.1
40-59 years (middle adulthood)	61	32.8
60 and above (late adult hood)	2	1.1
Gender		
Male	117	62.9
Female	69	37.1
Marital status		
Married	152	81.7
Not married	34	18.3
Academic qualifications		
Diploma	44	23.7
Degree	137	73.7
Post graduate	5	2.7
Teaching experience		
Less than 10 years	91	48.9
10-20 years	73	39.2
Above 20 years	22	14.4

With respect to age, the table shows that 66.1% and 32.8% of the respondents were at the age of adulthood and middle adulthood respectively. The remaining 1.1% was at late adulthood.

On the gender of the respondents, it can be observed that majority (62.9%) of the respondents were males while the remaining 37.1% were females.

With regard to marital status of respondents, it was revealed that majority (81.7%) of the respondents were married, while a few (18.3%) were not married.

On academic qualification, it can be observed that more than half (73.7%) of the respondents were degree holders, 23.7% were diploma holders, while the remaining 2.7% had post graduate qualifications.

As regards, the teaching experience, about half (48.9%) of the respondents had taught for less than 10 years while 39.2% had taught for 10-20 years. The rest 11.4% had had an experience of over 20 years.

### Causes of Employee Turnover

The table below documents the ratings of the various reasons given by the respondents for intending to and acting on their turnover.

**Table 3: Level of Employee Turnover**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
I am not satisfied with the performance of my clients (students)	1.85	Low	13
I wish I was working in an organization that is more productive and performance better	2.74	High	1
I am not involved in the policy making process in this organization	2.44	Low	5
My additional qualifications are not recognized by the authorities ( BOG, TSC)	2.21	Low	6
The management does not consider me for positions of responsibility in the organization	1.90	Low	10
I do not get satisfaction from the responsibilities I hold as an employee of this organization	1.11	Low	19
My work load in the organization is heavy	2.51	Very low	3
There are no sufficient organizations	1.49	High	17
This organization has no employee fringe benefits Schemes, e.g. paid annual	2.54	High	2

leave, travel allowance			
etc			
The organizations management approach is dictatorial	1.98	Low	9
There is no professionalism in staffing and employee deployment	1.89	Low	11
This organization has adequate internal supervision mechanism	1.99	Low	8
The management of this organization has a negative intent on the appraisal	1.88	Low	12
I relate poorly with the members of my departments and other staff in this organization	1.60	Very low	15
The management of the organization relates poorly with its employees	1.85	Low	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>Low</b>	

It is clear from the table that majority of the respondents agreed that the possible causes of high level of employee turnover are: wish to work in other organizations that are more productive (2.74), lack of employee fringe benefit schemes (2.54), heavy work load (2.51) and lower salary and incentives compared to other friends with same level of education but working in other organization (3.22).

Other factors that cause employee turnover as disagreed by few respondents are: non involvement in policy making process in the organization (2.44), additional qualification not recognized by the higher authorities (2.21), lack of professionalism while recommending employees for promotion in the organization (2.03), inadequate internal supervision (1.99), management leadership being dictatorial (1.98), top management not considering employee for position of responsibility (1.90), lack of professionalism in staffing and employee deployment (1.89), negative intention in employee annual appraisal (1.88), poor relationship between the management and its employee (1.85) and dissatisfaction with students performance (1.85).

Furthermore, it can be revealed that few respondents strongly disagreed that poor relationship with members of other department (1.60), inadequate provision of good working conditions (1.60), lack of sufficient resources to perform work in the organization (1.11) and lack of respect to employees by management (0.94) has no significant effect on employee turnover.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is a significant negative relationship between the levels of organizational stability and employee turnover since the null hypothesis was rejected. The System Theory by Ludwiq Von Bertalanffy (1952) has been proved by the findings. For instance, on organizational stability, healthy coexistence and free interaction, both internally and externally, are of paramount importance in enhancing stability in the organization. Similarly on employee turnover voluntary change in jobs by the employee depends on salary and incentives, lack of fringe benefits schemes and heavy work load which are the social-technical factors explained by the theory.

To enhance organizational stability and reduce employee turnover, stakeholders should strengthen and nurture healthy relationships amongst the members in the organization in order to create a conducive environment for higher productivity. There should be a clear communication of purpose with defined organizational structure of responsibilities. It is also important to provide sound leadership that is helpful, results in organization fulfilling its purpose and is intended to make it progress. The stakeholders should also improve pay packages; introduce incentives and employee fringe benefits schemes.

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