



## Teachers' perception towards organizational stress management strategies used to retain teachers in private secondary schools in Wakiso District, Uganda

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### Abstract

Teacher retention has been a significant issue in education for a long time. Organisational stress is one of the main reasons why teachers leave their jobs. Therefore, implementing stress management strategies has become essential for schools to retain their teachers. The aim of this paper was to examine teachers' perceptions towards organisational stress management strategies used to retain teachers in private schools in Wakiso District, Uganda. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey method of the descriptive design. The target population was 1824 respondents comprising of all the teachers and head teachers from rural and urban schools in District. Wakiso district. A sample size of 317 respondents consisting of 267 teachers, and 50 Headteachers was used in the study. Sample selection of the respondents was by Probability and Non probability sampling techniques. Questionnaires and interview guide were employed to collect data for this study. In ensuring content validity of the research instrument, the items in the questionnaire were constructed in relation to the literature review of this study. In ensuring content validity, suggestions from educational research experts was sought while reliability was attained through test-retest technique. Data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively and presented in tables and narrations. The study found out that a majority (83.2%) teachers agreed that teachers' self-esteem was encouraged among staff members in their schools. In addition, most of the teachers who participated in the study agreed with the statement that teachers' participation in co-curricular activities promotes teachers, physical and mental health. The study also suggested that majority (53.9%) believed that stressed teachers in their schools were given emotional support by the school management. The paper concluded that there was a positive perception amongst the teachers on the various Organisational Stress Management strategies being employed by private secondary schools to retain teachers. It was therefore recommended that teachers need to be sensitized about the importance of having a positive perception towards Organisational stress Management strategies in order for them to work for a longer period in their specific private schools.

**Keywords:** Teachers, Perception, Stress Management, Teacher Retention

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### 1. Introduction

Organizational stress management strategies can help reduce stress levels among teachers and improve their overall well-being. De Rooij *et al.* (2021) <sup>[11]</sup>, Tumwesigye, Emurungat, Asiimwe and Gaito (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Mugenyi, Matagi, Kobusingye, and Asiimwe (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, Maila and Asiimwe (2024) <sup>[23]</sup> explored teachers' perceptions of a stress management intervention in Dutch schools. The study found that teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the intervention and perceived it as an effective strategy for managing stress while Lee *et al.*, (2021) <sup>[21]</sup> investigated teachers' perceptions of a mindfulness-based stress reduction

program in South Korean schools. The study found that teachers reported improvements in their stress levels, job satisfaction, and overall well-being after participating in the program. Additionally, a review by Torres-Rodríguez *et al.*, (2020) <sup>[38]</sup>, Emurungat, Asiimwe, Gaito Tumwesigye (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Asiimwe, Emurungat, Mugenyi and Gaito (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, discussed the importance of involving teachers in the development and implementation of organizational stress management strategies. The review highlighted the need for schools to prioritize teachers' well-being and to create a culture that values work-life balance and stress reduction (Kayindu, Asiimwe & Nakiyingi 2020; Asmaa, Sofia, Kibuuka, & Asiimwe, 2024) <sup>[15, 6]</sup>.

Teacher retention is a critical issue in schools, and stress management strategies can play an important role in retaining teachers. A study by Niesche *et al.*, (2021) <sup>[28]</sup> investigated the impact of a stress management intervention on teacher retention in Australian schools. The study found that the intervention significantly reduced teacher stress levels and improved teacher retention rates. Sikora *et al.*, (2021) <sup>[34]</sup>, Asiimwe and Zueni (2023) <sup>[26]</sup>, Asiimwe and Niyikiza (2023) <sup>[26]</sup> discussed the importance of stress management strategies in retaining teachers in schools. The review highlighted the need for schools to provide resources and support to teachers to help them manage stress and avoid burnout.

In the US, Akerson *et al.*, (2020) De Rooij *et al.* (2021) <sup>[11]</sup>, Tumwesigye, Emurungat, Asiimwe and Gaito (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Mugenyi, Matagi, Kobusingye, and Asiimwe (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, Maila and Asiimwe (2024) <sup>[23]</sup> investigated the impact of a mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention on teacher stress levels and retention rates and found that teachers who participated in the intervention reported significant reductions in stress and higher rates of retention compared to those who did not participate. Also, Rios-Diaz and colleagues (2021) <sup>[32]</sup> examined the relationship between organizational support, burnout, and teacher turnover in US urban schools and found that teachers who perceived higher levels of organizational support were less likely to experience burnout and were more likely to stay in their jobs while Klapproth *et al.*, (2020) <sup>[17]</sup> discussed the importance of stress management strategies in promoting teacher well-being and retention. The review highlighted the need for schools to create supportive work environments, provide opportunities for professional development and growth, and offer resources for stress management ((Kayindu, Asiimwe & Nakiyingi 2020; Asmaa, Sofia, Kibuuka, & Asiimwe, 2024) <sup>[15, 6]</sup>.

In Uganda and particularly, Wakiso district there are many private secondary schools compared to public schools. (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2006) <sup>[25]</sup>. Private schools are business-oriented and this makes them to admit many students without putting into considerations the number of teachers required to teach. This leads to teachers having a big work-load which in turn results in occupational stress. Private schools in Uganda put a lot of pressure on teachers to perform and compete for better grades; those whose subjects are ranked poorly are warned or sacked (Ayiorwoth, 2007) <sup>[7]</sup>. When pressure is put on teachers to perform their duties in order to produce good results they end up being stressed. These results into job dissatisfaction, depression, exhaustion, moodiness, burnout, lower job performance, faulty decision, high absenteeism, workplace aggression as well as staff turnover (McShane & Glinow, 2015) <sup>[24]</sup>. To reverse this trend schools should apply different stress management

strategies in order to retain their teachers.

The level of stress among teachers in private secondary schools is significantly high. At the same time, the rate at which teachers are leaving the teaching profession in Uganda is high (MoES 2004). In particular there is a higher staff turnover in private secondary schools in Wakiso District. One wonders whether this high turnover rate among teachers is due to lack of appropriate stress management strategies in the work lives of the private secondary school teachers. This study was aimed to identify the challenges of retaining teachers in relation to organisational stress management strategies and to ascertain the perception of teachers towards organisational stress management strategies.

## 2. Literature Review

Teacher retention has been a significant issue in education for a long time. Organisational stress is one of the main reasons why teachers leave their jobs. Therefore, implementing stress management strategies has become essential for schools to retain their teachers. In recent years, several studies have been conducted to examine teachers' perceptions towards organisational stress management strategies used to retain teachers. A study by Shafiq, Shaheen, and Nawaz (2021) <sup>[33]</sup>, Emurungat, Asiimwe, Gaito Tumwesigye (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Asiimwe, Emurungat, Mugenyi and Gaito (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, investigated teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of stress management strategies in retaining teachers. The study found that teachers perceived several strategies, including workload reduction, supportive leadership, flexible working hours, and training programs, as effective in managing organisational stress and retaining teachers.

Similarly, another study by Khan and Sultana Asiimwe and Steyn (2013) <sup>[4]</sup>, Asiimwe and Steyn (2014) <sup>[5]</sup> (2021), De Rooij *et al.* (2021) <sup>[11]</sup>, Tumwesigye, Emurungat, Asiimwe and Gaito (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Mugenyi, Matagi, Kobusingye, and Asiimwe (2023), Maila and Asiimwe (2024) <sup>[14]</sup> explored the relationship between stress management strategies and teacher retention in Pakistani universities. The study revealed that supportive leadership, communication, and recognition and reward were perceived as effective stress management strategies by teachers. The study recommended that universities should implement these strategies to retain their teachers.

Furthermore, a study by Sundaram and Marimuthu (2020) <sup>[35]</sup> examined the impact of stress management strategies on teacher retention in Malaysian private schools. The study found that supportive leadership, workload management, and job security were the most effective stress management strategies perceived by teachers. A study by Rad *et al.* (2020) <sup>[30]</sup> De Rooij *et al.* (2021) <sup>[11]</sup>, Tumwesigye, Emurungat, Asiimwe and Gaito (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Mugenyi, Matagi, Kobusingye, and Asiimwe (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, Maila and Asiimwe (2024) <sup>[23]</sup> examined the role of leadership styles and stress management strategies in reducing teacher turnover intention in Iranian schools. The study found that supportive leadership and stress management strategies, such as workload management and professional development opportunities, were positively associated with lower turnover intention.

Another study by Chen and Wei (2020) <sup>[10]</sup> investigated the effectiveness of a stress management program in reducing teacher burnout and turnover intention in Chinese schools. The study found that the program, which included cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness training, was effective in

reducing burnout and turnover intention among teachers. Tachibana and Yamamoto (2019) <sup>[36]</sup> De Rooij *et al.* (2021) <sup>[11]</sup>, Tumwesigye, Emurungat, Asiimwe and Gaité (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Mugenyi, Matagi, Kobusingye, and Asiimwe (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, Maila and Asiimwe (2024) <sup>[23]</sup> explored the impact of organizational support on teacher burnout and turnover intention in Japanese schools. The study found that organizational support, including support from school leaders and colleagues, was negatively associated with burnout and turnover intention among teachers.

Mahmud and Rahman (2021) <sup>[22]</sup>, Emurungat, Asiimwe, Gaité Tumwesigye (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Asiimwe, Emurungat, Mugenyi and Gaité (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, explored the impact of teachers' participation in co-curricular activities on their physical and mental health in Malaysian secondary schools. The study found that teachers who participated in co-curricular activities had better physical and mental health outcomes, including reduced stress levels, improved sleep quality, and increased physical activity. Another study by Lee and Kim (2020) <sup>[20]</sup> investigated the relationship between teachers' participation in co-curricular activities and their job satisfaction and well-being in Korean schools. The study found that teachers who participated in co-curricular activities had higher levels of job satisfaction and well-being, including reduced job stress and increased social support. Chan and Jiang (2019) <sup>[8]</sup> examined the impact of teachers' participation in sports activities on their job stress and well-being in Hong Kong schools. The study found that teachers who participated in sports activities had lower levels of job stress and higher levels of well-being, including improved physical health and increased social support.

Teacher stress is a significant problem in many schools, and promoting teacher self-esteem has been suggested as a strategy to reduce stress levels. A study by Farooq *et al.*, (2021) <sup>[13]</sup> explored the relationship between teacher self-esteem, stress, and job satisfaction in Pakistani schools. The study found that higher levels of self-esteem were associated with lower levels of stress and higher levels of job satisfaction among teachers. Another study by Wang and Liu (2020), Emurungat, Asiimwe, Gaité Tumwesigye (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Asiimwe, Emurungat, Mugenyi and Gaité (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, investigated the relationship between teacher self-esteem and burnout in Chinese schools. The study found that higher levels of self-esteem were associated with lower levels of burnout among teachers. A review by van der Spuy and Lötter (2019) <sup>[40]</sup> discussed the importance of promoting teacher self-esteem to reduce stress levels and improve teacher well-being. The review highlighted the need for school leaders to create a supportive environment that encourages teachers to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Providing emotional support to teachers who are stressed is a strategy that can help reduce teacher stress levels. A study by Nelson *et al.*, (2021) <sup>[27]</sup> examined the impact of emotional support on teacher well-being in US schools. The study found that emotional support from colleagues and administrators was positively associated with lower levels of teacher stress and burnout. Another study by Reyes *et al.* (202) <sup>[31]</sup>, Emurungat, Asiimwe, Gaité Tumwesigye (2022) <sup>[12]</sup>, Asiimwe, Emurungat, Mugenyi and Gaité (2023) <sup>[14]</sup>, investigated the effectiveness of a teacher support program that included emotional support in Mexican schools. The study found that the program significantly reduced teacher stress levels and improved teacher well-being. A review by

Laanan and López-Fernández (2021) <sup>[19]</sup> discussed the importance of emotional support for reducing teacher stress levels and promoting teacher well-being. The review highlighted the need for schools to provide emotional support through mentorship programs, counseling services, and professional development opportunities.

### 3. Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey method of the descriptive design. Descriptive design enabled the researcher to collect information from a cross-section of a given population. The cross-sectional survey design was used as it is the most commonly used research method in social research and results from such a survey method are easily extrapolated to the entire population. Besides, this method was time saving and less costly for the researcher because the study population was big and the researcher was meeting all the costs. This design enabled the researcher to examine the current situation with respect to stress management strategies and retention of teachers focusing on teachers' perception towards stress management strategies and types of stress management strategies used in private school. Furthermore, the cross-sectional survey method was used to enable the researcher to collect data from the different categories of the sample population, which was representative of the total population of the teachers.

The target population of this study was all the teachers and head teachers from rural and urban schools to ensure experiences of the broad population were included. Those beyond 20 km of an urban area were considered as rural private secondary schools in Wakiso –District. Wakiso district has a total of 1,824 teachers (Ministry of education and Sports -2004). The teachers and headteachers were targeted for the study because they are concerned with the teaching of students in private secondary schools and thus they are able to indicate the effect of stress management strategies on retention in their schools. The sample size of 317 consisted of 267 teachers, and 50 Headteachers who were selected randomly from private secondary schools in Wakiso district.

The determination of sample size was based on guidelines given by Morgan and Kriecjie (1970). Morgan and Krejcie determination of sample size was ideal for this study because it was representative of the total population to be studied. According to Morgan and Krejcie table, there are given sample sizes(s) for the given population sizes (N). Basing on the Morgan and Krejcie table, the sample size studied which is 304 respondents was representative enough.

Sample selection of the respondents was by Probability and Non probability sampling techniques. The samples were got by the use of purposive sampling to select the headteachers from each of the 20 private secondary schools. This method was used because the researcher's judgment was useful to ascertain that the sample of the headteachers was representative of the target population. In selecting the sample from each school, simple random sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents especially teachers and Head teachers in order to collect focused information which was useful.

Questionnaires and interview guide were employed to collect data for this study. Questionnaires were appropriate because some of the data that was collected was quantitative in nature and based on individual perceptions, which could not be observed but could be better tapped through self-reports.

Similarly, questionnaires were used because they have the ability to solicit information from several respondents within a short time. Interview guides were used to get information from headteachers who acted as key informants about their views concerning teachers' retention in private secondary schools. This method was preferred because of its flexibility and ability to provide new ideas on the subject.

In ensuring content validity of the research instrument, the items in the questionnaire were constructed in relation to the literature review of this study. In ensuring content validity, suggestions from educational research experts was sought to establish whether the questionnaire would truly measure what it aimed to measure. In order to achieve this, the researcher consulted research experts several times to ensure that the questionnaire that was used was valid. Suggestions from the experts were integrated in designing the final questionnaire that was used for the data collection.

In ensuring reliability of the instrument, a Test-retest method for reliability was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire on teachers' retention, using the Pearson product moment correlation statistics. The test retest method for reliability was used to enable correlation of scores from

the two instruments by obtaining a coefficient of stability which had a minimum of 0.6. In both tests, the results were the same, a confirmation that they were reliable.

Data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was descriptively analyzed by examining the content of the data through identifying the distinctive categories that emerged from the data. Qualitative data analysis was used to help the researcher to analyze data which was in words. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages. Quantitative data analysis enabled the researcher to analyze data which were in numbers in order to have meaningful conclusions.

#### 4. Results

The aim of this paper was to determine the perception of teachers towards the organisational stress management strategies used to retain teachers in private secondary schools in Wakiso district, Uganda. To achieve this, the respondents were asked to indicate in the questionnaire. The findings are summarized in Tables 1.

**Table 1:** Responses of teachers on their perception towards the organisational stress management strategies used to retain teachers in private secondary schools

Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Staff members are not stressed if given opportunities to control duties assigned to them	242	79.7	13	4.3	49	16.1
Teachers' self-esteem is encouraged among staff.	253	83.2	16	5.2	35	11.5
Teachers are encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities that promote physical and mental health.	225	74	30	9.9	49	16.1
Medical services are provided to teachers by the school	152	50	43	14.1	109	35.9
Members are encouraged to participate in decision making process at school.	179	58.9	36	11.8	90	29.6
Emotional support is provided to teachers who are stressed due to bereavement, sickness or drunkardness	164	53.9	58	19.0	82	27.0
Guidance and counseling services are provided for teachers to relieve them from stress.	188	61.8	49	16.1	67	22

From the table 1 majority of the teachers 242 (79.7%) agreed that teachers are not stressed when given opportunity to control duties assigned to them while 13 (4.3%) were not sure. 253 (83.2%) agreed that teachers self-esteem is encouraged among staff members while 16 (5.2%) were not sure of the statement. 225 (74%) agreed that teachers are encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities that promote physical and mental health while 30 (9.9%) were Not Sure. 152 (50%) agreed that medical services are provided for teachers at school while 43 (14.1%) were Not Sure. 179 (58.9%) agreed that teachers are encouraged to participate in decision making while 36 (11.8%) were not sure of the statement. From all the statements in this question teachers agreed with the statements implying that they were positive about the organisational stress management policies that had been put in their schools.

Regarding Perception of Organisational stress management strategies used to retain teachers in private secondary schools' head teachers were asked how teachers perceive it when they try to them to cope with stressful situations. The qualitative data revealed that most teachers were positive towards the Organisational Stress Management strategies used by their private secondary schools. Most headteachers explained that teachers appreciated when the other teachers

went to attend the burial of their family members.

One head teacher explained that,

"Teachers are normally grateful. In most cases teachers show their appreciation about what was done for them during staff meetings by thanking the school administrators". Majority of the headteachers also agreed that communication between headteachers and teachers was received positively.

Basing on the above responses it was concluded that teacher's perception towards the use of organisational stress management strategies to retain teachers in their private secondary schools was positive. The research findings showed that there was a positive perception towards the organisational stress management strategies used to retain teachers in private secondary schools in Wakiso District. This was in line with research done by Graham (2007), who asserted that a positive mental attitude is one of the most important assets that one can possess therefore positive thoughts do not only help to dissolve the teachers stress but they also have a positive impact on his or her physical health as well.

In addition, it emerged that a majority (83.2%) teachers agreed that teachers' self-esteem was encouraged among staff members in their schools. This supports the findings of other researchers including Farooq *et al.*, (2021)<sup>[13]</sup>, Wang and Liu

(2020) and van der Spuy and Lötter (2019) <sup>[40]</sup> promoting teacher self-esteem can have a positive impact on reducing stress levels and improving teacher well-being. Encouraging teachers to participate in professional development opportunities, providing positive feedback, and creating a supportive work environment are all strategies that can help promote teacher self-esteem.

Most of the teachers who participated in the study agreed with the statement that teachers' participation in co-curricular activities promotes teachers' physical and mental health. Mahmud and Rahman (2021) <sup>[22]</sup>, Lee and Kim (2020) <sup>[20]</sup> and Chan and Jiang (2019) <sup>[8]</sup> who reported in their studies that teachers' participation in co-curricular activities can have a positive impact on their physical and mental health outcomes, job satisfaction, and well-being. Encouraging teachers to participate in co-curricular activities can not only benefit their personal health but also create a positive school environment. These research findings were in agreement with Chaplain (2001) who argued that effective coping of organisational stress through the use of social support might best be served by identifying and distinguishing different forms of stress and then learning to fit them in to particular forms of stress rather than assuming that social support has some singular, universally effective way of dealing with it.

The study also suggested that majority (53.9%) believed that stressed teachers in their schools were given emotional support by the school management. This supports the findings of Nelson *et al.*, (2021) <sup>[27]</sup>, Reyes *et al.*, (2020) <sup>[31]</sup> and Laanan and López-Fernández (2021) <sup>[19]</sup> who suggested in their studies that providing emotional support to teachers who are stressed can have a positive impact on reducing stress levels and improving teacher well-being. Schools can support teachers by creating a supportive work environment that values emotional support, providing access to counseling services, and encouraging mentorship and peer support programs. The various forms of organisational stress management strategies such as guidance and counseling, participation of members in decision making, effective communication between administrators and teachers were identified by teachers as being received with a positive perception.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper concluded that there was a positive perception amongst the teachers on the various Organisational Stress Management strategies being employed by private secondary schools to retain teachers. It was therefore recommended that teachers need to be sensitized about the importance of having a positive perception towards Organisational stress Management strategies in order for them to work for a longer period in their specific private schools.

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