

Effectiveness of Personnel Retention Strategies on Labour Turnover in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study of Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90500082>

Received: 20 April 2025; Accepted: 26 April 2025; Published: 30 May 2025

ABSTRACT

Labour turnover has emerged as a persistent challenge in Nigeria's tertiary education sector, driven by socio-economic instability, political uncertainty, and global migration of skilled professionals. This study investigates the effectiveness of personnel retention strategies in mitigating labour turnover at the Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology (OYSCATECH), Igboora, Nigeria. Anchored on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Exchange Theory. With a study population of 536 staff members, using mixed-method approach, stratified sampling technique was adopted in selection of 255 participants. Structured questionnaire was adopted in quantitative data collection while in-depth interview was administered on 12 purposively sampled respondents in order to examine the existing retention mechanisms and their effectiveness on staff attrition. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and linear regression, while qualitative insights were thematically interpreted. Findings reveal that although gaps exist—such as inadequate transport facilities and relocation support—OYSCATECH has implemented several effective retention strategies, including career advancement opportunities, leadership engagement, and timely promotions. Regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship between personnel retention and reduced labour turnover ($R^2 = 0.904$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that strategic personnel retention significantly curtails staff exit and enhances institutional stability. It recommends sustained investment in holistic human resource policies in order to reinforce workforce commitment and reduce brain drain within Nigeria's public tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Personnel retention, labour turnover, tertiary education, public sector, human resource strategies

INTRODUCTION

In the face of Nigeria's current economic realities, social distress, underemployment, and political mishaps, many professionals, especially academics, aspire to pursue greater career prospects and better life opportunities in Europe and America (Ogwo, 2022). This increasing aspiration of academics and other professionals for greener pastures led to increasing labour turnover in Nigeria's labour market. Thus, Nigeria's skilled manpower is lost to the labour markets of Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Netherlands (Ng'ethe, Iravo, & Namusonge 2012; cited in Idowu, 2018). This, no doubt, creates a depletion of the home-labour market with attendant effects on the civil and public service sectors of the national economy. This emigrational syndrome, now alarming among the staff of tertiary institutions, continues to open unspeakable gaps in teaching, research, and community service and these naturally create a question of the effectiveness of personnel retention strategies being operated in the public service (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023). Owing to the importance of personnel retention in the face of labour turnover, organisations employ diverse policies and strategies to ensure that employees who had been invested in payback through committed

retention of services in the organisation for the statutory period; or in another arrangement mutually beneficent to the personnel and the organisation (CIPD, 2024).

Employee turnover, as defined by Alo and Dada (2020), encapsulates the departure rate of employees from an organisation. This metric is quantified as the percentage of employees who exit the organisation within a specified timeframe, commonly calculated on an annual or quarterly basis. In a more detailed exploration, Allen (2023) delved into the intricacies of labour turnover, elucidating that employees part ways with organisations for a myriad of reasons. According to Allen, the motivations behind labour turnover are diverse and encompass various scenarios. Some employees leave to pursue alternative employment opportunities, while others embark on educational pursuits. Additionally, relocation due to a spouse's transfer, retirement, impulsive resignation prompted by dissatisfaction, and achieving financial independence are among the multifaceted reasons prompting turnover. Importantly, turnover is not a uniform concept, as the diverse reasons behind employee exits carry distinct organisational implications. Allen's nuanced perspective underscores the complexity of the employee turnover phenomenon, emphasising that while all these scenarios constitute turnover, their organisational repercussions differ significantly. Allen and Vardaman (2021) further divided labour turnover into two categories – involuntary and voluntary turnover. Involuntary Turnover is a type of turnover is initiated by the organisation. For example, an organisation might dismiss an employee due to poor performance, misconduct, or restructuring. Voluntary Turnover is a type of turnover is initiated by the employee. For example, a worker may quit to take another job, pursue further education, or address personal reasons. This study has particular focus on voluntary turnover especially with regards to effectiveness of the strategies which organisation design to control it due to it damaging effects on the organisation if left unchecked.

The concept often adopted by organisation to attempt controlling voluntary employees' turnover is 'employees' retention'. Gorde (2019) defined employee retention as an organisation's ability to retain its employees. He further explained that employee retention involves motivating and encouraging employees to stay with the organisation for an extended period, thereby ensuring its sustainability. This implies that employee retention encompasses an organisation's strategic capacity to sustain its workforce by preventing employee turnover over a defined period. The concept involves implementing effective measures and policies that foster a positive work environment, enhance job satisfaction, and provide career development opportunities. According to Gorde, the primary goal of employee retention is to enhance the happiness of both employees and employers. It encourages loyal employees to stay with the organisation for a longer period, ultimately benefiting both parties. By prioritising employee retention, organisations aim to minimise the frequency of staff departures, thereby ensuring workforce stability. Such stability is crucial for maintaining organisational knowledge, continuity, and productivity. Consequently, successful employee retention strategies contribute significantly to an organisation's overall efficiency and long-term success. Krishnamoorthy and Aisha (2022) hold a similar view, defining employee retention as a business-management concept that describes employers' efforts to keep their current employees. Effective employee retention involves systematic efforts by employers to create and maintain an environment that encourages employees to stay. This includes implementing policies and practices that address diverse employee needs. It also involves strategies companies use to prevent valuable employees from leaving their positions. Additionally, certain organisations dedicate significant time, effort, and resources to enhancing employee productivity and performance. This commitment is often reflected in their investments in various academic and non-academic initiatives, such as sponsoring educational programs like Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master of Science (M.Sc.), and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degrees, both within their home country and abroad (Ogbonnaya & Aryee, 2021). Additionally, organisations facilitate participation in conferences, seminars, and workshops, as well as formal training programs meticulously designed to systematically enhance employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities. In addition, to foster career development, organisations provide mentorship and coaching opportunities, conduct regular performance reviews with constructive feedback, and institute recognition and reward systems. Beyond these, comprehensive employee support mechanisms are implemented, comprising Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), healthcare benefits, retirement plans, leadership development initiatives, and employee stock ownership plans (Noe, 2017). Despite the substantial financial investment incurred by organisations to implement these strategies, the phenomenon of employee migration persists.

Despite employees' retention strategies, organizations in Nigeria find it difficult to motivate their employees into retention largely due to the ongoing economic instability, social discontent, underemployment, and political uncertainty which continue to influence significant labour turnover, particularly within the public sector and academia (Ogwo, 2022). Skilled professionals are increasingly migrating to countries like Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands, creating human capital deficits across critical sectors (Ng'ethe et al., 2012; Idowu, 2018). The attrition of academic staff in higher education institutions has highlighted the pressing need to reassess existing personnel retention strategies (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023). While interventions such as career advancement opportunities, competitive compensation, and institutional bonding initiatives like those of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (Silas, 2023; Noe, 2017) have been introduced to combat the so-called 'japa syndrome', high turnover persists.

A noteworthy initiative aimed at mitigating the pervasive issue of labour turnover, particularly in Nigerian academic institutions, is the strategic response to the *japa* syndrome. This phenomenon is characterized by teaching staff, especially, those on study leave, opting not to return to their employment upon completion of their academic pursuits. To counteract this trend, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has instituted and rigorously implemented a set of policy regulations. One significant regulation within this framework is the academic bond, a legally binding mechanism designed to prevent migrant teaching staff from abstaining from their employment commitments after a stipulated period (Silas, 2023). This academic bond serves as a proactive measure to curtail the national malady of *japa* syndrome and its manifestation as labour turnover within academic institutions. In fortification of this bond, employers demonstrate their commitment by continuing to sustain the employment status of personnel on study leave. This commitment is manifested through the provision of full or partial remuneration, underscoring the organisation's dedication to supporting academic pursuits. In some instances, employers go a step further to sponsoring their employees in their academic pursuits, further fostering a symbiotic relationship that incentivizes a return to employment post-study leave (Ogbonnaya, & Aryee, 2021). This multifaceted approach not only addresses the immediate concern of labour turnover but also reflects a comprehensive strategy to retain and nurture academic talent within the institution. This initiative aims to foster a supportive environment by combining legal constraints with financial and educational support. This approach encourages teaching staff to remain dedicated to their roles within the institution, ultimately enhancing the overall stability and intellectual capital of Nigerian academic establishments.

At the Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology (OYSCATECH) Igboora for example, the departure of teaching staff following postgraduate sponsorship illustrates this challenge. In response, OYSCATECH has deployed both formal and informal retention strategies, including leadership engagement, career development pathways, and contractual obligations. This study investigates the effectiveness of these strategies in curbing staff attrition, contributing to broader discourse on sustainable talent retention in Nigerian tertiary education. Framed by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2024; Parker, 2018) and Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Duarte & Silva, 2023), this study explores how motivation and reciprocal organisational relationships influence employee retention and turnover intentions. A review of empirical literature, including studies by Urme (2023), Ramachandran (2021), Idowu (2018), and Sawaneh & Kamara (2019), reveals consistent evidence supporting the impact of retention strategies—such as professional development, recognition, and inclusive decision-making—on turnover reduction. However, limitations in contextual specificity and empirical robustness signal a critical research gap. This study addresses that gap by examining OYSCATECH's personnel retention mechanisms and their impact on labour turnover. Specifically, it seeks to:

- (1) identify existing retention strategies at OYSCATECH, and
- (2) assess effectiveness of the identified strategies at controlling labour turnover in the institution

The hypothesis tested is that personnel retention does not significantly impact labour turnover at OYSCATECH.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a mixed-methods design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of personnel retention and labour turnover at the Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora. The study targeted the entire staff population of the institution, comprising 536 personnel—252 teaching staff across six faculties and 284 non-teaching staff across six administrative departments. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, yielding an initial total of 229 respondents. To account for possible non-responses, an additional 10% was added, bringing the final sample size to 255. Questionnaires were distributed using proportional allocation between teaching and non-teaching staff categories to ensure representativeness. In addition to the quantitative component, the study employed qualitative interviews with twelve purposively selected participants—six teaching and six non-teaching staff. This purposive sampling was designed to capture diverse perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of retention strategies at the institution. To establish the validity of the research instruments, experts in public administration and educational measurement and evaluation reviewed the questionnaire and interview guide. Furthermore, the instruments were pilot-tested at Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa, a comparable institution located within the same geographical zone as the study area. The pre-test helped identify and correct ambiguities and enhanced the reliability of the instruments for the main study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, data addressing the first research objective were analysed using frequency distributions and percentages, while data relating to the second objective were subjected to linear regression analysis to determine the effect of personnel retention strategies on labour turnover.

RESULTS

Response Rate

A total of 255 questionnaires were distributed across teaching and non-teaching staff members at Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora. Out of these, 250 were duly completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 98.04%, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Category	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
Teaching Staff	120	118	98.33
Non-Teaching Staff	135	132	97.78
Total	255	250	98.04

Existing Personnel Retention Strategies at OYSCATECH

Respondents were asked to evaluate the presence of various personnel retention strategies. The results are summarized in Table 2. The mean scores indicate the prevalence or absence of each strategy, with lower scores showing stronger disagreement.

Table 2: Existing Personnel Retention Strategies in OYSCATECH

Item	SA (%)	Mean	Variance
Leadership Issues (e.g., favoritism, high-handedness)	7.2	2.188	1.312
Lack of regular promotions	9.6	2.268	1.552
Inadequate funding for training sponsorship	0.0	1.932	0.704
Lack of career advancement opportunities	12.8	1.996	2.012

Absence of transport facilities	34.0	2.040	1.248
No relocation allowances	51.2	1.992	1.712
Inconsistent pay practices	8.8	2.116	1.824
Lack of justice and equity in decision-making	9.6	2.164	1.412

Effect of Personnel Retention on Labour Turnover

The effect of personnel retention strategies on labour turnover was assessed using selected indicators. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Effect of Personnel Retention on Labour Turnover

Item	SA (%)	Mean	Variance
Reduced number of staff exits	34.8	2.084	1.388
Increased job satisfaction	31.6	2.352	1.383
No recent recruitment due to low turnover	30.4	2.320	1.688
Freedom from industrial crises	33.2	2.108	1.368
Positive job reputation	28.8	2.416	1.860
Increase in voluntary services	38.4	2.216	1.840
Stable academic calendar	28.4	2.380	1.740

Test of Hypothesis

The null hypothesis (H_0): "Personnel retention has no significant effect on labour turnover at OYSCATECH" was tested using simple linear regression. The analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between personnel retention and labour turnover.

Table 4: Model Summary of Simple Linear Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.752	0.904	0.303	32.17021

Table 5: ANOVA Summary

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	377.278	1	377.278	226.457	0.000
Residual	177.104	249	0.666		
Total	554.382	250			

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	30.908	—	—	22.493	0.000
Retention	9.999	—	0.552	19.253	0.000

The R-square value of 0.904 implies that 90.4% of the variance in labour turnover is explained by personnel retention strategies, with a significant F-statistic (226.457, $p < 0.05$), allowing for rejection of the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Personnel Retention Strategies

The results indicate that OYSCATECH practices several retention strategies that positively influence staff stability. A majority of respondents agreed that leadership at the institution is supportive and participatory, consistent with Masood (2024) and Ganswani (2019). Promotion practices were reported as timely and fair, reinforcing the findings of Chukwu (2019). The presence of career advancement opportunities aligns with earlier studies by Gbenu et al. (2014) and Masood (2024).

Although transport facilities were reported as largely absent (79.6% disagreement), this aligns with feedback from interviews suggesting that allowances are integrated into salaries rather than provided as standalone benefits.

Labour Turnover

A key finding of this study is the notable reduction in labour turnover at OYSCATECH. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that effective personnel retention strategies have curtailed employee exits, corroborating Ramachandran's (2021) conclusion that strong retention policies reduce turnover.

Interview Triangulation

Responses from purposively selected interviewees—including union leaders and senior management—confirmed the survey findings. Leadership at OYSCATECH was described as union-friendly, participatory, and responsive. Staff promotions were generally timely, and training opportunities, primarily via TETFUND, were acknowledged. Career progression was widely regarded as attainable, with many senior appointments coming from internal promotions.

Despite some concerns around transport provisions, the overall perception of management was positive, and labour turnover was perceived to have decreased substantially since the 2018 crisis, attributed to enhanced state subvention and timely salary payments.

Statistical Validation

The hypothesis test strongly supports the conclusion that personnel retention significantly affects labour turnover ($R^2 = 0.904$, $p < 0.05$). The regression coefficient of 9.999 shows a substantial positive impact of retention strategies on labour turnover, highlighting the effectiveness of OYSCATECH's human resource policies.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that personnel retention strategies exist in Oyo state college of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora. Out of nine strategies drawn from literature and presented to respondents, only two of the strategies were not exit. The study also concluded that personnel retention has effect on labour turnover in the study location

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author acknowledges with deep appreciation the guidance and supervision of Dr. O. I. Alamu, whose scholarly input greatly contributed to the development of this article.

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