

Research Article

# The Case of Teacher Turnover in a Private School from the Philippines

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**Abstract:** This study examines teacher turnover in private schools, specifically analyzing how it varies by sex, academic unit, and subject area. Teacher turnover, particularly prevalent in private institutions in recent times, negatively affects student learning, school stability, and overall educational quality. Contributing factors include low salaries, limited administrative support, high stress levels, and poor working conditions. Using a causal-comparative research design, the study analyzed five years of Exit Interview data. Findings revealed that sex, unit, and subject area did not significantly influence turnover rates. Male teachers showed a slightly higher tendency to leave, but the difference was not statistically significant. The most frequently cited reasons for leaving were better job opportunities, personal circumstances, termination, and pursuit of higher education. These results highlight that individual and external factors play a greater role in turnover than demographic or departmental variables. To address these issues, the study recommends developing a comprehensive faculty retention program. Key strategies include competitive compensation, robust recognition systems, a strong and supportive work culture, professional development opportunities, and a safe working environment. This research is especially relevant today as schools recover from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which further strained teacher retention. Understanding and addressing the root causes of turnover is essential for building resilient, committed, and high-quality teaching staff in today's educational landscape.

**Keywords:** teacher turnover; private schools; faculty retention; job satisfaction; retention strategies

## 1. Introduction

Teacher turnover refers to the rate at which teachers leave their jobs and are replaced by new hires. High turnover rates can negatively impact student learning, school stability, and educational quality. Some key factors and considerations related to teacher turnover are low salary, lack of administrative support, high workload and stress levels, and poor working conditions. Teacher turnover is inevitable in private schools (Deloso & Bongcac, 2020). Teacher turnover also disrupts schools' administrative, academic, and professional standards. (Tshabalala & Ncube, 2014).

Many teachers joined the private secondary schools with numerous expectations that were not met, and this increased their dissatisfaction, causing a lack of commitment, and the result was always resignation (Candle, 2010). Private schools have been known to be prone to high turnover rates (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Brown and Wynn (2009), high teacher turnover rates result in: (1) a deficit of quality teachers and instruction; (2) loss of continuity and commitment; and (3) devotion of time, attention, and funds to recruitment rather than support.

Several factors have contributed to turnover rates as revealed in several studies. Kirochi (2015) found that the level of remuneration has, to a large extent, influenced teacher turnover. The majority of the respondents were not satisfied at all with their current remuneration rates and would quit their current jobs if a better opportunity presented itself. Loss of group cohesion, poor working conditions, poor pay, poor management, or supervision, which were categorized under employer-related factors, significantly affected teacher turnover as revealed in a study by Candle (2010).

Furthermore, Abbas, Manzor, Junaid, and Tariq (2013) also noted that pay, promotion, principal, and working conditions are key contributors to the turnover intention of teachers.

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Lack of teachers' motivation, low salary, communication gap between management and teachers, market opportunities for English teachers, workload, absence of career path, and weak recruitment processes are the major factors contributing to teachers' turnover in a study by Khawary (2012).

While various factors that result in teacher turnover have been discussed in different studies, limited research examines the turnover rate of teachers when categorized into sex, unit, and subject area, and its contribution to designing a faculty retention program. Investigating this will help the administrative team design a faculty retention program to address teacher turnover. This will require understanding the underlying factors contributing to turnover and implementing strategies to improve job satisfaction and retention. Thus, this study aims to determine the turnover rate of teachers in a private school concerning sex, unit, and subject area.

By calculating the turnover rate and examining the factors contributing to teacher turnover in terms of sex, unit, and subject area, this research seeks to provide insights that can inform policies and practices to improve teacher retention in consideration of these factors and design a program that will benefit the school community. This research could provide valuable insights into how to design a teacher retention program supporting and retaining effective teachers across diverse educational settings.

This study aims to describe answer the following research questions:

(1) What is the turnover rate of teachers in a private school, focusing on how it varies according to sex, academic unit, and subject area?

(2) Is there a significant difference in turnover rates according to sex, academic unit, and subject area?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Research Design

This study utilized a causal-comparative research design. According to Schenker and Rumrill (2004), causal-comparative research, also known as ex post facto research, aims to identify cause-and-effect relationships by comparing groups based on existing differences. Unlike experimental research, the independent variable is not manipulated but observed as it naturally occurs. This study's main objective was to determine teachers' turnover rate in five consecutive years. Furthermore, it also compared how the variables sex, unit, and subject area influence the turnover rate. This research design was used to direct the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data based on the study's objectives.

### 2.2. Data Gathering Instrument

The Exit Interview Form has been used by the school for several years to gather teachers' sentiments regarding their reasons for leaving. It is divided into three parts. Part 0 gathers data on the faculty's profile, such as Name, Date, Hire Date, Termination Date, Starting Position, and Ending Position. Part I asks the faculty member for the Reasons for leaving presented in a checklist format. Part II includes Comments/Suggestions for Improvement, where participants are asked to answer 12 essay-form questions. The data gathered from the Exit Interview Form of the teachers was used to answer the research questions. For the interpretation of the average turnover rate, the table below is used.

### 2.3. Data Collection Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the School Director. The permission also asked for access to the responses of the faculty members collected from their Exit Interview form from the school year 2019-2020 to 2023-2024. After securing permission and retrieving the answered Exit Interview Form, the researcher then organized the data in MS Excel.

Data regarding the sex, unit, and subject area were obtained from personal knowledge of the researcher and verified with members of the Management Team and the Human Resource Officer. Faculty members who were not able to answer or complete the Exit Interview Form when they left were asked to answer a Google Form version to make the data more complete. The researcher then reviewed the forms and summarized the responses. A total of 32 teachers were the respondents of the study.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The gathered data were used to determine the overall turnover rate of teachers and to compare different sexes, units, and subject areas. The general formula for solving the turnover

rate was used. The turnover rate of teachers is calculated by dividing the number of teachers who left during a specific period by the average number of teachers in that period. The result is then multiplied by 100 to express the turnover rate as a percentage. The average number of teachers during a specific period is calculated by adding the number of teachers at the beginning of the period to the number of teachers at the end of the period, and then dividing the result by 2. After calculating the average of the turnover rate of teachers according to sex, unit, and subject area from school year 2019-2020 to 2023-2024, the mean turnover rate for the five years was then computed.

To determine if there is a significant difference in the turnover rates between different sexes, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. This nonparametric test compares differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed. It assesses whether the distribution of values in one group is different from the distribution of values in the other group. For significant differences in the turnover rates between different units and subject areas, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. It is an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test and is used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the distributions of the groups. Data from Parts I and II of the Exit Interview Form were analyzed using a thematic analysis. This was used to identify the common themes representing the factors that contributed to teachers' turnover using their narrative found in the Exit Interview form.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Overall Turnover of Teachers from SY 2019-2020 to SY 2023-2024

Based on the data shown in Table 1, the turnover rate varies across the five school years. The average turnover rate for the last five years was recorded at 17.6. Looking at the table, the highest turnover rate was for SY 2019-2020 at and the lowest turnover rate was for SY 2020-2021. The turnover rate reflects a stabilized rate for two consecutive years, SY 2021-2022 and SY 2022-2023. By SY 2023-2024, its rate dropped, which shows an improvement during this time.

**Table 1.** Overall turnover of teachers from SY 2019-2020 to SY 2023-2024.

School year	Turnover rate (in %)	Description
2019-2020	24.56	Low
2020-2021	6.19	Very low
2021-2022	21.18	Low
2022-2023	21.62	Low
2023-2024	13.95	Very low
Average	17.6	Very low

#### 3.2. Turnover Rates of Teachers in a Private School According to Sex, Academic Unit, and Subject Area

Based on the data shown in Table 2, the average turnover rate for male teachers is higher than that of female teachers. However, both figures fall within the category of a low turnover rate, indicating that while there is a slight gender-based difference, overall teacher turnover remains low for both male and female educators.

The turnover rates show variation across academic units (Primary, Intermediate, High school) across the school years. Among three academic units, the Intermediate Grades Unit has the highest turnover rate, while the Primary Grades Unit shows the lowest turnover rate, and the High School unit falls in the middle of the three units. This demonstrates that implementing effective retention strategies and maintaining a stable, high-quality teaching workforce in each unit.

Subjects like CLE and Social Studies have high turnover rates, while Mathematics and Allied Subjects have low turnover rates. The huge values of the standard deviation also indicate the instability of the turnover rate of the teachers per subject in the last five years, owing to the large variation in the recorded data.

**Table 2.** Turnover rates of teachers in a private school according to sex, academic unit, and subject area.



Variable	Mean	SD	Description
Sex			
Male	22.33	20.46	Low
Female	17.65	7.95	Very low
Academic unit			
Primary	8.82	8.50	Very low
Intermediate	19.36	16.46	Low
High school	22.48	11.98	Low
Subject area			
Math	9.97	11.71	Very Low
CAF	11.08	17.49	Very Low
Allied	22.95	21.88	Low
CAE	22.95	21.88	Low
Social Studies	25.71	25.05	Low
Science	27.37	19.16	Low
CLE	31.33	30.15	Low

A Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to ascertain if a significant difference exists in the turnover rate between males and females. A Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to determine if a significant difference in the turnover rate among the different units exists. Table 3 below shows the results of the analysis. Since the p-value is higher than the set confidence level (5%), it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the turnover rate between males and females, among units and subject areas. In a sense, sex, units (Primary, Intermediate, or High school), and subjects taught do not significantly influence a teacher’s decision to remain in school for the next academic year.

**Table 3.** Results of inferential statistics for significant differences in the turnover rate comparing different sexes, academic units, and subject areas.

Test	Group	p-value	Remarks
Mann-Whitney U	Sex (Male, Female)	0.69	Not Significant
Kruskal Wallis	Academic Unit (Primary, Intermediate, High School)	0.229	Not Significant
Kruskal Wallis	Subject Areas (Math, CAF, Allied, CAE, Social Studies, Science, CLE)	0.654	Not Significant

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

### 3.3. Thematic Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Turnover Rates from SY 2019-2020 to SY 2023-2024

A thematic analysis (table 4) was conducted to arrive at themes that represents the factors mentioned by the respondents in their Exit Interview Form. In this study, it was found that several teachers leave the school because of better opportunities, which include better pay and working outside the country. Based on the study of Aduna, Patricio, Torres, and Balaria (2020), it is prevalent in private schools where teachers stay for only around one (1) year to gain experience, pass the required examination, and then transfer to government schools, which offer higher salaries. Furthermore, analysis of the interview results from the respondents revealed that personal reasons account for the primary factor why teachers leave. This includes better job opportunities, family needs, pursuit of graduate school, dissatisfaction with the supervisor and salary, and heavy workload.

**Table 4.** Thematic analysis of the factors affecting the turnover rates from SY 2019-2020 to SY 2023-2024.

Theme	Description	Example
Better opportunities	Teachers left to pursue more rewarding jobs.	“I wanted to share my values not only here in the Philippines, if possible with the students in other countries as well. I want to experience how to be an international teacher.”
Termination/Resignation	Some teachers left due to non-renewal of contracts or formal resignation.	“The school decided to let me leave.”
Personal reasons	Departures due to health, family, or	“It is time for me to go. I feel that I do not have anything more that

	relocation.	<i>I can offer to the school. On a personal note, I am also going back to Manila to take care of my aging parents while there is still time for me to be with them."</i>
Pursuit of higher education	Teachers resigned to continue their studies or continue professional development.	<i>"I want to focus more on my PhD program as I am going to finish it this year. I want to teach college students. I want to teach in a state university and join a state university's research department. I believe that the teacher's salary should increase yearly. In my case, my basic salary stopped increasing in my fourth year. Therefore, for three years, my basic salary is still the same."</i>

#### 4. Discussion

Teacher Turnover is a crucial event in most educational institutions. It greatly affects students' learning, the school's culture, and the overall stability of the institution. When many teachers leave, it disrupts teaching, adds work for remaining employees, and raises costs for hiring and training new teachers. Understanding why teachers leave and finding ways to keep good teachers is crucial for providing high-quality education and helping schools succeed long-term. This study aims to describe and analyze the turnover rate of teachers in a private school, focusing on how it varies according to sex, academic unit, and subject area. Furthermore, the study investigates whether there are significant differences in turnover rates based on sex, academic unit, and subject area.

Results on the overall average turnover rate of 17.6 % were supported by Ingroll that private schools have been known to be prone to high turnover rates. The average value of the turnover rate is considered very high. In comparison, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported in its 2021 publications that the labor turnover rate for the education sector in the country for the third and fourth quarters was 7.5% and 8.3%, respectively.

This finding agrees with Minor, Saw, Frank, Schneider, and Torphy (2019) that between 3.2% and 15.5% of teachers left their school over eight years. Some studies suggest that teacher turnover rates can vary significantly based on factors such as school type, location, and years of experience. For example, one study found that between 2005 and 2016, about 20% of teachers in Chile left the profession before completing five years of practice (Palma-Vásquez et al., 2022).

Another study pointed out that, in the USA, teacher turnover rate ranges from 13% to 15% annually (Cheng et al., 2023). Also, financial reason is the number one consideration for transferring to government schools (Ngasura et al., 2023). The rates of turnover varied by the time of the school year, with more teachers leaving at the end of the year than during mid-year. External contextual factors are related to increases in teacher turnover, independent of each other, and how these factors relate to teacher turnover depends on the school locale. The high turnover rate in private schools means that several factors or issues are leading to teachers leaving their jobs annually. Thus, it is more imperative to determine the factors that affect this turnover rate and to create a Faculty Retention Program to address the problem.

The turnover rate for both male and female teachers varies across the years. There are instances of very high turnover rates, and there are times when there is no turnover, especially for male employees. This means that the different factors affecting teacher turnover change every year. This result reflects UNESCO's report that men are more likely to leave the profession (UNESCO, 2023). Global attrition rates in 2021 were 9.2% and 5.9% for male primary and lower secondary teachers, respectively, compared to 4.2% and 5.6% for female teachers. The causes of higher attrition rates vary by region and by country, but are often linked to greater employment mobility among men than women.

Factors such as management practices, limited advancement opportunities, and demanding work environments can significantly contribute to teacher attrition irrespective of gender. Furthermore, one study suggests that female and married individuals may be preferred in the recruitment of kindergarten teachers, underscoring the need to alleviate pressure and enhance rewards for those teaching at the kindergarten level (Ren et al., 2024). However, sex is not a determining factor that influences the turnover rate of teachers. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the turnover rate of different subject areas and academic units. These two factors are likewise not influential in determining why teachers leave. In other words, there are other reasons that teachers leave private schools, as discussed in the next paragraphs.

The overall school climate and culture, including the support systems, vary across academic units, affecting teacher turnover and retention. The nature of teaching and the

behaviour of learners across units can be one of the few reasons teachers develop pressure, which leads to stress. The demand for work in each level is different from one unit to another, which potentially affects the turnover of teachers in a school.

Toropova, Myrberg, and Johansson (2021) noted that there is a substantial association between school working conditions and teacher job satisfaction. More specifically, teacher workload, teacher cooperation, and teacher perceptions of student discipline in school were the factors most closely related to teacher job satisfaction. It was found that the relationship between the extent of teacher cooperation and job satisfaction was more pronounced for male teachers, while student discipline was more important for job satisfaction of teachers with lower self-efficacy beliefs.

Turnover rates may be higher in subjects with teacher shortages or better job options outside teaching. Math and science teachers can often find higher-paying jobs in the private sector. Teaching can vary greatly by subject. Challenging workloads, student behavior, or curriculum may increase teacher stress and turnover. Teacher preferences and interests can influence their subject choices and, consequently, their likelihood of staying in a particular subject area. Teachers' perceptions of their working conditions were associated with teacher stress levels.

Ssenyonga and Hecker (2021), in their article, said that more efforts need to be geared towards improving the working conditions of teachers as a way of reducing stress. To address high turnover in specific subject areas, policymakers should consider providing higher salaries and increased support for teachers in those fields, as inadequate compensation and lack of support can contribute to dissatisfaction and a desire to leave.

## 5. Conclusions

This study revealed that the turnover rate of the school is high, as expected from any private institution. This further strengthened the need for a responsive and effective Faculty Retention Program. Three factors that can influence turnover rates were examined in this study: sex, academic unit, and subject area. Male teachers are more likely to leave the school compared to females, although this difference is not significant. Sex does not play a major role in influencing whether teachers stay in or leave the profession. Both male and female teachers tend to leave or remain in their positions at comparable rates, suggesting other factors that are more influential in determining teacher retention.

Furthermore, the data indicate that there is no significant difference in turnover rates among teachers based on the subjects they teach or the grade levels they are assigned to. This suggests that subject area and grade level are not major factors influencing whether teachers remain in or leave their positions. Instead, other elements may have a greater impact on teacher retention across the board. These three factors were indeed not part of the responses, which highlighted better opportunities, termination/resignation, personal reasons, and pursuit of higher education as the primary factors for leaving the institution.

Based on the descriptive and qualitative results, to improve faculty retention, the institution should implement a comprehensive program targeting several key areas. Providing competitive compensation and benefits is crucial to retaining effective educators. The program should also include a robust rewards system that offers tangible incentives and recognizes exceptional performance. Cultivating a strong school culture that values impact, service, academic excellence, and social responsibility is critical. Furthermore, fostering a professional, engaging, and positive work environment will contribute to overall faculty satisfaction. Finally, promoting workplace safety and maintaining an attractive, supportive work setting will further strengthen faculty commitment and retention.

This study, however, was limited only on analyzing the answers that the respondents provided in the Exit Interview Form, hence, the researcher was not able to explore and deepen the factors written by the respondents. Furthermore, the school years covered a pandemic year, which might have influenced the turnover rate and factors affecting such in the years covered by the pandemic. Lastly, this study was limited to a school-based scope using an instrument made and used by the school.

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