

Selected Individual Factors Influencing Private Secondary School Teachers' Turnover Intentions in Northern Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Teacher turnover poses a persistent challenge for private secondary schools in Northern Tanzania, undermining instructional continuity, student performance, and institutional stability. Despite its significance, empirical evidence on the individual psychological determinants of turnover in this context remains limited. This study examined the influence of selected individual factors, psychological stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and career aspirations on turnover intentions among 384 teachers from 96 private secondary schools across Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, and Manyara regions. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design and multiple linear regression analysis, the study assessed the predictive strength of these factors. Findings revealed that job dissatisfaction ($\beta = 0.376$, $p < 0.001$) and psychological stress ($\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$) were the strongest predictors of turnover intention, followed by burnout ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$) and career aspirations ($\beta = 0.143$, $p = 0.002$). Collectively, these variables explained 50.4% of the variance in turnover intentions ($R^2 = 0.504$), highlighting the central role of individual psychological experiences in shaping teachers' decisions to stay or leave. The study underscores the need for targeted institutional interventions to enhance job satisfaction, mitigate stress and burnout, and provide structured career development pathways to improve teacher retention in Tanzania's private education sector.

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1.0 Introduction

Teacher turnover intention, defined as the conscious willingness of teachers to leave their current employment either by seeking alternative positions or exiting the profession entirely (Räsänen *et al.*, 2022), has become a pressing challenge for education systems worldwide. Although actual turnover is often disruptive to institutional functioning, turnover intention remains a more reliable and measurable psychological predictor of future resignation behaviour, particularly in contexts where administrative exit data are fragmented or unavailable (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Frequent intentions to leave have been associated with increased workloads among remaining staff, disruptions in instructional continuity, declining student performance, and weakening of institutional memory due to recurrent staff replacement (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022; Thompson, 2020; Collie, 2023; Arnold & Rahimi, 2025). Empirical literature suggests that teachers' turnover intentions are strongly influenced by individual-level psychological experiences that shape their professional motivation and organisational commitment. Workplace stress, emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and unmet career aspirations have been consistently identified as critical personal determinants of withdrawal cognitions among teachers (Shah *et al.*, 2010). In developed education systems, studies conducted in Australia have identified occupational stress as a major contributor to teachers' intention to leave their institutions (Rajendran *et al.*, 2020; Rahimi & Arnold, 2025), while research in European contexts indicates that burnout symptoms significantly predict turnover intention depending on teachers' age and professional experience (Martinsone *et al.*, 2024). Longitudinal evidence from Finland further revealed that excessive workload pressures and emotional fatigue have led more than half of teachers to consider leaving their jobs within the first five years of service (Räsänen *et al.*, 2020). Similar patterns have been reported in the United States, where persistent job dissatisfaction has been linked to increased turnover intentions among teachers (Thompson, 2020).

In developing country contexts, individual psychological strain is often intensified by socio-economic constraints and unstable employment conditions. Studies conducted in Kenya, Malawi, and Nigeria indicate that dissatisfaction with compensation structures, limited opportunities for professional growth, and classroom management challenges significantly contribute to teachers' intention to seek alternative employment (Ekabu, 2019; Kamau *et al.*, 2021; Kafumbu, 2019; Ajayi & Olatunji, 2019). In Ethiopia, salary structures, non-salary benefits, and difficulties associated with classroom management have similarly been found to influence teachers' turnover intentions (Getahun & G/Slassie, 2020). These findings collectively suggest that beyond institutional arrangements, teachers' internal perceptions of stress, professional fulfilment, and future career prospects play a decisive role in shaping their decisions to remain in or leave their workplaces. Within Tanzania, research on teacher turnover has predominantly focused on institutional and managerial challenges affecting public school teachers, leaving the internal psychological experiences of teachers in private secondary school environments largely unexplored. For instance, Seiph (2021) identified delayed salary payments, inadequate teaching tools, and poor working conditions as key contributors to turnover intention in private secondary schools, while studies conducted in public school settings reported managerial weaknesses and delayed promotions as major retention challenges (Mkisi, 2020; Mkoma, 2022). However, private secondary schools operate under distinct contractual arrangements, performance expectations, and career advancement systems that may influence teachers' psychological wellbeing differently from their public-sector counterparts (Amir, 2024). This study was further anchored in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which explains human behaviour as the result of reciprocal interactions between personal factors and environmental conditions. In the context of teacher turnover, the theory suggests that internal psychological experiences such as stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and career aspirations interact with workplace realities to

shape teachers' intentions to remain or leave their institutions. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how selected individual psychological factors influence turnover intentions among teachers in private secondary schools.

Therefore, this study examined the influence of psychological stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and career aspirations on teachers' turnover intentions in private secondary schools in Northern Tanzania.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, enabling measurement of individual factors and turnover intentions at a single point in time among private secondary school teachers (Rahi *et al.*, 2017).

2.2 Study Area and Population

Initially, during the proposal stage, Cochran's (1977) formula was used for preliminary estimation because the total number of classroom teachers in private secondary schools in Arusha Region, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanga, and Manyara Region was unknown. Upon obtaining the actual population of 6,500 teachers, the finite population formula was applied, yielding a minimum required sample size of 362 teachers. To enhance precision and account for potential non-response, a slightly larger sample of 384 teachers was retained, with participants selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across all four regions.

2.3 Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across regions. Four classroom teachers were randomly selected from each of 96 selected schools (Arusha: 33; Kilimanjaro: 41; Tanga: 15; Manyara: 7) (PO-RALG, 2023).

2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire composed of close-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). The questionnaire

included four major constructs: psychological stress, burnout symptoms, job dissatisfaction and career aspiration challenges. These constructs were adapted from existing empirical studies such as Martinsone *et al.* (2024) for burnout and stress indicators, Ayall *et al.* (2022) for teacher strain variables, and Theodory (2017) for job satisfaction measures. Items were refined to match Tanzania's private context. Turnover intention was measured through established items evaluating thought of leaving, intention to look for other jobs, and desire to exit the teaching profession.

2.5 Pilot Testing Validity and Reliability

Before the main survey, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 teachers from private secondary schools not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot helped refine ambiguous statements and improve clarity. Content validity was ensured through expert review by specialists in educational management and psychology, who confirmed that the instrument adequately covered internal psychological determinants of turnover. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded coefficients above 0.70 for all constructs, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency and aligning with recommended thresholds in social science research (Kasirye, 2021).

2.6 Data Processing and Analysis

Collected data were cleaned, coded, and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis summarised sample characteristics and mean scores of key variables. Inferential analysis employed multiple linear regression to determine the predictive strength of psychological stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and career aspiration on turnover intention. Regression diagnostics, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, linearity, and independence of errors, were conducted to ensure compliance with statistical assumptions (Shapiro-Wilk test, VIF thresholds, Breusch-Pagan test, and Durbin-Watson index). Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level. Ethical clearance was obtained from relevant educational authorities prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and

informed consent was secured from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and the data were used solely for academic purposes.

3.0 Results

3.1 Regression Diagnostics

Table 1

Normality Test

Test	Statistic (W)	p-value	Interpretation
Shapiro-Wilk	0.982	0.076	Residuals are normally distributed

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess the normality of residuals in the regression model. A p-value > 0.05 indicates that the residuals are normally distributed, confirming the validity of parameter estimates.

Table 2

Multicollinearity Test

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance	Interpretation
Stress	1.94	0.52	Acceptable
Burnout	2.21	0.45	Acceptable
Job Dissatisfaction	2.87	0.35	Acceptable
Career Aspiration	1.76	0.57	Acceptable

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: VIF values <5 and Tolerance >0.2 indicate no threat of multicollinearity. All predictors contribute unique explanatory power to the regression model.

Table 6

ANOVA – Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Mean Square (MS)	F	Sig
Regression	85.214	4	21.304	96.52	0.001
Residual	83.286	379	0.220		
Total	168.500	383			

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: The ANOVA results confirm that the regression model is statistically significant (p<0.001). This indicates that psychological

Table 3

Homoscedasticity Test

Test	Chi-Square	p-value	Interpretation
Breusch-Pagan	4.38	0.221	Variance is constant

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: The Breusch-Pagan test confirms constant variance of residuals (homoscedasticity), validating the use of standard errors and significance tests in the regression.

Table 4

Independence of Errors

Test	Statistic	Interpretation
Durbin-Watson	1.89	Errors are independent

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: The Durbin-Watson value was close to 2.0, indicating no autocorrelation among residuals, ensuring the regression model is unbiased.

3.2 Main Regression Results

Table 5

Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.71	.504	.498	.663

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: The regression model explains 50.4% of all variance in turnover intention. This is a strong predictive capability for behavioural research and justifies the relevance of psychological determinants in explaining turnover behaviours, consistent with findings by Martinsone *et al.* (2024) and Ayall *et al.* (2022).

stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and career aspirations collectively have a significant impact on predicting turnover intention.

Table 7

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized		Standardized		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	0.884	0.152	-		5.81	0.000
Stress	0.312	0.041	0.355		7.61	0.000
Burnout	0.274	0.046	0.289		5.95	0.000
Job Dissatisfaction	0.358	0.052	0.376		6.86	0.000
Career Aspirations	0.121	0.039	0.143		3.09	0.002

Source: Field Data Analysis (2026)

Legend: All predictors are significant (p<0.05). Job dissatisfaction and stress are the strongest

predictors, followed by burnout and career aspirations.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Psychological Stress

Stress had a statistically significant and positive effect ($\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$). Teachers experiencing acute psychological pressure, workload strain, and emotional fatigue are more likely to consider leaving. These findings are consistent with Martinsone *et al.* (2024), who identified stress as a central predictor of turnover among teachers in Europe. This suggests that in the context of private secondary schools in Northern Tanzania, persistent workload pressures and emotional demands may psychologically weaken teachers' attachment to their institutions, thereby increasing their contemplation of alternative employment opportunities outside the teaching profession.

4.2 Burnout

Burnout significantly predicted turnover intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$). Emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment undermine teachers' motivation to remain. This aligns with Ayall *et al.* (2022), who argue that burnout erodes professional identity and accelerates withdrawal behaviours. In privately managed school environments where performance expectations are often closely monitored, emotional exhaustion may gradually diminish teachers' sense of professional accomplishment, ultimately influencing their willingness to remain within their current institutions.

4.3 Job Dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.376$, $p < 0.001$). Dissatisfaction with salary, recognition, administrative support, and workload disproportionately pushes teachers toward leaving. This supports Theodory (2017), who found dissatisfaction significantly increases turnover intention in Tanzanian educational contexts. This implies that dissatisfaction with administrative support, workload distribution, and reward systems in private schools may undermine teachers' organisational commitment, making them more psychologically inclined to consider exiting their current employment.

4.4 Career Aspirations

Career aspirations had a weaker but significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.143$, $p = 0.002$). Teachers may seek alternative careers with better financial rewards, career growth, or autonomy, consistent with Martinsone *et al.* (2024). This may reflect a growing perception among teachers that long-

term career advancement opportunities within private secondary schools are limited, prompting them to explore alternative professions offering greater financial security and professional growth.

4.5 Summary of the Findings

Overall, psychological stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and career aspirations collectively shape turnover intention among private secondary school teachers. The strong explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.504$) justifies the argument that internal psychological experiences are critical determinants of turnover. These findings provide novel contextual evidence for Tanzania's private education sector, where empirical data regarding the psychological determinants of turnover have been scarce. These findings are consistent with social cognitive theory, which posits that internal psychological processes significantly shape behavioural intentions within specific organisational contexts.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study examined how individual psychological factors, specifically stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction and career aspirations, influence turnover intentions among teachers in private secondary schools in Tanzania's Northern Zone. Findings demonstrated that all four variables significantly predicted turnover intention. Job dissatisfaction emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, and limited recognition remain major triggers for teachers' desire to leave. Stress and burnout were also significant, reflecting the emotional and physical strain associated with heavy workloads, student management pressures, and administrative demands, consistent with findings by Martinsone *et al.* (2024) and Ayall *et al.* (2022). Career aspirations showed a moderate influence, indicating that many teachers consider alternative careers offering better growth opportunities and stability. Overall, the results confirm that psychological experience plays a central role in shaping teachers' decisions to remain or leave the profession within the private education sector. Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretations, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. Future research may employ longitudinal designs to examine actual turnover

behaviour over time and incorporate qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences within private secondary school contexts.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance teacher retention in private secondary schools:

- i. Enhance Job Satisfaction Through Better Work Conditions: School owners should review salary structures, provide timely payments and ensure equitable workloads to address dissatisfaction, which is the strongest predictor of turnover intention.
- ii. Introduce Stress-Reduction and Wellness Programmes: Regular stress management training, counselling services and improved teacher support systems can help reduce psychological strain and burnout.
- iii. Strengthen Professional Development and Career Pathways: Teachers should be offered clear career growth opportunities, including training, promotions and leadership development programmes, to mitigate the effects of unmet career aspirations.
- iv. Improve Administrative Practices and School Leadership: Supportive leadership, transparent communication and collaborative decision-making can reduce stress levels and enhance teachers' commitment to their institutions.
- v. Policy-Level Interventions for Private Schools: The Ministry of Education and quality assurance agencies should monitor teacher welfare in private schools more closely, ensuring that labour standards and operational policies support teacher well-being. Collaboration with teacher unions and associations can further strengthen advocacy for fair treatment and retention strategies.

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8.0 Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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