

Teacher Retention And Attrition Through The Lenses Of Principals And Teachers In Rural Secondary Schools Of Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study explored the most important factors for teachers retention and attrition, the most critical challenges facing teachers, and the strategies considered most crucial to improved teacher retention through the lenses of principals and teachers of rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 544 respondents comprised of 75 principals that represented 40 percent of the principals, and 469 teachers which represented ten (10) percent of the teachers. The sample was selected based on the multi-stage sampling technique due to the difficult geographical terrain. The questionnaire titled, "The determinants of teachers retention and attrition" which was well validated, with a reliability coefficient of 0.81, was used to collect the data. Descriptive statistics (the weighted mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (the independent t-test) were used to analyze the research questions, and hypotheses respectively at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that both principals and teachers significantly differed in their rating of the most important factors causing teachers to remain or leave rural secondary schools. However, both groups considered inadequate infrastructure such as lack of roads, staff housing, health facilities and social amenities like portable water as the most critical challenges confronting the teachers in rural secondary schools. There was also a congruence of opinion between principals and teachers as both considered equitable distribution of workload among teachers, and providing compensation packages competitive with those occupations requiring similar level of education and workload, as the most preferred strategies for increased teacher retention in the rural secondary schools. It was concluded, among others, that teachers' decision to stay or leave rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State was greatly affected by the principals' degree of leadership support for teachers.*

Keywords: *Attrition, Retention, Rural Secondary Schools, School Heads, Teachers*

I. INTRODUCTION

Countries all over the world, including Nigeria, have a secondary school system. It is an important level between elementary and tertiary education because it not only prepares students for higher education and professional courses, but also builds a strong foundation for lifelong learning and personal growth (Batman, 2024). It is generally recognized that the quality of secondary school system cannot rise above the quality of the teachers, the most important resource in any school system. But having the right quantity, quality, and mix of teachers is a major challenge among nations.

States or provinces within developed and developing economies have schools in urban, suburban and rural areas. United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, China, Ghana, Mali and United States and so on, are typical examples. In the United States, for example, in 2019 there were 98,500 public elementary and secondary schools. In that same year, there were about 27,500 (28%) public elementary and secondary schools in rural areas, enrolling 9.8 million students, representing 19% of the public school enrolment (National Center for Education, 2023).

From global perspective, the situation of rural education when compared to urban, is considered more urgent generally. Many investigative efforts have pointed to educational

disadvantage in rural areas, having higher dropout rate, negative effects on students learning outcomes, performing poorly, and requiring greater support to pass their subject than their urban counterparts (Pantages & Creeton, 2018). In the US, it has been found that insufficient supply of new teachers and perennial teacher shortages have resulted in lower school performance (American Federation of Teachers, 2022; Government Accountability Office 2022, Ingersoll & Tran, 2023).

In Nigeria, the current status of rural education is very worrisome considering the various challenges confronting it. The situation is even worse with Bayelsa State – One of the newest states and the least populous among the 36 states in Nigeria with an estimated population of over 2,530,000 as at 2022. Bayelsa State is in the Niger Delta with riverine and estuarine setting with bodies of water everywhere within the State. The difficult terrain makes development of significant infrastructure quite difficult (Wikipedia 2024).

The geographical location has made networking and delivering effective pedagogy problematic. Quality in education in rural schools can only be buttressed through significant social and economic developments in Bayelsa State, where more than 80 percent of the villages and communities are rural, riverine and remote and difficult to reach. The physical conditions in schools, lack of basic classrooms, social amenities, housing, and lack of communication system have negatively affected learners performance in comparison to schools elsewhere (Mulkeen, 2015; Mc Ewan, 2019).

In Nigeria, a major concern in all states is that of teacher retention and attrition. Teacher retention refers to the ability of a school education board to keep teachers who have been employed by government and deployed to remain in the schools for a long period of time, not less than five years. Teacher attrition, on the other hand, refers to the gradual reduction in teachers numbers overtime when they voluntarily move out of the teaching profession for personal reasons or due to a toxic work environment, to take up another and simply not being replaced soonest (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). It is the responsibility of States to employ, continuously develop and retain quality and experienced teachers, and do all within their power to reduce attrition by enhancing retention.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is the integration of ideas from Adam’s Equity Theory (1965), Boylan et al. (1993) retention framework, and Sher’s (2013) proposed three (3) Cs theoretical rural teachers retention and attrition model.

John Stacey Adams, a workplace behavioral psychologist, postulated that employee motivation is mostly determined by their sense of fairness at work. Adam argued that employees keep a mental record of their job’s inputs and outputs, and then utilize that record to compare their inputs and outputs to those of others (People Hum, 2022). The key components of exchange - relationship in Adam’s theory are inputs and outcomes. Input refers to what an individual brings into the exchange. They are the contributions or efforts put into the work. Where a person exchanges his or her services

for pay, inputs comprise effort, performance, education, training, skills, past job experience, and efforts to achieve goals. Outcomes or results are rewards that come from the exchange in the employment situations such as compensation, benefits and promotions. Additionally, other rewards such as supervisory treatments, job assignments, fringe benefits and status symbols may also count in evaluating the exchange (Modway, 2017).

Equity theory appreciates that people take concern not just with the total amount of rewards they receive for their efforts, but also with how this amount relates to what others receive. If the rewards they receive for their efforts or inputs is perceived to be greater than others, then teachers are more likely to remain in their rural location. On the other hand, if their inputs are perceived to be greater than others but the rewards of the others are considered greater than theirs, they will perceive unfairness and as a result they will decide to leave the rural school location. It is believed that teachers mainly leave public secondary schools in search of greener pastures. The constant hopping of teachers in secondary schools is mainly because of comparison with what others in other organizations are getting (Obiri, 2015; Muiruri, 2012).

FACTORS FOR TEACHER RETENTION AND ATTRITION

Boylan et al. (1993) developed a useful framework for teachers retention and attrition. The authors identified fourteen factors which they categorized into four spheres of influence that affect teachers to decide to remain or leave rural teaching position. To these four spheres of influence could be added a fifth one which the authors of this current article referred to as government sphere of influence. Boylan et al. (1993) postulated that the complex set of interactions between these elements in the spheres of influence is a major determinant of teacher retention or attrition. This framework has been conceptualised as illustrated in figure 1.

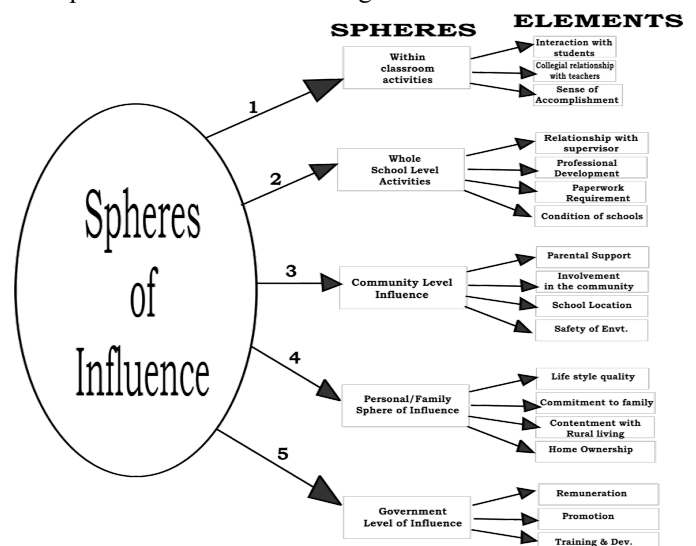


Figure 1: Modified Conceptual Framework by Boylan et al.

CAUSES OF TEACHER RETENTION AND ATTRITION

The various spheres have been operationalized as follows:

- ✓ Within classroom activities: consist of activities such as interactions with students, collegial relationship with other teachers, and a sense of accomplishment in the performance of the duties of teaching itself.
- ✓ Whole school level activities: include relationships with supervisors, professional development opportunities, paper workload, and physical conditions of the school.
- ✓ Community level Activities: include parental support, involvement in the activities of the community, geographic location of the school, and the safety of the environment.
- ✓ Finally, family/personal factors: is concerned with issues such as quality of lifestyle, commitment to family, contentment with rural living, and home ownership.
- ✓ The fifth sphere introduced by the current authors of this paper is referred to as government activities. This include employment and deployment of teachers in public schools, payment of their salaries and benefits, development and training while in service and promotion on the basis of seniority and/or merit.

A closely related and useful rural teacher retention and attrition model is the three CS theoretical framework proposed by Sher (2013). The 3 Cs they used to explain these phenomena are: characteristics, conditions, and compensation. Fig 2 illustrates the 3Cs model.

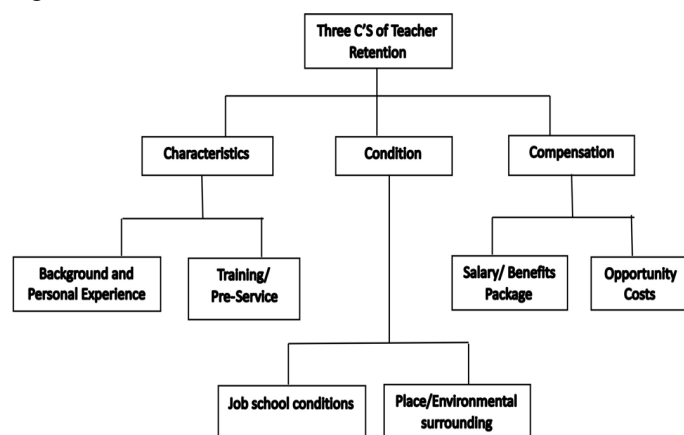


Figure 2: Conceptualization of the Three C's Teacher Retention Model

According to Sher (2013), teacher characteristics influence their rate of retention and attrition. Teacher characteristics in the theory include background, training, pre-service and personal experience of a teacher. According to Lemke (1994), having the right person for a rural school assignment decreases attrition while increasing teacher retention. Helge (1985) had reported that teachers who have the least experience are the most likely to leave a rural school setting. Competency was noted to reduce attrition and the characteristics of a person hired to teach in rural settings have influence on attrition.

Sher (2013) also posited that conditions represent the job, and the place the school conditions and environmental surroundings such as cultural venues, recreational opportunities, housing, family, and friends. The theory holds that the conditions of the job and place influence the rate of teacher attrition and retention. Stone (1990) had found that rural teachers leave due to social, cultural, geographic and professional isolation. The theory also argued that less

attractive working and living conditions increased attrition, decreased retention and increased recruitment difficulties.

Thirdly, the three C's model argued that the compensation component of a teacher's job influences retention and attrition. Sher (2013) defined compensation as including any financial component such as salary, rewards, benefits, incentives and opportunity cost such as the ability to make a higher salary in an alternate field. Kirby and Grissne (1993) findings supported this theory when they reported that teachers salary had a positive correlation to teacher retention.

After a close study of the relevant models, the current researchers observed certain deficiencies and decided to refine and integrate them. For example, it was observed that certain factors such as compensation in the Boylan et al., model is better classified under the category of government in public school education in Nigeria.

In every organization, it is desired to have a working force of competent men and women who can bring about quality outcomes because it has been recognized that "there are no great schools without great teachers"(Hins, 2018). Further, like any organization, it is normal for employees to come and go. But when there is a high attrition rate of those employed and deployed in the first three to five years, it becomes a major concern for the organization, so it is with the education sector.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF ATTRITION

Studies have shown that having high attrition of teachers negatively affected the achievement of all students in a school, diminishes teacher effectiveness and increases the difficulty in completing the curricula. It also results in poor performance of students in external examinations and in the overall quality of instruction for those teachers that remain in the classroom (Ronfeldt, Loeb and Wyckoff, 2013). Teacher attrition is thus disruptive of student academic attainment (Gibbons, Scritinio and Telhaji, 2021). Merriall (2014) and Sorensen & Ladd (2020), in their findings, pointed out that attrition leads to significant loss of resources by way of high costs of recruiting, and training replacement of teachers (Badasso & Acosta, 2024; Lynch 2012; Alliance of Education Excellence, 2005). It also leads to crowded classes, overburdened teachers, and educational disparities (UNESCO, 2010).

While teacher attrition is considered a problem, a number of studies have alluded to the importance of attrition that can be beneficial for students and the education system. A typical example is in cases where the departing teachers are ineffective or low performing; and the entrance of "new blood" into the school can bring out innovation and enhance student learning (Grisson & Bartanen, 2019; Ingersoll and May, 2012).

In addition to the foregoing analysis, the following conditions have been identified as contributing to teacher attrition (Norton & Kelly, 1997) in rural secondary schools: Problems, frustration and general stress associated with paper work and teacher job burnout (Andera& Bullock, 2010), concerns about evaluation of student performance, problems relating to student behavior and handling of students disciplinary problems; the loss of intellectual capital (Ettorre, 1997:4), teacher workload and expectations for assuming extra-curricular assignments, and concern for relationship with peers and administrative personnel.

Others are problems of poor salary and allowances, poor working conditions (Anog and Peteros, 2024), lack of incentives (Chinonye, 2011), a shift in the teachers original reason for entering the field (Kirby & Grissmon (1993) and existence of attractive opportunities outside the teaching profession. Inadequate monitoring programmes (Oliver, 2009; Corbell, Osborne & Reiman, 2010), concerns on career development and progression (UNESCO, 2010, Nguyen et al., 2020), and Lack of administrative support (Smith, 2009; Baker 2007) are also fueling attrition decisions.

Lack of respect from the public and parents, and the Lack of the provision of needed resources and technological support, dissatisfaction with the way teachers are given responsibilities (Buluwat, 2020), and possible toxic school culture or climate (Leug et al, 2019; Toropova et al., 2021) are other reasons.

CHALLENGES FACING RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

The various basic challenges facing rural schools and which needed to be overcome so as to improve their access to quality education can be summarized as follows; lack of school buildings and facilities, lack of transportation and inaccessibility to remote rural communities, lack of portable water, roads, power/electricity, and lack of modern health facilities. There are also communication challenges such as internet, chat rooms, bulletin boards, web sites and telephone facilities, lack of decent housing, computer hardware and software and competent computer operators, programmers and technologist. There are also lack of science and technical laboratories, and libraries.

TEACHERS RETENTION: FACTORS AND IMPORTANCE

Increasing teacher retention is a major source of interest in both developed and developing nations because it has a lot of advantages for a nation's educational system. First, it serves to improve the quality of the entire educational system just as it can bring about a greater equality across the nation's education system as a whole. Secondly, the performance of students in external examinations will improve as the curricula are adequately covered by experienced and qualified teachers with expertise in their discipline. Thirdly, high teacher retention is considered as a crucial indicator of the stability and efficacy of an educational system (Toropova et al, 2021).

The decision of teachers to remain in rural secondary schools is determined by a number of factors:

- ✓ When teachers' salaries and perks are worth a living wage (Chambers Mack et al., 2019).
- ✓ School support for teachers work (duPless & Mestry, 2019).
- ✓ Presence of prospects for professional development and career advancement (Matthews, 2020) through regular promotion.
- ✓ Creating a positive school culture and climate (Leung et al 2019).
- ✓ Creating environment where teachers feel respected and appreciated (Liu et al., 2021)
- ✓ Good teacher mentoring and supervisory relationship (Norton and Kelly, 1997).

- ✓ Diversification of work activities to create variety and eliminate monotony or boredom
- ✓ Appropriate distribution of teacher workload among staff,
- ✓ Recognition for achievement and talent (Mngomezul, Challenor, Mupano, Mashau, and Chikandiwa, 2015).
- ✓ Provision of welfare packages for rural secondary school teachers e.g. social club, sports facilities, transportation allowance and housing subsidy.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE TEACHER RETENTION

The strategies and policies that could be used to increase teachers' retention in rural secondary schools include the implementation of the factors highlighted above in addition to the following:

- ✓ Promoting a positive working environment to foster teachers job satisfaction and commitment to the teaching job (Anog and Peteros, 2024; Nguyen, 2018)
- ✓ Building on motivation and improving overall job satisfaction
- ✓ Provision of support for the individual teacher and family, promoting collaboration among teachers and involving teachers in community activities
- ✓ Involving teachers in decision making in schools
- ✓ Assigning experienced experts to mentor newly engaged teachers and fostering healthy competitiveness
- ✓ Onboarding programmes for new teachers involving community (RonfieldMc & Queen, 2017; Ingersoll &Perda, 2010).
- ✓ Adequate salary, good promotion schemes and regular teacher development programmes
- ✓ Provision of basic amenities such as portable water, supplies and technological tools to support effective teaching and learning in rural secondary schools, and
- ✓ Providing childcare facilities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Evidence from the literature has suggested that multiple factors cause low retention and higher attrition of teachers in rural secondary schools. It is known that not all teachers quit rural schools; while some leave, others remain. There is no known empirical studies on these phenomena in Bayelsa State secondary schools. One pertinent question that needed to be asked at this juncture is, from the lenses of the principals and teachers who have worked in this geographical location, why do some teachers leave and others continue teaching in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State? What are the critical challenges confronting rural secondary school teachers, and what strategies would be considered most important for increasing teacher retention and reducing their attrition?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following four research questions were raised to guide the study:

- ✓ What factors do principals and teachers consider most significant in causing teachers to remain in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

- ✓ What factors do principals and teachers consider most important in fueling teachers decision to leave rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
- ✓ What challenges are perceived as the most crucial by principals and teachers confronting teachers in rural secondary schools?
- ✓ What strategies do principals and teachers consider to be most significant for increasing teachers retention in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- ✓ There is no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and that of teachers on the most crucial factors causing teachers to remain in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- ✓ 2. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and that of teachers on the most compelling factors causing teachers to leave rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- ✓ There is no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and that of teachers on the most important challenges confronting teachers in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- ✓ There is no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and that of teachers on the most preferred strategies for increased teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a descriptive survey research design used to unveil indepth knowledge of the phenomena of teachers retention and attrition in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It does not involve the manipulation of any of the variables present. It is quantitative in nature involving the use of self-developed and validated questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The numerical data were analyzed using both descriptive (mean, standard deviation), and inferential statistics (the independent-t-test) to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study is based on the positivist paradigm.

The population of this study consisted of 4,895 public secondary school principals (188) and 4707 teachers. The sample size of 544 respondents was selected using the multi-stage sampling technique because of the difficult terrain. The sample consisted of 75 principals (40%) and 469 (10%) of the teachers. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method and it has a reliability coefficient of 0.81. This shows that the instrument was reliable enough to be used for the study. For the research questions, a mean score of above 2.50 was used as the benchmark for agreeing and any score 2.50 and below is said to be a disagreeing.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 AND HO1

The first research and its corresponding hypothesis sought to find out difference between the mean rating of factors by principals and teachers as to the reasons why teachers decide to remain in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State, and if any, if it was significantly different as presented in Table 1

S/No	Reason for Stay in Rural Secondary School	Principal (N=75)		Teachers (N=469)	
		- x	Ranking	- x	Ranking
1.	Supportive school leadership	-----	-----	3.26	1 st
2.	Lack of opportunities to teach in urban schools	-----	-----	3.25	2 nd
3.	Reduced workload	-----	-----	3.21	3 rd
4.	Support from the government	-----	-----	3.13	4 th
5.	Closeness to home and school	-----	-----	3.11	5 th
6.	Enjoyment of the rural lifestyle	-----	-----	3.09	6 th
7.	Personal attachment to the community	-----	-----	3.03	7 th
8.	Professional development opportunities	-----	-----	3.02	8 th
9.	Incentive like housing assistance for rural school teachers	3.38	1 st	-----	-----

Table 1: Principals and Teachers Mean Ranking of Rural Secondary School Teachers Retention Factors

The principals considered only one factor and that is incentives like housing assistance for rural secondary school teachers as the most important reason why teachers decide to remain in rural secondary schools. This finding partly supports Badasso& Acosta's (2024) results that monetary incentives and related perks such as housing could be useful policy for improving teacher retention in rural schools. Teachers, unlike the principals, rated eight reasons as the most important that caused them to remain in rural secondary schools. These factors are supportive school leadership, refusal of government to transfer teachers from rural schools to urban, reduced work load, support from government, closeness to home, enjoyment of the rural life style, personal attachment to the community, and professional development opportunities. It is instructive to note that the one factor identified by the principals is not one of those considered by teachers as an important factor that caused teachers to remain in rural schools.

The teachers perspective is similar to the findings of Popova et al. (2022) and Badasso& Acosta's (2024) that opportunities for teacher professional development and in service training through coaching and mentoring, are part of

useful policies for improving rural secondary school teachers' retention.

The analysis of data related to hypothesis 1 indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and that of teachers in relation to the factors that caused teachers to decide to remain in rural secondary schools. Table 2 shows the independent t-test statistics comparing the mean rating of principals and teachers on the factors causing teachers to remain in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	t-cal	t-crit.	Sig n	Remark
Principals	75	2.56	1.14					
				542	-1.473	1.96	0.05	Null
Teachers	469	2.75	1.02					Hypothesis accepted
Total	544							

The computed t-value (-1.473) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and teachers on the factors causing teachers to remain in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State, although the evidence overwhelmingly revealed that both groups differ in terms of the number of the most important factors in teachers consideration to stay in a rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

The potential explanation for this finding could be that despite the differences in the number of the most important, individually reported factors, both groups have an overall similar perceptions and evaluations of the most important factors influencing teachers decision to remain in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State. This finding aligns with Schreiner (2017) whose finding revealed that there was no significant difference in principals and teachers' perceptions and evaluations of the factors influencing teachers retention in secondary schools. Going by the teachers voice, this finding also aligns with those of George (2015), Wright (2022), and Alulia and Haerani (2023), who found amongst others, that teachers who enjoyed rural life style (ranked 6th) and professional development opportunities (ranked 8th) were among the most important elements that encouraged teachers' retention in rural secondary schools.

Further, the findings from the teachers perspective, agreed with that of Urick and Bowers (2014), Bolden (2019), and Dickey (2022), in which school leadership support (ranked 1st) as a major reason teachers remained in rural schools. It is believed that with principals' leadership support, teachers can feel insulated and protected from threats, more empowered and committed and this will intrinsically motivate them to decide to remain in their rural school positions.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION 2 AND HO2

The second research question and its corresponding hypothesis sought to find out the factors principals and teachers considered most crucial in fueling teachers decision to quit teaching in rural secondary schools.

S/No	Items	Principal (N=75)		Teachers (N=469)	
		-x	Ranking	-x	Ranking
1.	Inadequate Salary	3.13	1 st	-----	-----
2.	Unsupportive school leadership	-----	-----	3.24	1 st
3.	Lack of special hazard allowance for rural teachers	-----	-----	3.24	1 st
4.	Inadequate support from the government	-----	-----	3.18	3 rd
5.	Excessive Workload	-----	-----	3.13	4 th
6.	Lack of good classroom environment devoid of health risks	-----	-----	3.07	5 th
7.	Lack of enjoyment of the rural lifestyle	-----	-----	3.06	6 th
8.	Lack of functional health facility in rural schools	-----	-----	3.06	6 th
9.	Lack of personal attachment to the community	-----	-----	3.04	8 th
10.	Lack of satisfaction with working condition	-----	-----	3.03	9 th
11.	Lack of opportunities to teach in urban schools	-----	-----	3.02	10 th
12.	Nonpayment of transportation allowance for rural teachers	-----	-----	3.00	11 th

Table 3: Principals and Teachers Mean Ratings/Ranking of Factors Causing Teachers to Leave Rural Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

An inspection of Table 3 shows that principals ranked inadequate salary in 1st position and the only factor that propelled teachers to leave rural secondary schools. This finding is similar to that by Aulia and Haeran (2022) and UNESCO Global Report (2024) that teachers decision to stay or not is fueled by teachers salary and benefits, and in their judgment whether these are or not worth a living wage (Chambers Mack et al. 2019; Liu et al. 2021). However, teachers who know better where exactly the shoe hurts most did not consider inadequate salary as even a reason why they decided to leave rural schools. Instead, they identified eleven most important factors for moving out of rural secondary schools. On Priority basis, the factors are unsupportive school leadership and lack of special hazard allowance for rural teachers ranked tied in first position. Others are inadequate support from government (ranked 3rd), excessive workload (4th), lack of good classroom environment (5th), lack of enjoyment of rural life style, and lack of functional health facilities tied in the 6th position. The lack of personal attachment to the community, lack of satisfaction with working conditions, lack of opportunity to be transferred to teach in urban or city schools, and non-payment of transportation allowance to rural school teachers, were

additional most important elements that fueled teachers decision to quit rural schools.

The difference in the perspective and opinions of principals and teachers could be because the former may have a broader view of the school but teachers were more concerned for themselves. This difference could also be attributed to likely leadership style of the principals that may not have augured well for intimate connection between principals and teachers. Consequently, principals may not be well informed of the true feelings and forces pushing teachers to decide to quit teaching in rural schools.

The position of the principals that the only most important reason why teachers leave rural schools is inadequate salary, is in agreement with Peck (2023) and McKinsey (2023). These authors found that the number one (1) reason why teachers leave teaching is compensation. McKinsey found that 48% of educators are planning on leaving the field of education due to compensation, while 42% have already left because of the same reason.

The position of teachers as to the factors propelling teachers to leave rural schools which included lack of principals' leadership support, lack of enjoyment of rural life style and excessive work load, are in tandem with Ingersoll and Tran's (2023) findings that dissatisfaction with school administration due to non-support from the school principals was the primary driver of teachers turnover in rural secondary schools. The teachers reported causes are in agreement with Morris (2023) findings that among reasons teachers sometimes leave rural schools include such obvious reasons as high workload.

The finding of the corresponding hypothesis 2 as presented in Table 4, revealed that there was a significant difference between the mean rating of principals and teachers on the most important factors causing teachers to quit their rural schools. The computed t-value (-2.83) was greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This suggests that there was a significant difference on the opinions of the mean rating of principals and teachers on the factors causing teachers to leave rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State, with the weighted mean of the teachers higher than that of the principals.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	D.F.	-cal	-crit.	Sig n	Remark
Principals	75	2.58	1.05					
				54	2.83	1.96	0.005	Null
Teachers	469	2.94	1.02					Hypothesis accepted
Total	544							

Table 4 : Independent t-test Statistics Comparing the mean rating of principals and teachers on the factors causing teachers to leave rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State

THE RESEARCH QUESTION 3 AND HO 3

The third research question and its corresponding hypothesis sought to find out the challenges perceived as the most critical by principals and teachers as confronting rural secondary school teachers in Bayelsa State as shown in table 5.

S/No	Reason for Stay in Rural Secondary School	Principal (N=75)		Teachers (N=469)	
		-x	Ranking	-x	Ranking
6.	Lack of professional development opportunities	3.05	1 st	-----	-----
4.	Inadequate infrastructure	3.03	2 nd	-----	-----
18.	Bad access roads	3.01	3 rd	3.04	1 st
5.	Poor rate of school attendance by students	3.00	4 th	-----	-----

Table 5: Principals and Teacher Means Ratings/Ranking of crucial challenges confronting teachers in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State

On the most critical challenges facing rural secondary school teachers, the principals identified four while the teachers accredited only one as the most important challenge as can be found in Table 5. The four factors identified by the principals are lack of professional development opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, bad access roads, and poor rate of class attendance by rural students. This last challenge is the only one highlighted by the teachers. If roads are regarded as part of infrastructure, then it can be argued that both principals and teachers agree that infrastructure is a major challenge facing teachers in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State. This finding aligns with that of duPlessis and Mestry (2019) which stated that rural schools face severe challenges that are unique to their location and one of these is inadequate infrastructure. Cummins (2023) similarly found a lack of professional development opportunities and poor school attendance due to chronic transportation problems as some of the major challenges that rural secondary school teachers face.

A test of the relevant hypothesis as shown in Table 6 reveals that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on their reported most crucial challenges facing teachers in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State (Table 6). The null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated t-value (1.16) was less than the critical table t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. This finding could be attributed to the fact that both principals and teachers commonly face this problem of lack of roads and other infrastructure in the rural, riverine communities.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	D.F.	t-cal	t-crit.	Sig n	Remark
Principals	75	2.77	0.97					
				54	1.16	1.96	0.05	Null
Teachers	469	2.63	0.96					Hypothesis accepted
Total	544							

THE RESEARCH QUESTION 4 AND HO4

S/No	Reason for Stay in Rural Secondary School	Principal (N=75)		Teachers (N=469)	
		-x	Ranking	-x	Ranking
1	Rural transport subsidy	3.52	1 st	----	----
2	Teachers benefits, such as life insurance ...	3.37	2 nd	----	----

3	Induction programmes for new teachers involving the community	3.35	3 rd	----	----
4	Equitable distribution of work among teachers	3.28	4 th	3.10	3 rd
5	Promoting teacher collaborative culture	----	----	3.22	2 nd
6	Providing compensation packages competitive with those occupations requiring similar levels of education/workload	3.28	4 th	3.05	4 th
7	Study leave with pay	3.17	6 th	----	----
8	Hazard allowance for rural teachers	3.13	7 th	----	----
9	Increased/higher salary level for teacher in rural schools	3.03	8 th	---	----
10	Mutual trust and respect among teachers and administrators	3.03	8 th	----	----
11	Increase retirement benefit	3.01	10 th	----	----
12	Empowering teachers to succeed by providing them with resources they need to be successful	----	----	3.25	1 st

Table 7: Principals and teachers' mean rating/ranking of preferred strategies for increased teacher retention in rural schools in Bayelsa State

The fourth research question and its corresponding hypothesis sought to find out the strategies principals and teachers considered to be most important for increased teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State. It was found that the strategies both parties considered to be most important were disproportionate. For instance, while principals expressed 10 most important strategies, teachers on their part disclosed only four strategies. The principals considered the following top - down strategies as most important; rural transport subsidy, teachers benefits such as life assurance, induction programmes for new teachers involving the community, equitable distribution of workload among teachers, providing compensation packages competitive with those of similar occupations, and study leave with pay. Others are hazard allowance for rural teachers, higher salary level for teachers in rural schools, mutual trust and respect among teachers and school administrators, and increased retirement benefits.

The four most important strategies reported by teachers in descending order were empowering teachers to succeed by providing them with required resources, promoting collaborative teacher culture, equitable distribution of work load among teachers, and providing compensation packages competitive with those occupations requiring similar level of education and workload.

The finding from the hypothesis as shown in Table 8 revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean rating of principals and that of the teachers on the reported strategies for increased teacher retention in rural secondary school in Bayelsa State. In the table 8, the t-test

calculated has the value (1.16) which was less than table t (1.96) at 0.05 level significance.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	t-cal	t-crit.	Sig n	Remark
Principals	75	2.95	0.94					
				54	1.44	1.96	0.05	Null
Teachers	469	2.76	1.08					Hypothesis accepted
Total	544							

Table 8: Independent t-test Statistics Comparing the mean rating of principals and teachers on the strategies for increased teachers retention in rural secondary schools of Bayelsa State

The principals' perspective that rural transport subsidy for rural teachers as one of the preferred strategies for teacher retention is akin to the finding by Aulia and Haerani (2023). They found that for teachers to decide to stay in rural schools, administrators should consider ensuring there is handsome rural allowances for them. Saifullahi, Che-kum and Raihan (2015), Burton et al (2013), and Garcia (2022) findings revealed that implementation of a combination of strategies, such as providing incentives like transportation subsidy, and encouraging collaboration, and boosting salary and compensation wages, are essential rural secondary school teachers retention measures.

It needed to be pointed out that although principals and teachers disagree greatly on the most preferred strategies for increased teacher retention, both however, agree on three basic retention strategies, namely equitable distribution of workload among teachers, providing competitive compensation strategy comparable to similar occupations, and empowering teachers to succeed in the performance of their duties.

V. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

- ✓ Both principals and teachers disagree on the most important factors that influence teachers decision to remain in rural secondary schools.
- ✓ Both principals and teachers did not agree on the weighted mean rating of the most important factors teachers considered in Bayelsa State, and also disagreed on the number of individual most important factors.
- ✓ Both principals and teachers considered inadequate infrastructure which included lack of roads and social amenities as the most crucial challenge confronting teachers in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- ✓ Both principals and teachers considered equitable distribution of workload among teachers and providing compensation packages competitive with those occupations requiring similar levels of education and workload, as the most preferred strategies for increased teacher retention in rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, our conclusion could be inferred as follows:

- ✓ Teachers' decision to either to stay or leave rural schools in Bayelsa State is greatly affected by principals leadership support for teachers.
- ✓ There is no congruence between principals and teachers, particularly on the number of factors each group considered as most important in teachers' decision to stay or leave rural secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- ✓ Principals and teachers agree on the most crucial challenges facing rural school teachers in Bayelsa State.
- ✓ Both principals and teachers are in harmony with regards to the most important strategies government should adopt to bring about high teacher retention in rural schools in Bayelsa State

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Flowing from the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- ✓ Since the study revealed that supportive principal's leadership style leads to teacher retention, and unsupportive leadership behavior triggers teacher attrition, it is recommended that government should deploy experienced principals with demonstrated leadership qualities. Such principals should be ones the ability to create a conducive school climate and culture, interpersonal relations, trust, have skills of promoting good school - community relationship, participative decision making, inspiring team work, and ensuring teachers benefit from regular teacher development opportunities.
- ✓ The Bayelsa State government should also review its current policies on secondary school teachers in rural communities by involving teachers in the design and implementation of prioritized policies particularly in the area of improved working conditions, staff housing and transportation allowances since it is difficult to construct roads in the remote rural riverine communities.

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