



ETHICAL VALUES IN HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES: ENHANCING TEACHER RETENTION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS



¹Alli, Olufunmilayo Simiat
funmilolaalli50@gmail.com

²Prof. Virgy Onyene
vonyene@unilag.edu.ng

&

³Prof. Sheidu Sule
drsulesa@yahoo.ca
12&3 Department of Educational Management,
Faculty of Education
University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of ethical values in human resource practices—focusing on professional development, training, and employee benefits—on teacher turnover and academic achievement in Lagos State private secondary schools. The research posits that ethical HR practices enhance teachers' commitment and performance, thereby reducing turnover and improving student outcomes. The study addresses three research questions and corresponding hypotheses in line with the objectives of the study. A quantitative approach was employed in this study and correlation research design was adopted. The study sample comprised 400 teachers across 20 private secondary schools in Lagos State, selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaire measuring perceptions of HR ethics, professional development, benefits, turnover intention, and academic achievement indicators. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data and test hypotheses accordingly. Results revealed that professional development and training significantly reduce teacher turnover intentions ($p < 0.01$) and positively correlate with higher student academic achievement ($p < 0.05$). Employee benefits also showed a positive effect on job satisfaction and retention but with a moderate effect size. The study concludes that embedding ethical values in HR practices is crucial for sustaining teacher workforce stability and enhancing educational outcomes in Lagos private schools. Recommendations based on the study findings include policy reforms to institutionalise continuous training and improve employee welfare.

Background to the Study

Education is universally acknowledged as a catalyst for national development. However, the effectiveness of any educational system largely depends on the quality and stability of its teaching workforce. In Nigeria, teacher turnover and low academic achievements seems to have become persistent issues that threaten the sustainability of the education sector. Many schools are grappling with teacher attrition, which disrupts learning continuity, affects student performance, and increases the cost of recruitment and training. Thus, the human resource function in the education system is threatened. In actual fact, human resource management plays a critical role in educational institutions by influencing recruitment, retention, professional development, and overall teacher satisfaction. However, when human resource practices are void of ethical values, schools risk high teacher turnover and poor academic results (Okafor & Ogbu, 2021).

Ethical human resource management, therefore, is not optional; it is a necessity for school sustainability and student success. Ethical values are fundamental in shaping human resource (HR) practices, especially in the education sector. In Nigeria and globally, schools face challenges such as teacher attrition and declining academic performance. Ethical values in HRM refer to the application of fairness, respect, honesty, and integrity in managing people within an organization (Edeh & Ilechukwu, 2020). In schools, this means transparent recruitment processes, equitable treatment of staff, just conflict resolution mechanisms, and respect for teachers' welfare and rights. According to Adebayo and Akinlolu (2022), important ethical human resource practices include; fair recruitment and promotion where teachers are selected and promoted based on merit rather than nepotism or favoritism; workplace justice that addresses grievances impartially to maintain trust and reduce workplace conflicts; and Professional Development that offers equal access to training opportunities in order to enhance teachers' skills and motivation.

Human Resource Management (HRM) in education goes beyond administrative functions; it is about recruiting, developing, motivating, and retaining teachers to foster educational excellence. Ethical human resource practices ensure fairness, transparency, equity, and respect in managing teachers and other staff (Edeh & Ilechukwu, 2020). When human resource processes are rooted in ethical values, they promote trust, satisfaction, and loyalty among teachers, which in turn enhances their commitment to students' academic growth. Furthermore, ethical human resource management is critical in establishing a positive school climate that supports both staff and student success. Ethical leadership in human resource fosters mutual respect, encourages innovation, and reduces workplace conflicts. This creates a stable environment where teachers can thrive and focus on improving academic achievements (Ogunyemi, 2022). Given the increasing challenges in Nigeria's education sector—such as inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and declining student performance—the need for ethical human resource practices has never been more pressing. Schools must therefore prioritize ethical considerations in recruitment, retention, appraisal, and professional development if they intend to build a resilient educational system.

Unfortunately, in many Nigerian schools, human resource practices are fraught with ethical lapses such as favoritism, biased promotions, delayed remunerations, and lack of professional development opportunities (Nwosu, 2023). These unethical practices appear to demoralize teachers and contribute significantly to high turnover rates, especially in public schools and rural areas. Research by Adepoju and Oni (2021) has shown that when teachers perceive injustice in recruitment, appraisal, and rewards, their motivation decreases, which negatively affects their performance and, by extension, student outcomes. Similarly, Armstrong (2020) emphasizes that fairness in recruitment, appraisal, and reward systems is crucial for sustaining employee motivation. He notes that perceived organizational injustice leads to emotional disengagement, especially among teachers, reducing their commitment to instructional quality and student achievement. Akintayo (2018) also agrees that inequity in school management practices, especially in promotions and performance evaluation, contributes to teacher burnout and withdrawal behaviors, ultimately deteriorating student academic success. On the contrary, Obi and Salami (2022), found that although teachers might perceive bias in human resource practices, many still maintain professional standards due to intrinsic motivation, personal ethics, and student-centered commitment. Similarly, Okeke (2019) argues that while perceived unfairness affects teacher satisfaction, it does not always translate into poor performance. Some educators continue to perform optimally due to fear of sanctions, personal goals, or alternative career aspirations that require maintaining a good professional record. Fredrickson and Losada (2005) suggest that positive emotions and resilience can buffer the negative impact of perceived injustices, allowing individuals—including teachers—to maintain productivity even in unfair environments. Researchers have found several factors to be responsible for teacher turnover and academic achievement and this has sparked disagreement among researchers on the actual factors that influence teachers' decision to leave as well as the academic achievement of students. This study therefore strives to fill this gap by examining how professional development, and employee benefits as ethical human resource practices relates to teacher turnover and academic achievement in private secondary schools in Lagos State.



Professional Development as an ethical human resource practice is an important indices in this study and attempt is made to unravel the connection with teacher turnover. Ethical human resource management involves practices that uphold fairness, respect, and dignity in the workplace (Greenwood, 2013). Professional development fits into this framework as it prioritizes employee growth and recognizes teachers not just as labor inputs but as professionals with evolving competencies. By offering teachers continuous learning opportunities, schools demonstrate respect for their roles and contributions, thereby fostering ethical employment relationships (Collin et al., 2012). Professional development is more than just a routine administrative function; it is an ethical obligation in human resource management. Research by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) highlights that when teachers are provided with opportunities for skill enhancement, they feel valued and empowered. This recognition boosts their morale, leading to higher engagement levels and reduced intentions to leave the profession. Thus, professional development aligns with ethical human resource principles by addressing not just the operational needs of schools but also the personal and professional needs of teachers. By investing in teachers' professional growth, schools can reduce turnover, enhance job satisfaction, and improve educational outcomes. Addressing teacher turnover through ethical human resource practices like continuous development is critical for achieving educational quality and sustainability. For policymakers and school leaders, this means prioritizing inclusive, relevant, and accessible professional development programs to support teacher retention. Teachers who perceive stagnation in their career growth are more likely to leave for better opportunities (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Adepoju and Oni (2021) assert that when teachers feel unsupported in advancing their knowledge and skills, their motivation declines, making them susceptible to exit behaviors. Okeke (2019) found that in many public schools, the absence of clear career progression paths and insufficient training lead to frustration, pushing skilled teachers out of the system. This trend has long-term consequences on student achievement and institutional sustainability. On the contrary, structured professional development programmes serve as retention tools. Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasizes that teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they receive mentoring, coaching, and collaborative learning experiences. These programs not only improve instructional quality but also create a sense of belonging and career satisfaction (Borko, 2004). In Nigeria, the neglect of professional development has been cited as a major cause of teacher attrition. Actually, ignoring professional development violates the ethical principles of equity and justice in human resource management. Teachers deserve equal access to opportunities that foster their professional growth, regardless of their school location or subject area (Collin et al., 2012). When only a select few teachers' benefit from training programs, it creates perceptions of favoritism and breeds dissatisfaction, which accelerates turnover (Obi & Salami, 2022). Moreover, ethical human resource practices require that teachers be engaged in decision-making about their developmental needs. Imposed or irrelevant training can be counterproductive, while collaborative professional development planning respects teachers' autonomy and encourages retention (Armstrong, 2020).

Employee benefits are a crucial component of ethical human resource management, especially in education where teacher retention is a pressing issue. Schools and education authorities that prioritize teacher welfare through comprehensive benefit schemes seems to experience lower turnover rates and higher teacher satisfaction. Ethical human resource management requires treating teachers as valued professionals whose contributions to society deserve fair and humane compensation beyond basic salaries. In the teaching profession, comprehensive benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, housing support, and leave entitlements are essential for promoting job satisfaction and reducing turnover rates (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). When teachers perceive that their welfare is neglected, they are more likely to leave, leading to instability in schools and adverse effects on student outcomes. Empirical research shows that the lack of adequate employee benefits contributes significantly to teacher turnover. In a study by Adepoju and Oni (2021), over 68% of teachers in Nigerian public schools reported dissatisfaction with benefits such as healthcare, pension, and housing allowances, which directly influenced their decisions to seek alternative employment or leave the profession entirely. Similarly, Okeke (2019) conducted a survey of 450 secondary school teachers in

Nigeria and found that 72% cited inadequate benefits as a primary reason for considering resignation. The study concluded that ethical HR practices, including robust employee benefit schemes, are necessary to retain qualified and experienced teachers. Similarly, a study in the U.S., by Podolsky et al. (2016) revealed that teacher retention was higher in districts offering competitive benefits packages. Teachers in districts with strong health insurance, retirement security, and family leave policies were 25% less likely to leave their jobs compared to those in districts with limited benefits. Furthermore, Obi and Salami (2022) reported that teachers who perceive fairness in benefit distribution are more committed and resilient, even when facing challenging work environments. This suggests that employee benefits are not just financial incentives but ethical commitments to employee well-being.

Problem Statement

Teacher turnover is one of the major challenges facing the education sector globally, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. High turnover rates negatively affect school stability, student performance, and institutional growth (Ingersoll, 2001). It appears that ethical human resource practices, such as fair promotion, equitable workload distribution, and professional development opportunities, are critical to ameliorating the issues around turnover. However, despite the recognized importance of ethical values in human resource management, many educational institutions in Nigeria continue to struggle with unethical human resource practices. These include nepotism in recruitment, lack of transparency in promotion and appraisal processes, poor remuneration, and insufficient support for professional growth. This seems to be responsible for increased teacher attrition, leading to workforce instability and frequent disruptions in the teaching-learning process.

In actual fact, teacher turnover not only increases recruitment costs but also affects student learning outcomes. When experienced teachers leave, students lose mentors and instructional continuity is broken, negatively impacting academic performance (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023). In some schools, the absence of ethical HR policies leads to disengaged teachers who are less committed to their roles, resulting in low productivity and poor classroom delivery. Additionally, the absence of ethical leadership in HR management contributes to workplace dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout among teachers. Many educators feel undervalued and exploited, prompting them to seek opportunities elsewhere or to disengage from their duties (Nwosu, 2023). The problem of teacher turnover is noticed at all levels of the education system denoting the severity of this issue in the country and unless this ugly trend is reversed, there will be continued disruption in the teaching and learning process, poor academic performance of students, poor quality of service provided, production of unqualified manpower to handle job responsibilities in the society, waste of resources, increase in crime rate among others. This study therefore sought to investigate the influence of ethical values in human resource practices—focusing on professional development and employee benefits—on teacher turnover and academic achievement in Lagos State private secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main focus of this study is to investigate the influence of ethical values in human resource practices on teacher turnover and academic achievement in Lagos State private secondary schools. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions.
2. determine the relationship between professional development and student academic achievement
3. examine the relationship between employee benefits and teacher turnover.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions.
2. Professional development and student academic achievement are not significantly related.
3. Employee benefit is not significantly related to teacher turnover.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey research design and the population of the study was all the 34,112 private secondary school teachers in Lagos State while the sample was 400 participants determined through the Taro Yemane formula for determining minimum sample size. The multi-stage sampling approach was used to select the participants of the study. At the first stage, the state was stratified into the six Education District and simple random sampling technique was used to pick one Education District (Education District IV). Thereafter, the simple random sampling technique was used to select one Zone in the district and thus Yaba was selected after which 20 registered schools were selected using the simple random sampling technique. Thereafter, the proportionate sampling technique was used to select the number of teachers in each school. Lastly, the simple random sampling technique was used to select the actual participants of the study in the selected schools that formed the sample of the study. A self-designed instrument was used for data collection on the stated research hypotheses while standardized test instrument was used to measure students' academic achievement. The questionnaire was designed using the four-point likert-type scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with a rating score of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive items and otherwise for negative items. The research instrument was validated by experts in instrument construction while reliability was assured by administering the instrument on 30 participants who did not participate in the main study once and data collected was analysed Cronbach alpha reliability technique and a reliability coefficient of .76 proved the instrument was reliable. The stated hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistics at .05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

Results

The analysis of data collected is presented below.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions.

Table 1
Professional Development and Teacher Turnover Intentions

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	r	p	Rmk	Decision
Professional Development	10.40	3.26						
Teacher Turnover Intentions	6.48	2.12	400	398	.72	.001	Not Sig	Reject Ho ₁

Sig@ p<.05

Information on Table 5 above shows that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions in Lagos State private secondary schools ($r(400) = .72$; $df = 398$; $p < .05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions was rejected. This implies that professional development significantly relate with and teacher turnover intentions in Lagos State private secondary schools.

Hypotheses 2: Professional development and student academic achievement are not significantly related.

Table 2
Professional Development and Students' Academic Achievement

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	r	p	Rmk	Decision
Professional Development	10.40	3.26	400	398	.78	.003	Sig	reject Ho ₃
Academic Achievement	5.322.63							

Sig@ p<.05

Information on Table 7 shows that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between professional development and student academic achievement in Lagos State private secondary schools ($r(400)=.78$; $df=398$; $p<.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that professional development and student academic achievement are not significantly related was rejected. This implies that professional development significantly relate with students' academic achievement in in Lagos State private secondary schools.

Hypotheses 3: Employee benefit is not significantly related to teacher turnover.

Table 3
Employee Benefit and Teacher Turnover

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	r	p	Rmk	Decision
Employee Benefit	8.143.26		400	398	.76	.002	Sig	Reject Ho ₂
Teacher Turnover	6.48	2.12						

Sig@ p<.05

Information on Table 6 shows that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between Employee benefit and teacher turnover in Lagos State private secondary schools ($r(400)=.76$; $df=398$; $p<.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that employee benefit is not significantly related to teacher turnover was rejected. This implies that employee benefits significantly relate with teacher turnover in Lagos State private secondary schools.

Summary of Findings

The following are the summary of findings of this study.

1. There is a strong, positive and significant relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions in Lagos State private secondary schools ($r(400)=.72$; $df=398$; $p<.05$).
2. There is a strong, positive and significant relationship between professional development and student academic achievement in Lagos State private secondary schools ($r(400)=.78$; $df=398$; $p<.05$).
3. There is a strong, positive and significant relationship between Employee benefit and teacher turnover in Lagos State private secondary schools ($r(400)=.76$; $df=398$; $p<.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypotheses one shows that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between professional development and teacher turnover intentions in Lagos State private secondary schools. This may be based on the fact that teachers probably decide to stay on a job when their professional needs are met by the school. This finding agrees with the work of Obi and Salami (2022) where it was found that a significant relationship exists between professional development and teacher turnover. It also supports the work of researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Borko, 2004) where it was revealed that a significant relationship exists between professional development and teacher turnover.

However, it contradicts the finding of a study by Adepoju and Oni (2021) where it was found that no significant relationship exists between professional development and teacher turnover.

The result of analysis of hypothesis two found that a strong, positive and significant relationship exists between professional development and student academic achievement in Lagos State private secondary schools. This finding may be attributed to the fact that the provision of professional development and training opportunities for teachers help them to get acquainted with modern trends in instructional delivery and classroom management techniques which translates to improved academic achievement of the students. This finding agrees with the work of Ayanwoye, O. K. (2023) where it was found that a significant relationship exists between professional development and student academic achievement. Similarly, it corroborates the result of the analysis by Joshi, Kothari and Sawant(2024) where it was established that a significant relationship exists between professional development and student academic achievement.

Lastly, the result of analysis of hypothesis three revealed that there was a strong, positive and significant relationship between employee benefit and teacher turnover in Lagos State private secondary schools. This is probably due to teachers satisfaction with the benefits they derive from the institution which motivates them to continue working with such institution. This finding agrees with the work of Obi and Salami (2022) where it was found that there was a significant relationship between employee benefit and teacher turnover. It also corroborates the work of Okeke (2019) who found that a significant relationship exists between employee benefit and teacher turnover. It however, contradicts the finding of Bakker and Demerouti (2018) where it was revealed that no significant relationship exist between employee benefit and teacher turnover.

Conclusion

A recurring issue in many Nigerian schools is teacher retention. According to Nwosu (2023), unfair workload distribution, delayed salaries, and favouritism are examples of unethical practices that lead to teacher discontent and turnover. In addition to raising hiring expenses, teacher turnover has an impact on student learning results. Students lose mentors and instructional continuity when experienced teachers depart, which has a detrimental effect on academic achievement (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023). Lack of moral HR practices in some schools causes instructors to become disengaged and less dedicated to their jobs, which lowers output and degrades instruction. Additionally, the absence of ethical leadership in HR management contributes to workplace dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout among teachers. Many educators feel undervalued and exploited, prompting them to seek opportunities elsewhere or to disengage from their duties. Teachers who experience ethical leadership tend to be more committed, innovative, and student-centered (Adepoju & Oni, 2021). Embedding ethical values in human resource practices is essential for the sustainability of the education sector. Ethical HRM not only promotes teacher retention but also enhances student academic performance by fostering a stable and motivating teaching environment. In the face of global and local educational challenges, Nigerian schools must prioritize ethics as a strategic tool for long-term success.

Recommendations

To enhance teacher retention and academic achievement, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. School administrators should adopt ethical human resource policies
2. Institutions should provide equal professional development opportunities for all staff.
3. The school administrators should ensure that employees get the right benefits as and when due in order to encourage them to stay on the job and contribute meaningfully to school growth and stability.
4. Institutions should strengthen support systems by creating mechanisms for confidential reporting of unethical practices.



References

- Adebayo, O., & Akinlolu, A. (2022). Ethical human resource management and teacher retention in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Leadership*, 14(2), 45–58.
- Adegoke, M. (2020). Ethical Challenges in human resource management: A case study of Nigerian public schools. *African Journal of HR Practices*, 8(1), 33–49.
- Adepoju, T. & Oni, O. (2021). Teacher motivation and student academic achievement: The role of ethical leadership. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 10(3), 110–122.
- Akintayo, D. I. (2018). Human resource practices and teacher commitment in public secondary schools in Nigeria. *African Journal of Management*, 14(1), 45–58.
- Armstrong, M. (2020). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice* (15th ed.). Kogan Page.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2018). Multiple levels in job demands-resources theory: Implications for employee well-being and performance. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of Well-being*. DEF Publishers.
- Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 3–15.
- Collin, K., Paloniemi, S., & Meijers, F. (2012). Ethical practice in learning and development: A critical review. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 24(5), 337–350.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 291–309.
- Edeh, N., & Ilechukwu, C. (2020). Human resource ethics and teacher performance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review*, 7(5), 98–104.
- Eze, P., & Nwachukwu, L. (2023). The impact of teacher retention on students' academic performance: A Nigerian perspective. *Journal of Educational Management*, 15(1), 22–36.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Losada, M. F. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist*, 60(7), 678–686.
- Greenwood, M. (2013). Ethical analyses of HRM: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 114(2), 355–366.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499–534.
- Nwosu, I. (2023). Managing teacher attrition through ethical human resource practices. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 11(4), 89–101.
- Obi, C. & Salami, A. (2022). Teacher resilience and performance amidst perceived workplace injustices in Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 4(3), 76–89.
- Ogunyemi, K. (2022). Participative leadership and staff retention in schools. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy*, 5(1), 55–67.
- Okafor, C., & Ogbu, S. (2021). Human resource management ethics and teacher commitment in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Studies*, 9(2), 70–82.
- Okeke, R. O. (2019). Teacher professionalism and ethical standards: Does perceived injustice really matter? *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*, 3(1), 65–78.
- Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators*. Learning Policy Institute.