



Factors contributing to retention of teachers in public secondary schools in rural areas in Tanzania: a study of Lindi district

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing teacher retention in public secondary schools situated in rural areas, with a particular focus on the Lindi District in Tanzania. The research employed a convergent design within a mixed-methods approach and included a sample of 60 students, 30 teachers, and 3 heads of schools. Quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate a comparatively low retention rate in rural secondary schools in Lindi, attributed to factors such as inadequate remuneration and benefits, limited professional development opportunities, poor work-life balance, and unsupportive work environments. These challenges may negatively impact the quality of education, as insufficient support and compensation for teachers can lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, and overall engagement in their roles.

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INTRODUCTION

The retention of teachers plays a pivotal role in ensuring the stability and enhancement of educational quality in rural districts, as exemplified by the case of Lindi District in Tanzania. High rates of teacher retention are essential for sustaining a capable and committed teaching workforce, which directly influences school performance and students' academic achievements (Bulawat, 2020; Tyas et al., 2020). Skilled and dedicated teachers are primary agents of curriculum implementation and play a crucial role in facilitating effective teaching and learning experiences. The retention of experienced teachers is vital for maintaining instructional continuity, building strong student relationships, and fostering a conducive learning environment (Aleem and Bowra, 2020). Additionally, teacher retention is closely linked to school success, as teachers' working conditions significantly affect retention rates and overall school outcomes (Berry et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding the factors that impact teacher retention in rural areas and identifying strategies to enhance retention rates is essential for advancing high-quality education.

Literature identifies various factors hindering teacher retention, including inadequate remuneration and benefits, limited professional growth opportunities, unfavorable working conditions, insufficient administrative support, and scarce resources and materials (Larkin et al., 2022; Landertinger et al., 2021). Nketsia et al. (2022) highlight the impact of professional development opportunities on teacher retention in rural areas. The lack of training and orientation programs for new teachers contributes to low retention rates (Zakaria & Otieno, 2022). These challenges are not unique to Tanzania; similar issues are observed in other countries such as the United States (Guthery & Bailes, 2022), Uganda (Sol et al., 2022), and Ethiopia (Nketsia et al., 2022).

To address these challenges and improve teacher retention rates in rural areas, targeted approaches are necessary. Prior research suggests that offering competitive compensation packages, providing professional development opportunities, and creating supportive working environments are effective strategies for enhancing motivation and retention (Larkin et al., 2022; Aleem and Bowra, 2020). Training and professional development activities have been

shown to increase teachers' dedication and preparedness to adapt to changing educational contexts (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Additional measures such as implementing mentoring and support programs, ensuring administrative support, and facilitating access to resources can further contribute to a positive work environment for teachers (Mkoma, 2022; Thorp, 2022). Comprehensive orientation and induction programs for new teachers can also enhance retention rates (Zakaria and Otieno, 2022). Tailoring these strategies to the specific needs of rural regions like Lindi District can potentially enhance teacher retention rates and elevate education quality.

Teacher retention is a global concern, with countries such as the United States facing challenges in retaining qualified and experienced teachers (Guthery and Bailes, 2022). To address evolving educational needs, many nations have integrated information and communication technology (ICT) into teacher education (Pieters et al., 2019; Brevik et al., 2019). For example, in Nepal, teacher preparation programs have been modernized to include ICT (Rana and Rana, 2020), while European countries such as Portugal, Poland, and Turkey have also embraced ICT integration (Brevik et al., 2019). This global trend underscores the importance of addressing teacher retention challenges and incorporating ICT in teacher education to improve education quality.

In Africa, teacher retention remains a significant issue, particularly in rural areas. Nketsia et al. (2022) emphasize the role of professional development opportunities in influencing teacher retention in rural areas of Ethiopia. In Uganda, local training programs have helped mitigate teacher turnover (Sol et al., 2022). Moreover, Ghana and Kenya have integrated ICT in teacher education to enhance the quality of education (Ayall et al., 2021). These initiatives highlight the need for customized approaches to improve teacher retention and incorporate ICT in teacher education programs across Africa.

In Tanzania, particularly in rural areas such as Lindi District, teacher retention presents specific challenges that require attention. Newly hired teachers often leave their positions within the initial months of employment, contributing to low retention rates (Mkoma, 2022). Challenges such as low motivation, inadequate facilities, and poor internet access persist despite efforts to integrate ICT into teacher education (Koomson and MacBride-Stewart, 2021). Ongoing initiatives, including the UNESCO-Chinese Fund in Trust project providing computers and internet points in teacher colleges, aim to

improve access to ICT (UNESCO, 2018). Despite these challenges, ICT integration in teacher education can enhance education quality and teacher retention in Tanzania (Mkoma, 2022; Mgaiwa and Hamis, 2022).

A comprehensive examination of the factors affecting teacher retention in Lindi District, Tanzania, is essential for developing targeted strategies and interventions to improve retention rates and enhance educational outcomes in rural areas. This study aimed to assess the factors contributing to teacher retention in public secondary schools in rural regions, focusing on Lindi District. Through this examination, the study sought to identify the most effective strategies for improving teacher retention and, ultimately, the quality of education in rural Tanzania.

■ METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a convergent design within a mixed-methods approach and was conducted in Lindi District, Tanzania, known for its significant number of rural schools and challenges in teacher retention. The target population comprised students, teachers, and school heads from public secondary schools. A sample of 60 students, 30 teachers, and 3 heads of school was used. Probability and non-probability sampling methods were used to select a balanced sample, including stratified sampling for teachers and students and purposive sampling for school heads. Data were collected using questionnaires for teachers and students, and interview guides for school heads. The study ensured validity by consulting research experts and enhancing the questionnaires based on their feedback, while reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data, with ethical considerations observed throughout the research process.

■ RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Rate of Teacher Retention in Rural Secondary Schools of Lindi District

The first objective of this study was to assess the rate of teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Lindi District. To achieve this objective, data were collected from teachers, students, and heads of schools. Both teachers and students provided their perspectives through interviews, while heads of schools offered their insights. Table 1 presents the students' responses regarding statements related to teacher retention.

Table 1. Students' responses to the retention rate of teachers (n = 60)

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Most of the teachers in Lindi district stay in their schools up to retirement.	2	3.3	6	10	10	16.7	28	46.7	14	23.3
The turnover rate of teachers in rural secondary schools of Lindi district is low.	3	5	7	11.7	12	20	25	41.7	13	21.7
Teachers in Lindi district schools likely to continue teaching in the same school.	5	8.3	9	15	14	23.3	20	33.3	12	20
The majority of teachers in rural secondary schools of Lindi district have been stayed in their school for a long time	4	6.7	8	13.3	11	18.3	22	36.7	15	25
Teachers in Lindi district schools plan to continue teaching in the same district.	6	10	11	18.3	15	25	18	30	10	16.7
The retention strategies implemented in rural secondary schools of Lindi district are effective in keeping teachers in their positions.	2	3.3	5	8.3	13	21.7	24	40	16	26.7
Teachers in Lindi district schools have a positive perception of their job security and feel confident about their future in the school.	3	5	6	10	12	20	23	38.3	16	26.7
The administration in rural secondary schools of Lindi district actively supports and encourages teachers to stay in their positions.	4	6.7	9	15	11	18.3	21	35	15	25
Teachers in Lindi district schools feel valued and recognized for their contributions, leading to higher retention rates.	5	8.3	10	16.7	13	21.7	20	33.3	12	20
The professional development opportunities provided in rural secondary schools of Lindi district contribute to teacher retention.	3	5	7	11.7	12	20	24	40	14	23.3
The work environment in rural secondary schools of Lindi district promotes job satisfaction and encourages teachers to stay in their roles.	4	6.7	8	13.3	11	18.3	22	36.7	15	25

Source: Field data (2023) Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = undecided; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree

The data in Table 1 reveal that only 3.3% of the students strongly agreed, while 10% of them agreed that most of the students in Lindi district schools stay in their schools up to retirement. In contrast, a significant portion (46.7%) disagreed, and 23.3% strongly disagreed, indicating a considerable lack of student retention. These findings are in line with the research conducted by Kiragu (2021), who investigated student retention and found a higher rate of students staying until graduation. The difference in findings suggests that the rate of student retention in Lindi district schools might be lower than that in other areas explored by Kaliboti. This implies that specific factors or challenges unique to Lindi district may contribute to the lower retention rate.

The data in the same table also reveal that 5% of the students strongly agreed and 11.7% agreed that the dropout rate of students in rural secondary schools of Lindi district is low. However, a higher proportion (41.7%) disagreed, and 21.7% strongly disagreed, indicating a significant level of disagreement and potential dropout. These results

align with the research conducted by Scallon et al. (2023), who also explored student dropout and identified factors such as dissatisfaction and lack of support as contributors. The similarity in findings suggests that the high dropout rate observed in Lindi district is consistent with what has been observed in similar studies. This implies that there may be common underlying factors contributing to student dropout in rural areas. Therefore, interventions should focus on addressing these shared challenges to improve retention rates and provide stability in rural secondary schools, taking into account the specific context of Lindi district.

The data in Table 1 also show that 8.3% of the students strongly agreed, and 15% agreed that students in Lindi district schools plan to continue studying in the same school. However, a higher proportion (33.3%) was uncertain, and 20% disagreed, indicating mixed intentions among students. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Martinie et al. (2022), who explored student intentions and identified a strong relationship between intention and dropout. The similarity in

findings suggests that the uncertainty and mixed intentions observed among students in Lindi district are reflective of broader patterns found in similar studies. This implies that there may be common factors influencing students' decisions to stay or leave their schools. Thus, efforts should focus on addressing these shared factors, such as academic engagement, social support, and school climate, to enhance retention in Lindi district schools.

The data also reveal that 6.7% of the students strongly agreed, while 13.3% agreed that the majority of students in rural secondary schools of Lindi district have stayed in their schools for a long time. However, a considerable proportion (36.7%) disagreed, and 25% strongly disagreed, indicating that the majority of students had not stayed in their schools for a long duration. These findings diverge from previous studies and research by [Mkoma \(2022\)](#), who explored the relationship between benefits and reward systems, working environment, and dropout intention. Mkoma's study found an inverse relationship between these factors and dropout intention. The difference in findings suggests that the factors influencing student retention in Lindi district may differ from those observed in Mkoma's research. This implies that there may be unique challenges or circumstances in Lindi district contributing to shorter tenures among students. Therefore, further investigation is needed to identify these specific factors and develop tailored strategies to promote longer-term retention in rural secondary schools in Lindi district.

The data show that 10% of the students strongly agreed, while 16.7% agreed that students in Lindi district schools are likely to continue studying in the same district. However, a significant proportion (30%) disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed, indicating mixed intentions among students. These findings suggest that while some students express a desire to continue studying in the same district, a considerable number are uncertain or consider other options. These results are in agreement with the research conducted by [Marshall et al. \(2022\)](#), who found that a substantial percentage of students considered changing schools or pursuing education outside of the district. The similarity in findings suggests that the issue of student retention and intentions to stay within the district is a common concern. Hence, efforts should be made to understand and address the underlying factors influencing students' decisions to enhance retention in Lindi district schools.

The data reveal that 3.3% of the students strongly agreed, while 8.3% agreed that the retention strategies implemented in rural secondary schools of

Lindi district are effective in keeping students in their positions. However, a significant proportion (40%) disagreed, and 26.7% strongly disagreed, indicating dissatisfaction with the implemented strategies. These findings highlight the need for further examination and improvement of the current retention strategies. These results are in contrast to previous studies, such as the research by [Fessehatsion and Peng \(2021\)](#) who found that eliminating testing did not impact the likelihood of students leaving their positions or changing schools. The difference in findings suggests that the effectiveness of retention strategies may vary depending on the context and specific interventions implemented. Therefore, it is essential to reassess and implement evidence-based strategies tailored to the unique needs and challenges of student retention in rural secondary schools in Lindi district.

The data show that 5% of the students strongly agreed, while 10% agreed that students in Lindi district schools have a positive perception of their academic security and feel confident about their future in the school. However, a higher proportion (38.3%) disagreed, and 26.7% strongly disagreed, indicating concerns and uncertainties regarding academic security. These findings suggest that there may be challenges and perceived insecurities among students in Lindi district schools. These results are consistent with the research conducted by [Mgaiwa and Hamis \(2022\)](#), who emphasized the importance of academic satisfaction and its impact on reducing dropout intention and enhancing commitment. The similarity in findings highlights the significance of addressing academic security concerns to improve student retention in Lindi district schools. Therefore, efforts should focus on providing a supportive and conducive learning environment that instills confidence and academic security among students.

The data reveal that 6.7% of the students strongly agreed, while 15% agreed that the administration in rural secondary schools of Lindi district actively supports and encourages students to stay in their positions. However, a considerable proportion (35%) disagreed, and 25% strongly disagreed, indicating a lack of perceived support from the administration. These findings suggest that there may be a disconnect between students and the administrative support provided. These results align with the research conducted by [Scallon et al. \(2023\)](#), who identified the recognition of students as knowledgeable contributors, effective communication of the school's vision, and student-centered approaches as practices that characterized principals of low-turnover schools. The similarity in findings

implies that fostering a supportive administrative culture that values and supports students can contribute to enhancing student retention in Lindi district schools. Therefore, efforts should be made to strengthen the relationship and collaboration between students and administrators.

The data show that 8.3% of the students strongly agreed, while 16.7% agreed that students in Lindi district schools feel valued and recognized for their contributions, leading to higher retention rates. However, a significant proportion (33.3%) disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed, indicating a lack of perceived recognition and appreciation. These findings highlight the importance of recognizing and appreciating students' contributions. These results are consistent with the research conducted by [Mkoma \(2022\)](#), who found an inverse relationship between recognition, appreciation, and dropout intention. The similarity in findings underscores the significance of creating a supportive environment where students feel valued and acknowledged for their efforts. Therefore, efforts should be made to establish recognition and appreciation programs that celebrate students' achievements and contributions.

The data reveal that 5% of the students strongly agreed, while 11.7% agreed that the professional development opportunities provided in rural secondary schools of Lindi district contribute to student retention. However, a significant proportion (40%) disagreed, and 23.3% strongly disagreed, indicating dissatisfaction with the current professional development opportunities. These findings suggest the need to reassess and improve the effectiveness of professional development initiatives. These results are consistent with previous research by [Mkoma \(2022\)](#), who highlighted the importance of effective professional development in reducing dropout intention and enhancing academic satisfaction. The similarity in findings emphasizes the significance of providing relevant and impactful professional development opportunities that address the specific needs and aspirations of students in Lindi district schools. Therefore, efforts should focus on designing and implementing high-quality professional development programs that foster continuous growth and support student retention.

The same question was also asked of the teachers to triangulate the information collected from the students regarding the rate of teacher retention in the schools. Teachers' responses to this question are summarized in table 2.

The data presented in Table 2 show that 16.7% of the teachers strongly agreed and 20.0% agreed that most teachers in Lindi district schools stay in their schools up to retirement. However, a significant

proportion (33.3%) disagreed, and 16.7% strongly disagreed, indicating a lack of teacher retention until retirement. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by [Kiragu \(2021\)](#), who found a strong and significant relationship between organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover. The similarity in findings suggests that the challenges faced by teachers in Lindi district schools align with those identified in Kaliboti's study. This implies that strategies to enhance teacher retention until retirement should focus on improving organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Therefore, targeted interventions and support systems should be implemented to address these challenges and promote long-term teacher retention in Lindi district schools.

The findings indicated that the turnover rate of teachers in rural secondary schools in Lindi District is higher than expected. Specifically, 13.3% of teachers strongly agreed and 10.0% agreed that the turnover rate is low, whereas 26.7% disagreed and 30.0% strongly disagreed, suggesting a notable teacher attrition rate. These results contrast with previous research by [Mgaiwa and Hamis \(2022\)](#), which underscored the crucial role of job satisfaction in mitigating turnover intention. The discrepancy suggests that unique challenges specific to Lindi District may be contributing to the elevated turnover rates among teachers. Therefore, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the district's specific challenges and targeted strategies to improve teacher retention.

Furthermore, the data reveal mixed intentions among teachers regarding their likelihood of continuing to teach in the same school. While 20.0% of teachers strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that they were likely to continue teaching at their current school, 33.3% were uncertain and 16.7% disagreed. These findings align with [Mkoma's \(2022\)](#) research, which highlighted the interplay between benefit and reward systems, work environment, and turnover intention. Efforts to improve teacher retention should consider enhancing benefits, working conditions, and overall job satisfaction to achieve greater stability in Lindi District schools.

The data also suggest a lack of long-term retention among teachers in rural secondary schools, with only 10.0% of teachers strongly agreeing and 23.3% agreeing that the majority of teachers remain in their positions for a substantial period. A significant portion (36.7%) disagreed, and 25.0% strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings diverge from research by [Scallon et al. \(2023\)](#), which identified practices such as recognizing teachers' expertise, clear communication of the school's vision, and a

focus on student-centered learning as hallmarks of schools with low teacher turnover. Investigating and addressing the district-specific factors contributing

to shorter tenures among teachers is essential for improving long-term retention.

Table 2. Teachers' Responses to the Retention Rate of Teachers (n = 60)

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Most of the teachers in Lindi district stay in their schools up to retirement.	5	16.7	6	20.0	4	13.3	10	33.3	5	16.7
The turnover rate of teachers in rural secondary schools of Lindi district is low.	4	13.3	3	10.0	6	20.0	8	26.7	9	30.0
Teachers in Lindi district schools likely to continue teaching in the same school.	6	20.0	8	26.7	2	6.7	9	30.0	5	16.7
The majority of teachers in rural secondary schools of Lindi district have been stayed in their school for a long time	3	10.0	7	23.3	6	20.0	5	16.7	9	30.0
Teachers in Lindi district schools plan to continue teaching in the same district.	7	23.3	4	13.3	5	16.7	6	20.0	8	26.7
The retention strategies implemented in rural secondary schools of Lindi district are effective in keeping teachers in their positions.	2	6.7	4	13.3	8	26.7	6	20.0	10	33.3
Teachers in Lindi district schools have a positive perception of their job security and feel confident about their future in the school.	6	20.0	5	16.7	3	10.0	7	23.3	9	30.0
The administration in rural secondary schools of Lindi district actively supports and encourages teachers to stay in their positions.	5	16.7	6	20.0	4	13.3	8	26.7	7	23.3
Teachers in Lindi district schools feel valued and recognized for their contributions, leading to higher retention rates.	3	10.0	7	23.3	6	20.0	5	16.7	9	30.0
The professional development opportunities provided in rural secondary schools of Lindi district contribute to teacher retention.	4	13.3	6	20.0	5	16.7	8	26.7	7	23.3
The work environment in rural secondary schools of Lindi district promotes job satisfaction and encourages teachers to stay in their roles.	7	23.3	3	10.0	6	20.0	5	16.7	9	30.0

Source: Field data (2023) Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = undecided; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree

Additionally, while 23.3% of teachers strongly agreed and 13.3% agreed that teachers in Lindi District schools plan to continue teaching within the district, a higher proportion (30.0%) disagreed, and 26.7% strongly disagreed. These mixed intentions suggest a divergence between teachers' intentions to remain in the district and actual turnover behavior. This aligns with findings by Fessehatsion and Peng, (2021), who found that eliminating testing did not significantly impact teachers' likelihood of leaving their positions. Efforts should focus on understanding the underlying factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain in Lindi District schools.

Comparing the findings from teachers, students, and previous research, it is evident that Lindi District schools face unique challenges that impact teacher retention differently than other contexts examined.

While both teachers and students expressed mixed intentions regarding retention, the overall level of agreement was low. These discrepancies highlight the need for targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by Lindi District schools to enhance retention rates.

Heads of schools echoed these concerns, emphasizing the need for increased support from the government and collaborative initiatives involving various stakeholders to tackle issues such as insufficient resources, support networks, and professional development opportunities. These collaborative efforts, including government officials, human resource officers, district education officers, and policymakers, are necessary to foster an environment that supports long-term teacher tenure in Lindi District's rural secondary schools.

Factors affecting the rate of teacher retention in rural secondary schools of lindi district

The second research objective of this study was to examine the factors influencing teacher retention rates in rural secondary schools in Lindi District. Data were collected from both teachers and heads of

schools to address this objective. Teachers provided their insights through questionnaires, while heads of schools participated in interviews. Table 3 illustrates the data gathered from teachers regarding factors affecting teacher retention

Table 3. Teachers' Responses to Factors Affecting Teacher Retention

Item	Major Factor		Minor Factor		Not a Factor	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
i. Supportive school leadership	18	60	7	23.3	5	16.7
ii. Adequate salary and benefits	14	46.7	8	26.7	8	26.7
iii. Opportunities for professional growth and development	10	33.3	12	40	8	26.7
v. Work-life balance	9	30	10	33.3	11	36.7
v. Positive work environment	17	56.7	6	20	7	23.3
i. Recognition and appreciation	12	40	11	36.7	7	23.3
i. Access to resources and materials	8	26.7	9	30	13	43.3
i. Supportive colleagues and relationships	13	43.3	10	33.3	7	23.3
x. Adequate administrative support	10	33.3	12	40	8	26.7
x. Access to professional development opportunities	7	23.3	9	30	14	46.7
i. Opportunities for leadership roles	5	16.7	15	50	10	33.3
ii. Mentorship and support programs	12	40	8	26.7	10	33.3

Supportive school leadership is a critical factor for teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Lindi District. According to the data, 60% of teachers underscored its importance, suggesting that heads of schools who demonstrate empowering leadership behaviors, such as cultivating a positive work culture, facilitating clear communication, and advocating for teachers' needs, contribute significantly to teachers' job satisfaction and commitment. This aligns with research by Johnson and Kardos (2020), which emphasized the role of supportive leadership in promoting teacher retention. Therefore, fostering a supportive leadership environment is essential for enhancing teacher retention in rural areas.

Adequate salary and benefits also play a vital role in retaining teachers in rural secondary schools. Nearly half (46.7%) of the teachers highlighted its importance, indicating that competitive salaries and comprehensive benefits packages are crucial for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural schools. Fair compensation reinforces teachers' sense of value and motivation, leading to higher job satisfaction and lower attrition rates. This finding aligns with Seneviratne and Bandara's (2021) research on the negative impact of low salaries on teacher retention, suggesting that addressing salary concerns and offering financial incentives are necessary strategies for enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools.

Opportunities for professional growth and development are another significant factor

influencing teacher retention. Approximately one-third (33.3%) of teachers emphasized the importance of access to continuous learning, training, and career advancement opportunities. Such opportunities enhance teachers' expertise, job satisfaction, and personal fulfillment, contributing to their long-term retention. Research by Hofman et al. (2019b) similarly highlighted the positive impact of professional development on teacher retention, supporting the need for ongoing learning opportunities tailored to the needs of rural teachers.

A healthy work-life balance was recognized as important for teacher retention by 30% of teachers. Achieving a balance between professional responsibilities and personal life increases teachers' likelihood of remaining in their positions. Work-life balance reduces stress and promotes overall well-being among teachers, as emphasized by Tait and Tait (2019) in their research on teacher retention. Thus, supportive policies and practices prioritizing work-life balance are crucial for improving teacher retention in rural areas.

A positive work environment was identified as a key factor influencing teacher retention, with 56.7% of teachers recognizing its significance. A supportive work culture, characterized by collaboration, respect, and teamwork, fosters job satisfaction, motivation, and a sense of belonging among teachers. This finding aligns with the work of Hodge and Sleeter (2020), which indicated the positive influence of a nurturing work environment on teacher retention.

Recognition and appreciation of teachers' contributions were acknowledged as important factors in teacher retention by 40% of teachers. When teachers feel valued and recognized for their efforts, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles. This finding aligns with research by [Koomson and MacBride-Stewart \(2021\)](#) on the need for targeted interventions to recognize and appreciate teachers' work. Consequently, implementing recognition programs and fostering a culture of appreciation are essential for enhancing teacher retention in rural areas.

Access to resources and materials was highlighted by 26.7% of teachers as a significant factor for retention. When teachers have sufficient access to educational resources, technology, and teaching materials, they can deliver quality instruction and meet students' needs more effectively. Insufficient resources can hinder teachers' instructional capabilities, leading to job dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of attrition. Previous studies, such as [Adeyemi et al. \(2020\)](#), support the importance of resource availability for enhancing teacher retention.

Supportive relationships with colleagues also contribute to teacher retention, as noted by 43.3% of teachers. Positive and supportive relationships with colleagues enhance teachers' job satisfaction, professional growth, and overall well-being. This aligns with the findings of [Kilika and Ndiku \(2019\)](#), who emphasized supportive relationships as a key factor in teacher retention.

Adequate administrative support was identified by 33.3% of teachers as significant for retention. When teachers receive sufficient support from heads of schools, they feel valued, empowered, and motivated in their roles. This aligns with [Tait and Tait's \(2019\)](#) study on the impact of administrative support on teacher retention. Ensuring strong administrative support is therefore crucial for enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools.

Access to professional development opportunities was recognized as significant for teacher retention by 23.3% of teachers. When teachers have access to relevant and impactful professional development programs, they feel supported, motivated, and equipped with the skills necessary to enhance their teaching practice. This finding aligns with research by [Wang \(2021\)](#) on the importance of professional development in influencing teacher retention.

In conclusion, supportive school leadership, adequate salary and benefits, opportunities for professional growth and development, work-life balance, positive work environments, recognition and appreciation, access to resources and materials,

supportive relationships with colleagues, administrative support, and access to professional development opportunities all play a critical role in retaining teachers in rural secondary schools. These factors align with previous research and emphasize the importance of targeted interventions and policies to improve teacher retention rates and promote high-quality education in rural areas

Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Retention in Rural Secondary Schools of Lindi District

The third objective of this study was to explore the most effective strategies for enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools. The teachers' responses are presented in Table 4.

One strategy identified to enhance teacher retention in rural secondary schools is the cultivation of supportive relationships among colleagues, with 50.0% of teachers emphasizing its importance. This finding indicates that when teachers benefit from a supportive network of peers and maintain positive relationships within the school community, their job satisfaction, professional development, and overall well-being are improved. Supportive colleagues facilitate collaboration, mentorship, and mutual support, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and community within the school. This aligns with previous research, including the work of [Kilika and Ndiku \(2019\)](#), which highlighted supportive relationships as a key factor influencing teacher retention. Therefore, promoting a culture of support and collaboration among teachers is essential for enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools.

Improved salary and benefits are significant strategies for enhancing teacher retention, with 43.3% of teachers recognizing their importance. Offering competitive salaries and comprehensive benefits packages is essential for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural schools. Adequate compensation reflects teachers' value and dedication and contributes to their job satisfaction and motivation. This aligns with previous research, such as studies by [Seneviratne and Bandara \(2021\)](#) and [Koomson and MacBride-Stewart \(2021\)](#), highlighting the negative impact of low salaries on teacher retention. Therefore, addressing salary concerns and providing financial incentives are critical strategies for improving teacher retention in rural areas.

Recognition and appreciation were also identified as effective strategies for enhancing teacher retention, with 40.0% of teachers acknowledging their significance. When teachers feel valued and recognized for their contributions and efforts, they

are more likely to remain committed to their positions. Forms of recognition can include acknowledging achievements, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a culture of appreciation within the school. This not only boosts teachers' morale but also contributes to their job satisfaction and motivation. This finding aligns with previous

research, such as the study by [Koomson and MacBride-Stewart \(2021\)](#), which emphasizes targeted interventions to recognize and appreciate teachers' work. Therefore, implementing recognition programs and fostering a culture of appreciation are essential for enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools.

Table 4. Teachers' responses to strategies for enhancing teacher retention

Strategy	f	%
Supportive colleagues and relationships	15	50.0
Improved salary and benefits	13	43.3
Recognition and appreciation	12	40.0
Mentorship and support programs	11	36.7
Adequate administrative support	10	33.3
Creating a positive and supportive work environment	9	30.0
Enhanced professional development opportunities	8	26.7
Strong mentorship and support programs	7	23.3
Access to resources and materials	7	23.3
Access to professional development opportunities	7	23.3
Providing incentives for teachers to stay in rural schools	6	20.0
School's reputation in the community	6	20.0
Implementing flexible working arrangements	6	20.0
Opportunities for leadership roles	5	16.7

Mentorship and support programs were recognized as key strategies for enhancing teacher retention, with 36.7% of teachers acknowledging their importance. Providing mentorship and support programs for new and experienced teachers can contribute to their professional growth, job satisfaction, and overall retention. Mentorship programs offer guidance and a sense of belonging, while support programs provide ongoing professional development and opportunities for collaboration. These programs align with research by [Hodge and Sleeter \(2020\)](#), highlighting the positive influence of high-quality professional development programs on teacher retention. Thus, implementing tailored mentorship and support programs is crucial for improving teacher retention.

Adequate administrative support emerged as another important strategy, with 33.3% of teachers recognizing its significance. When teachers receive adequate support from heads of schools, it enhances their job satisfaction, empowerment, and retention. Administrative support includes clear communication, professional guidance, and advocacy for teachers' needs and concerns. This creates a conducive work environment and strengthens teachers' sense of value within the school. This aligns

with the study by [Tait and Tait \(2019\)](#), emphasizing the impact of administrative support on teacher retention. Therefore, providing robust administrative support is a crucial strategy for enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools.

Creating a positive and supportive work environment is another strategy that 30.0% of teachers found significant. When schools cultivate a supportive work environment characterized by collaboration, respect, and teamwork, it fosters teachers' job satisfaction, well-being, and retention. Such an environment supports a sense of belonging, professional growth, and motivation. This aligns with research by [Tait and Tait \(2019\)](#), highlighting the importance of a positive work environment for teacher retention. Therefore, creating a nurturing and supportive work environment is important for improving teacher retention in rural areas.

Enhanced professional development opportunities were recognized by 26.7% of teachers as a strategy to enhance teacher retention. Access to relevant and impactful professional development programs contributes to teachers' professional growth, job satisfaction, and overall retention. Professional development enables teachers to acquire new skills, stay updated with best practices, and feel

supported in their professional journeys. This aligns with research by [Hodge and Sleeter \(2020\)](#), emphasizing the positive influence of high-quality professional development programs on teacher retention. Therefore, providing continuous and meaningful professional development opportunities tailored to rural teachers' specific needs is important for improving teacher retention.

Overall, Table 4 highlights strategies to enhance teacher retention in rural secondary schools, including supportive colleagues and relationships, improving salaries and benefits, recognizing and appreciating teachers' work, providing mentorship and support programs, offering adequate administrative support, creating a positive and supportive work environment, enhancing professional development opportunities, and providing access to resources and materials. These strategies align with previous research and underscore the importance of addressing various factors to enhance teacher retention. Implementing these strategies can contribute to higher job satisfaction, professional growth, and overall well-being among teachers, thereby improving teacher retention in rural secondary schools.

School heads also provided suggestions for strategies to enhance teacher retention in rural secondary schools. For instance, they recommended the implementation of comprehensive teacher incentive programs, including financial incentives and housing assistance, to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. Prioritizing workload reduction and work-life balance was also highlighted, as it allows teachers to focus more on teaching and less on administrative tasks. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of investing in infrastructure and resources in rural schools, providing modern facilities and well-equipped classrooms to support teachers.

In summary, the analysis of data from Table 4 and recommendations from school heads reveals a need for strategies aimed at improving teacher retention rates in rural secondary schools. These strategies include providing competitive compensation and incentives, promoting work-life balance, facilitating professional development opportunities, and improving infrastructure and resources. Consistency between the results shown in Table 4 and prior research emphasizes the importance of these approaches in augmenting teacher retention. By implementing these techniques, governmental entities and educational authorities can create a conducive environment that facilitates and inspires teachers, thereby enhancing teacher retention rates in rural secondary educational institutions

■ ■ DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the retention rate in rural secondary schools in Lindi District is relatively low, pointing to a pressing concern for education authorities and heads of schools. The findings suggest a range of intentions and uncertainties among both teachers and students regarding teacher retention in the district. The data indicate various factors contributing to the reduced rate of teacher retention, such as the lack of supportive school leadership, inadequate compensation and benefits, limited opportunities for professional advancement, work-life imbalance, an unfavorable work environment, insufficient recognition and appreciation, limited access to resources and materials, weak relationships with colleagues, inadequate administrative support, and few opportunities for professional development.

These challenges have far-reaching implications for the quality of education in rural secondary schools. Insufficient support and compensation can lead to diminished work satisfaction and motivation among teachers, which can negatively impact their dedication and efficacy in the classroom. When teachers face dissatisfaction and a lack of support, their ability to engage students effectively and provide quality instruction may be compromised. This can result in a decrease in students' academic performance and overall educational outcomes, thereby perpetuating a cycle of low educational attainment in rural areas.

The study emphasizes the significance of strategies such as fostering supportive leadership, offering competitive salaries and benefits, providing opportunities for professional development, creating a positive work environment, and recognizing and appreciating teachers' contributions. Addressing these aspects can enhance teacher retention and improve educational outcomes. By focusing on these factors, educational institutions can cultivate a stable, dedicated, and motivated faculty, which can, in turn, lead to improved student engagement and achievement.

Further, the study underscores the importance of developing robust support systems and focused interventions to enhance teacher retention rates. For instance, mentorship programs, peer support networks, and accessible professional development opportunities can help retain teachers by fostering a sense of community and professional growth. Additionally, targeted measures such as flexible working arrangements, improved facilities and

resources, and recognition programs can contribute to higher teacher retention rates.

Ultimately, enhancing teacher retention in rural secondary schools is critical for achieving consistency in instruction and promoting student engagement. By addressing the challenges of low teacher retention rates, educational authorities can improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, leading to long-term positive impacts on students, teachers, and the broader community. Furthermore, reducing teacher turnover can minimize the costs associated with recruiting and training new teachers, allowing resources to be allocated more efficiently towards educational improvements.

In summary, the study provides valuable insights into the complexities of teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Lindi District. By highlighting the factors affecting retention rates and proposing strategic interventions, the study presents a roadmap for enhancing stability and continuity within rural schools. This, in turn, will contribute to the elevation of educational standards and the empowerment of students and teachers in the region.

Recommendations

Based on the study conclusions, several recommendations were made to address the challenges of teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Lindi District:

First, the government should prioritize the enhancement of supportive school leadership in rural secondary schools. This goal can be achieved through leadership training programs and initiatives that foster positive work environments, effective communication, and support for the professional needs of teachers. Implementing supportive leadership strategies can lead to increased teacher satisfaction and higher retention rates.

Additionally, the government should address the issue of insufficient remuneration and benefits for teachers in rural areas by conducting wage evaluations and adjustments to ensure equitable and competitive compensation for teachers. Offering comprehensive benefits packages, including health insurance and retirement plans, may further contribute to improving teacher retention.

Furthermore, the government should allocate funds to establish professional growth and development opportunities for teachers in rural secondary schools. This could include providing relevant training programs, workshops, and conferences tailored to the specific demands and challenges faced by rural teachers. By offering ongoing learning opportunities, the government can

enhance teachers' skills and job satisfaction, resulting in higher retention rates.

Lastly, human resource officers should play a proactive role in the recruitment and retention of teachers in remote regions. This involves implementing targeted recruitment strategies, offering comprehensive orientation programs for new hires, and providing continuous support and mentorship for teachers. By focusing on these measures, schools can create a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages teachers to remain in rural area.

■ DECLARATIONS

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Ethical approval

The authors declare that this study followed applicable research ethics. This study obtained approval from relevant authorities, including the Regional Education office and the St. Augustine University of Tanzania, who gave clearance for this study. Furthermore, all participants provided informed consent and agreed to participate in this study.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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