

Exploring the Dynamics of Teacher Retention and Attrition in Samoa

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Abstract – The issue of teacher attrition is a significant concern at both the global and national scale. Given its prevalence in Samoa, this minor research aims to investigate factors that influence teacher attrition within this context. The study is qualitative in nature and involves 51 primary and secondary teachers, who shared their views on factors influencing teacher attrition and retention. The participants' views were gathered through an open-ended questionnaire focusing on factors that seem to influence teacher attrition and retention. The Four Capitals Framework-Human Capital, Social Capital, Structural Capital and Positive Psychological Capital-was used as a lens to understand the multifaceted factors influencing teacher attrition and retention. The findings highlighted several key determinants of teacher retention and attrition: professional development opportunities (human capital), strong collegial relationship and supportive school culture (social capital), administrative and leadership support (structural capital) as well as personal well-being (positive psychological capital). The research findings stress the need to address these various dimensions to create an environment that effectively supports and retains teachers.

Keywords – Teacher Retention, Attrition, Capital Factors, Professional Development, Leadership.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher attrition and retention are recurring problems facing educational systems globally (Nguyen, Springer & Crouch, 2019). As teachers continue to depart from the teaching profession, education systems across the world scramble to find ways to address the problem as high teacher turnover rates not only significantly affect students' learning at the same time causes substantial expenses on schools. For example, a study from Brookings Institution notes that high teacher turnover is linked to lower student achievement and results in significant expenses for schools (Brookings Institution, 2023). Additionally, research using statewide administrative data has shown that teacher turnover climbed in 2021 and 2022, raising concerns about the future of the teacher workforce (Smith & Johnson, 2023).

The issue of teacher shortages in Samoa has sparked heated debate, as reported by the Radio New Zealand (RNZ) in February 2024). RNZ outlined the Samoan government plans to address this challenge with the Minister of Education acknowledging it as a major challenge for the country's education system. The phenomenon of teacher attrition poses significant implications for Samoa's educational goals and anticipated outcomes. For example, the Samoan Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2019-2024 includes an outcome aimed at 'ensuring a sufficient supply of qualified teachers and trainers' (p. 14). This raises the critical question: how can this goal be achieved if teachers continue to leave?

The report also highlights the issue of qualified teachers departing for 'better salaries and employment opportunities, such as labor mobility scheme in Australia and New Zealand, or roles in other Government agencies. It is important to note that some of the assumptions underpinning the ESP (2019-2024) focus on improving "learning outcomes at all levels," with recommended activities including: "(i) sufficient supply of

qualified teachers via pre and in-service training, and (ii) implementing strategies like recruitment, deployment, induction and mentoring to address teacher shortages in Government of Samoa (GoS) schools (p.77).

This information implies that strategic efforts are being made to tackle teacher shortage issues. However, these efforts are largely based on assumptions, highlighting the need for empirical research to validate them.

This research aims to gather information from practitioners (teachers) in primary and secondary schools concerning factors that may have led to teachers leaving the profession and equally factors that can influence teacher retention.

The Following Research Questions Guided The Study:

1. What factors are connected to teachers' decision to leave?
2. What factors are correlated with teacher retention?
3. How do support systems and professional development opportunities impact teacher retention?
4. What role does school leadership play in influencing teachers' decisions to stay or leave?
5. How does teachers' work-life balance or well-being affect retention?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher attrition and retention have been extensively studied over the past decades, with a significant increase in research focusing on the various factors influencing these phenomena. This review will explore the overall implications of teacher attrition on student learning, factors that contribute to teacher attrition and strategies that can influence teachers to remain in the teaching profession.

Teacher Attrition-A Global Concern

Due to the significant role teachers play in students' academic achievement, the high teacher attrition rate is a cause of great concern as noted in the UNESCO report 2024. The report highlights the dilemma the world currently faces concerning teacher shortage, which may have a bearing on the 'achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and the Education 2030 agenda. The report projects a deficit of 44 million primary and secondary education teachers by 2030 and it stresses the seriousness of this challenge calling for expeditious action. Evidence of high teacher attrition is well documented through research studies for example, in a study conducted by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, about 500,000 teachers in the United States leave their schools, a process that happens year over year. In New Zealand, the nation is currently grappling with a major teacher shortage especially in the secondary level, and more new teachers are needed to ensure all primary and secondary school students have a teacher.

Within the Pacific islands, a 1999 report was developed based on a compilation of studies conducted from 1996-1997 by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning in close collaboration with its Research and Development Cadre. These studies were conducted in American Samoa, Chuuk, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Kosrae, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, Pohnpei, and Yap to determine risk factors for Pacific schoolteachers and administrators and identify factors that contributed to absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout. Findings with respect to teachers indicated 'too much stress and no support' from the central office and school administration as the key reasons for teachers

leaving teaching. Although this study within the Pacific islands was conducted over more than two decades, it is worth investigating into this phenomenon in Samoa whether similar factors still exist as reasons for teachers leaving the profession or whether other additional factors are contributing to this phenomenon. Based on what has been reviewed so far, there is clear evidence which suggests that the issue of teacher attrition is a global phenomenon with severe implications.

Impact of Teacher Attrition

The teacher shortage phenomenon has profound implications for education of all students in all classrooms. That is, it negatively affects the achievement of all students in a school. For example, Oke, Ajagbe, Ogbari Jonathan & Adeyeye, (2016) argued that the high rate of teacher attrition can significantly affect school improvement efforts as it causes instability. The latter disrupts the continuity of teaching and learning as well as the cohesion of the school culture and affecting student achievement. In the same vein, Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wykoff (2012) in an approximation study based on a ten-year observation on the effects of teacher turnover on over 1.1 million New York city 4th grade found, that students in grade-levels with higher turnover score lower in both ELA and math and this effect is particularly significant in schools with more low performing and black students. The results also suggest that turnover has negative impacts altering the overall mix of teacher quality. Additionally, teacher attrition also incurs financial (and human resource) costs of replacing teachers. In the United States, Ingersoll (2003) reported that about 15.7% of teachers quit their jobs annually with a national teacher turnover rate of approximately 16.8% with 40% of teacher who leave the profession without return. This high teacher turnover cost the education system in the United States billions annually (Henke et al. 2001). Given the significant impact of teacher attrition, it is important to examine factors that may have attributed to this issue.

Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition

The literature is replete with information concerning factors associated with teacher attrition. These include teacher satisfaction (Oke, Ajagbe, Ogbari Jonathan and Adeyeye, 2016), increased teaching responsibilities and paper work (McCarthy et al. (2009), lack of support from principals and school management, teacher burnt out (Hudson & Hudson, 2016; Kearney, 2014), wellbeing and mental health issues, student behavioral problems, poor working conditions and salaries, and seeking better opportunities in other ministries or overseas (Nguyen, Pham, Springer and Crouch, (2019). All these elements factor into teachers' decision to leave the profession.

Moreover, a more recent study undertaken in three public schools in Central Florida (Cells, Sabina, Touchton, Shankar-Brown and Sabina, 2023), examined factors that influence teacher retention in the early years of their careers. The study highlighted high demands, lack of support and unrealistic expectations from principals as significant contributors to early attrition.

A review of the literature on influential factors for teacher attrition and retention highlights three broad categories: personal factors, work environment, and external factors. This aligns with the findings of Nguyen, Pham, Springer and Crouch, (2019) in their comprehensive meta-analysis of more than 120 studies. The authors identified three main categories namely; personal correlates which include teacher characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, gender and job satisfaction (including work-life balance); school correlates encompassing factors related to the schools environment and teachers' working conditions such as organizational characteristics,

student disciplinary problems, administrative support, and professional development opportunities; as well as external correlates, which refer to national and state policies related to accountability and school improvement efforts. This classification helps in understanding the multifaceted factors that contribute to teacher attrition and retention.

Factors Affecting Teacher Retention

When juxtaposing factors that influence attrition with those related to teacher retention, we observe that work conditions, including, administrative support, compensation, leadership; and individual factors such as work-life balance, passion, age, personal and family commitments as well as external factors like policies play significant roles.

Work Environment

Various studies (Oke, Ajagbe, Ogbari Jonathan and Adeyeye, 2016; See, Morris, Gorard and El Soufi, 2020) stress the importance of a supportive and conducive work environment as a way to enhance teacher motivation and retention. Various means to support teachers include professional development. For example, research by Cells, Sabina, Touchton, Shankar-Brown and Sabina (2023) on factors that impact teacher retention in the early years of the teachers' careers found that teachers who feel supported through professional development and collaboration time with colleagues are more likely to stay in the profession.

Podolsky, Kini, Bishop and Darling-Hammond (2018) also reviewed policy literature concerning successful strategies to improve teacher retention. They found teachers are more likely to remain if they are supported by administrators through resource access and professional development opportunities. While Podolsky, Kini, Bishop and Darling-Hammond (2018) found comprehensive teacher preparation programs and ongoing mentoring for new teacher to improve retention rates, see et al., (2020) were unable to find strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of these strategies in retaining teachers due to limitations in the research approach. Aside from support systems and the work environment, salary is an added factor that influences teachers to remain in the teaching profession.

Compensation

Podolsky, Kini, Bishop and Darling-Hammond (2018) stressed that adequate and competitive salaries are crucial for retaining teachers. The same conclusion was also drawn by Oke, Ajagbe, Ogbari Jonathan and Adeyeye (2016) who state that adequate remuneration and welfare packages are essential in improving job satisfaction and retention. While these findings suggest the significance influence of salary on teachers' decision to leave or remain, findings from see et al., (2020) are also worth noting. For example, in their systematic review of international studies on the most effective approach to attract and retain teachers in schools located in areas that are 'hard to staff, they found that financial incentives were the only method that seemed to motivate teachers to work in these schools. However these cash incentives were not able to motivate teachers to stay long, which suggests that other influential factors aside from cash may play a significant role in retaining teachers, such as leadership.

Leadership

Studies on the significant roles school leaders play in teachers' decisions to remain or leave the teaching prof-

-essional are not small. For example, Podolsky, Kini, Bishop and Darling-Hammond (2018) highlighted the importance of effective school leadership that fosters a positive school culture and supports teachers' professional growth as it leads to teacher retention. Shuls and Flores (2023) in their systematic review on how various attributes and behavior of the school principals influence teachers' decisions to stay in their positions revealed the importance of supportive leadership. For instance, teachers highly value principals who are approachable, provide support, offer professional development opportunities and foster a positive school culture.

Additionally, they found that trust and fairness are critical elements in a principal's decision making. Teachers prefer working in environments where their contributions are valued and fairly assessed. Some studies emphasized the notion of distributed leadership practice as one contributing factors to teacher retention. For example, Urwick, (2020) noted that schools who share a leadership approach with teachers result not only in an increase in student achievement but also in teacher retention. In a similar vein, Sulit and Davidson (2020) in support of the distributive leadership model argue that the model increases teacher autonomy alleviating teacher attrition. Shuls and Flores (2023) stress that involving teachers in decision-making processes is crucial, as it strengthens their sense of bellowing and commitment to the school. Clearly, the literature highlights the importance of principal leadership in creating a supportive and inclusive school environment that can help retain teachers.

Overall, the literature highlight factors that influence a teacher's decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession. These encompass (i) personal influences such as; teacher characteristics like age, race/ethnicity, gender and job satisfaction (including work-life balance); (ii) school correlates including the school environment and teachers' working conditions, organizational elements, student disciplinary problems, administrative support, and professional development opportunities; and (iii) external influences such as national and state policies associated to accountability and school improvement efforts.

The literature being reviewed indicates a lack of research in Samoa on factors that may contribute to teacher attrition and retention. The current study aims to explore the views of primary and secondary school teachers on factors that may have contributed to teacher attrition and retention within the Samoan context. The intention is to develop strategies that can address these issues. By examining the rationale behind teachers' decisions to leave or remain in the teaching professions, it may help address some of the current challenges related to the teaching and learning process and student achievement in this context.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study explores these multifaceted factors through the lens of the Four Capitals Framework (Mason and Matas, 2015): Human Capital, Social Capital, Structural Capital and Positive Psychological Capital. The four Capitals Framework offers a holistic approach to analyzing teacher attrition and retention. Human capital includes concepts of skills and knowledge, analyzing how professional development opportunities and initial training impact teacher effectiveness and their decision to remain in the profession as well as career advancements opportunities for growth and advancement that motivate teachers to stay. Social Capital involves examining the role of supportive relationships with colleagues, administrators, and the broader school community in providing teachers with a sense of belonging and support along with the benefit of a collaborative environment and team teaching in enhancing job satisfaction and reducing feelings of isolation. Structural capital assesses the impact of school policies, resource availability, and administrative support on teachers'

working conditions and their decision to stay or leave, while considering how workload management and the degree of autonomy in teaching practices affect teachers' job satisfaction and retention. Positive psychological capital investigates how teachers' personal resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism influence their ability to cope with challenges and their overall commitment to the profession as well as analyzing how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors contribute to teachers' engagement and long-term retention. By integrating these dimensions, this study aims to identify strategies that can enhance teacher retention and reduce attrition contributing to a more effective and sustainable educational system. The findings of this research will be invaluable for school leaders, policymakers, and educators seeking to create supportive and enriching work environments for teachers.

IV. METHODOLOGY

We employed a qualitative research approach using an open-ended questionnaire to survey the perception of individuals concerning the teacher attrition and retention phenomena. This design provides rich detailed insights into teachers' personal experiences, feelings and perceptions regarding attrition and retention (Department for Education, 2018). Qualitative surveys can capture a wide range of perspectives from a large number of participants, providing both breadth and depth in the data collected similarly qualitative surveys offer flexibility in how questions are framed and can be adapted based on initial responses, leading to more comprehensive data collection (Creswell, 2013).

Using qualitative surveys empower teaches by giving them a platform to share their perspectives and stories leading to more engaged and motivated participants (William, 2022). Qualitative data provides context-specific insights that are particularly valuable in educational settings, informing targeted interventions to improve teacher retention (Brown, 2019). Ontologically, this study adopts a constructivist approach acknowledging that reality is shaped by social interactions and personal experiences (Bryman. 2016). Epistemologically, this aligns with interpretivism, emphasizing that knowledge is derived from comprehending the meanings and contexts of participants' lived experiences (Crotty, 1998).

We employed a homogenous purposive sampling given the common characteristics of participants - persons with teaching experience. We were interested in these teachers' views concerning their own teaching experiences and what may influence their decision to leave or remain in the teaching profession. A purposive sample is a nonprobability sample based on the research aim as well as the characteristics of a population (Crossman, 2020). A set of open-ended questions were developed and distributed to a total of 51 primary and secondary teachers who at the time of data gathering were involved in their university studies within the University. This manner of data collection was more convenient for us researchers given we are all full-time lecturers hence we were able to gather from teachers that we worked with. A detailed description of participants is provided in Table 1. Participants were asked to complete and return within 3 weeks. The information sheet and consent forms were also provided for all participants before the commencement of data collection. Some questionnaires were completed at the University while a number were completed at the participants' home or workplace.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of teachers in the study.

Category	Subcategory	Count
Age	Below 30	7

Category	Subcategory	Count
	31-40	21
	41-50	5
	50+	1
	Did not indicate	17
Gender	Female	43
	Male	8
Teaching Level	Primary	30
	Secondary	21
Qualification	Certificate	4
	Diploma	6
	Bachelor Education	34
	Postgraduate Diploma Education	2
	Did not indicate	5
Years' Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year	1
	1-5 years	14
	6-10 years	11
	11+ years	18
	Did not indicate	7

V. DATA ANALYSIS: THEMATIC AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

In our research, we employed thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and content analysis (Enago Academy, 2024) to analyse qualitative data collected through the open-ended questionnaire.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) served as our primary method for identifying and interpreting patterns within the data, allowing us to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in depth. We followed these steps in our process:

First, we familiarized ourselves with the data by reading and rereading it thoroughly. Next, we generated initial codes by identifying and labelling significant data features, which helped us organize the data into meaningful groups. Then we searched for themes by grouping the codes into potential themes and recognizing patterns and relationships within the data. Afterward, we reviewed the themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. Finally, we defined and named the themes, presenting them as findings in the final report, supported by participants' insights to highlight various aspects of the findings.

Content Analysis

We also utilized the content analysis technique (Enago Academy, 2024) to augment our thematic analysis by

quantifying certain elements within the data. This approach gave us a systematic framework to interpret qualitative findings. Our process included the following steps:

1. Frequency Coding: We determined the occurrence of particular themes or codes in the data highlighting patterns and trends.
2. Contextual analysis: We examined the context in which these themes emerged, offering deeper insights into the nuances of the data.

VI. FINDINGS

The current study was aimed at surveying participants' views on factors that influence teacher's decision to leave or remain in the teaching profession. After analysis, data findings fall under the following aspects of the four capitals: Human capital, Social capital, Structural capital and Positive psychological capital. Findings will be presented with respect to these capitals (Table 2).

Table 2. Factors influencing teacher attrition and retention organized by four-capital framework.

Capital Type	Category	Attrition Factors	Retention Factors
Human Capital	Professional Development	Limited professional development	Professional development opportunities
	Teacher Mentoring	Limited teacher mentoring	Teacher mentoring/training
Social Capital	Relationships among Teachers	Poor relationships, Negativity, Envy	Positive collegial relationships
	Collegial Support	Poor support from senior staff	Supportive senior teachers
	Leadership Styles	Partisan leadership, Principal's pet teachers, Misuse of leadership power, Authoritarian, Favoritism, Unfairness, Bossy, Negligent, Unskilled	Effective leadership, Positive attitude, Fair, Unbiased, Friendly, Caring, Considerate, Attentive to teachers' needs, Empathetic, Humble, Trustworthy
Structural Capital	Administrative Support		
	Work Conditions	Poor work conditions	Healthy work conditions, Clean facilities
	Workload Management	High teaching workload, High class imbalance	Fair workload, Balanced class and teacher ratio
	Management - Student Behavior	Disrespectful, Ill-mannered students, Overuse of freedom of speech	
	Resource Availability	Poor teaching resources	Sufficient teaching resources
	School Policies		
	Compensation	Low salary, Leave for better-paid jobs (e.g., seasonal work)	Salary increase
Positive Psychological Capital	Personal Commitments	Quit to fulfill personal obligations (e.g., managing family affairs, care for elderly family members, religious, and community commitments)	

Capital Type	Category	Attrition Factors	Retention Factors
	Motivation		Motivating and well-being initiatives

Human Capital

Findings found that factors such as professional development and mentoring in connection to teachers play a significant role in teachers' decision to leave or remain in the teaching profession.

Professional Development Support

The data revealed that the availability of professional development (PD) opportunities significantly influences teacher retention. For instance, all teachers indicated that participation in regular professional development programs motivates and encourages them leading to job satisfaction and a stronger commitment to their schools:

Great knowledge was gained from the training college (PDs) to share amongst teachers. Good skills received from older teachers who have been teaching for years (T8).

The professional development done in the schools helps me with the teaching methodologies and skills shared by other teachers who were there in the profession longer than me (T44).

Teacher Mentoring

Findings also highlighted the importance of offering mentoring for teachers to inspire them in their work as noted by these participants:

When I was a novice teacher, I had the opportunity to work with what we called ITEP (International Teacher Education Program) missionary couples. These senior couples were retired educators from overseas and chose to serve the church schools around the pacific. So, they volunteered to teach courses and provide trainings that were mandatory for teachers, not only to novice teachers but everyone that was an educator...with this support I have grown to love teaching and especially relationship with the students. I've learned and developed good classroom management skills and ways to cater for each student learning ability (T21).

I remember well the support provided by the older and experienced teachers, like teaching methodologies and management strategies to cope with classroom challenges. For example, how to teach and deliver the year one syllabus-with a lot of repetition so the children will consolidate the taught concepts, such as reading and recognizing words (T7).

Conversely, the lack of professional growth opportunities can be a deterrent for teachers, especially the new teachers as noted by this individual:

There needs to be an orientation to get new teachers used to the teaching job. There should be PDs programs to help teachers understand how to deliver lessons. There should be sports day to encourage teachers more in their work (T8).

Social Capital

In addition to the impact of human capital, the findings also highlighted the significant influence of positive relationships and collegial support among teachers, as well as effective leadership on their decision to depart from or remain in the profession.

Collegial Relationships

Strong collegial relationships were also linked to higher teacher retention rates according to the findings. Teachers who were supported by their peers and engaged in collaborative work environments reported higher job satisfaction. This support also includes mentoring from experienced teachers and administrative support as noted here:

We no longer have those older wise teachers who gave us the richness in wisdom and experience in teaching. These experienced and wise teachers taught us the golden rule of ‘no gossiping’ (aue le faitala’, They worked hands, feet and mouth and were so committed to doing the work. They do not misuse their mouth for unnecessary stuff. Nowadays, students’ misbehaviour has increased while teachers seem to eye food provided by students’ families (e faasiumata faiaoga i fafaga a tamaiti i aso nei) (T9).

In contrast, the absence of such support systems was a major factor driving attrition. For example, some participants reflecting on their first years of teaching, voiced the sense of discouragement they experienced from the lack of support from some senior teachers in their first schools they were first posted:

The first college I was posted to was very challenging since the older and experienced teachers were very unwilling to share or help me with many things and questions I had. However, the next college I was posted to in town was different, i.e., the management in this second school placed me under a teacher who has been teaching for a long time, and I was able to learn from this teaching environment since the second teacher shared all her experience with me. This is the difference between these two colleges (T5).

School Management and Leadership

Findings highlighted the crucial role of leadership in teacher retention. For example, schools with fair, supportive, and inclusive leadership saw lower attrition rates. The majority of participants indicated that effective leadership practices are reflected in transparent decision-making, recognition of teacher contribution, and fostering a positive school culture by decreasing the rate of teacher turnover:

Principal leadership style can impact teacher attrition and retention due to poor personality. For example, a good principal with a supportive personality will attract others to join the teaching profession because there is a leader who will walk together with them along in their journey. They will provide them with advice, encourage their co-workers to always have a positive mindset and this will lead to increased job satisfaction and commitment to the teaching profession (T1).

A supportive principal with a positive leadership fosters a collaborative and respectful work environment, which helps retain teachers. Principals who provide opportunities for professional development and growth show they value their staff, further encouraging teachers to stay. On the other hand, poor leadership skills or a lack of support can lead to frustration, dissatisfaction, and higher teacher attrition. Effective leadership is crucial for maintaining teacher morale and reducing attrition (T21).

On the other hand, authoritarian and biased leadership style, along with poor management of student behavior, were significant factors in teachers’ turnover:

Some authoritarian leaders are driven by money... they do not have classes to teach but just muck around ...sitting in air-conditioned office with big salaries while teachers do all the work. Additionally, some school

leaders have their own gang and do not treat teachers fairly. Under this type of leadership, children are left to misbehave (and these types of leaders condone students' wrong doing because they are afraid of the law concerning children's right (T9).

Some school principals do not take advice or counsel from others, they have favorite or pet teachers and gang up with other teachers and neglect others. This kind of leadership puts off teachers from the teaching profession (T44).

Teachers may leave the profession due to leadership attitude i.e if the principal would harshly tell off the teachers. Also, if the principal misuses his or .her power to make unfair decisions that affect the teacher or relationship amongst teachers ...(T3).

Structural Capital

Findings also highlighted the influence of work-related elements such as working conditions, resources, student behavior management and compensation on teacher retention and attrition.

Work Conditions

The importance of the work environment was also highlighted by the majority of teachers to impact on teachers' motivation. For example, an unhealthy environment can be a deterrent to teachers:

There should be sufficient classrooms and schools should have ample resources to equip teachers for lesson delivery and learners for activities to use for different subject areas. Toilet and ablution blocks to be kept clean for health reasons, and parents and community need to rally to support keeping the school clean and healthy. The PTA and community work together to provide support by buying detergents for cleaning purposes. This also supports the health of students with special needs (T21).

Teacher Workload

Teacher workload is considered in this analysis in connection with the support system. For example, some participants indicated that if schools are supportive of their teachers, they should take into consideration the teachers' workload, so teachers are not overloaded and feel discouraged as seen in these comments:

Ever since I started teaching, there has not been much I can do at home because of the numerous work I need to finish for school preparation. It affects my mental health (T41).

It is hard to tackle work and life especially when you are a teacher because you cannot postpone the day's scheduled work to the next day. So, you take home work to plan and mark and prepare for the next day of school (T42).

Students' Behavior

Some teachers indicated that disrespectful student behavior can lead to high stress level resulting in teachers departing from teaching profession:

These days students' behavior lacks respect and no commitment to studying. This is a great challenge and if teachers discipline children, then parents take teachers to court (T9).

Resources

Adequate teaching resources emerged as a critical factor for teacher retention. In this study, teachers who had access to sufficient instructional materials and technological tools indicated that they are more likely to remain in their roles. On the other hand, teachers who faced resources shortages expressed frustration and a higher likelihood of leaving as noted here: The lack of necessary teaching resources is the main thing that I find very challenging in my teaching (T42).

Compensation

There is also the issue of wages-almost all participants indicated that salary affect their decision to stay or leave the teaching profession:

Compensation plays an important role in teacher retention and recruitment although we passionately feel about the teaching profession, however a high price of living also drives teachers to apply for high salary jobs (T45).

Salary that teachers receive is not adequate to cater for family needs (faalavelave) hence teachers leave the teaching profession for seasonal work as this type of work provides better wages to address teachers' needs especially collective needs of the family (T2).

Positive Psychological Capital

In addition to work conditions, the impact of factors such as personal, family, and community commitments as well as teacher's well-being on teachers' decisions to leave or remain in the profession was also noted. For example, about half of the participants indicated their calling and responsibilities within the family, church, and the community to take precedence on their decision to leave teaching as noted below:

Family Commitments

A number of teachers indicated caring for family members to take precedence over teaching hence a teacher can quit teaching to care for family members:

Teachers have different reasons for leaving the profession and this depends on the seriousness of an issue such as whether there are sufficient family members with the skills, knowledge and capability to take on extra responsibilities. If there are ample family members who can take on community and religious roles then teachers are comfortable in continuing teaching. As seen in the teaching profession today teachers, are matais, deacons – they wear many hats. Some may end up making full commitment to the family and the church due to a strong desire to be involved fully in family or church matters (T36).

Due to the close connection between individuals and their parents many individuals are willing to leave teaching to care for their elderly loved ones especially if it is a family with not too many members

Many teachers prioritize caring for their families and parents hence they may decide to leave their jobs to care for their families (fatuaiga). If I am the head of my family and the family lacks members (ausage le aiga) this may cause me to quit teaching and care for my family (T12).

The same sentiment was noted throughout this aspect in the findings: When there is endless faalavelave (issues) pertaining to the family, then the teacher tends to take leave from work to attend the family faalavelave.

This is a cause of a lot of pressure since there is not enough \$\$ to contribute to the family faalavelave. That is

what I believe leads to sudden deaths for some teachers (T8).

Church Commitments

One of the major reasons for some teachers leaving the profession is connected to their religious calling as noted here:

... There is a lot of impact on these various commitments especially if it connects to retaining teachers. Example, my calling to serve in church should be given my full commitment, hence I will leave teaching to take on this calling. (T12)

One of the greatest challenges for teachers and a cause for teacher shortage is when teachers leave for theological college. Also, when there is not enough people to care for elderly parents or family members (T11).

There is a huge impact on one's own commitment to the teaching profession. Some feel that they cannot effectively serve two areas at the same time, hence decided to leave teaching and concentrate on their commitments in the culture, family and community (T7).

Many individual teachers place spiritual (religion) first due to the blessings they receive, so they can decide to leave teaching to concentrate on their religious calling (T2).

Community Commitments

One other significant finding in relation to teachers' decision to leave connects to their commitment to their communities. A lot of teachers are titled members of a village community, and at the same time heads of families and hold church positions. As will be noted by the following comments, the majority of participants feel that these community commitments can be a restrain on their teaching role hence the decision to leave is the only option:

A teacher's cultural, church, or community commitment can strongly influence their decision to stay or leave the profession. When teachers feel a deep connection and sense of responsibility to their community, they are more likely to stay, as they view their role as meaningful and impactful. However, if their professional demands conflict with these commitments, it may result in their leaving the profession as they prioritize their personal values and responsibilities (T21).

Similarly, teachers as community members are highly valued in every village community due to their physical and intellectual contribution to decision-making:

There is a big impact since church leaders and community members also rely on teachers' contribution to the development of some aspects of the community. Sometimes it is very hard to make a decision (which is to be carried out and which to leave out) because if one does not attend community meetings there is a penalty (T5).

Too many community involvements result in teachers leaving the teaching profession as noted by this comment:

If I am a village matai with a responsibility of caring for the village affairs, and at the same time I have a role to play in church, as well as my responsibility as head of my family I am overwhelmed and divided by many decisions. If the national church conference is held (two weeks annually), there is a requirement to attend the church conference for these periods hence I need to take some leave from work. When there is a special village

occasion for bestowal of titles (saofa'i) then I will also need to be present hence another leave of absence from work (teaching) to attend to these various responsibilities and commitments. These many responsibilities can drive me to leave teaching and be fully committed to these commitments (T13).

Work Life Balance

Findings pointed to the importance of balancing aspects of the teacher's work and life. For example, the majority of participants indicated struggling to balance their work and life—they find this very challenging resulting in poor health and teacher burn out:

There is always the issue of not having enough time for preparation, so we take our work home which impinges on our time with families. The workload is too much but the pay is not enough for the raising of our families (T39).

Stress from work, overload work and planning take up most of the time. When at home we have little time to offer to help out in family affairs. It cost teachers sleepless nights and health issues trying to balance life at home and teaching (T40).

Too much overload at school results in incompletion of family roles and commitments, especially church commitment. This causes a lot of mental stress. Similarly, when schoolwork does not flow smoothly, it causes a lot of teacher stress especially when the teacher is preparing students for a national exams (T12).

In summary, it is clear that the four capitals; human, social, structural and positive psychological capitals have greatly influenced the findings as will be noted in the discussion in the next section.

VI. DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at exploring teachers' views on factors that may impact teachers' decision to remain in or leave the teaching professions. We will in this section discuss the findings under the four capitals: human, social, structural and positive psychological capitals.

Human Capital

The findings underscore the significance of human capital in influencing teacher retention. Human capital emphasizes the value of providing professional development opportunities for teachers as it results in teacher effectiveness and motivation to remain in the teaching profession. In the current study the concept of professional development emerged as one of the critical factors that enhance teachers' sense of preparedness and professional growth, thereby reducing attrition. This aligns well with the literature (Cells, et al, (2023), Podolsky et al., (2018) on the value of professional development in boosting teachers' morale and confidence, inspiring them more in their teaching roles. Teachers also emphasized the value of continuous professional development as it leads to their motivation, hence the importance for schools to invest in continuous professional learning and ensure that teachers have adequate resources as this can lead to higher retention rate.

The concept of mentoring was also noted as an inspirational tool to retain teachers in the profession. For example, more than half of participants pointed to the value of being mentored by the more experienced teachers as this help boost their own confidence and inspiration to remain in the teaching profession. This finding aligns well with Wiens et al. (2023) study findings on a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) mentoring program. Their

findings revealed a notable decrease in teacher attrition rates in schools that implement their mentoring program. The value of mentoring and professional development for teacher growth and retention cannot be overstated. Therefore, it is crucial to develop policies that support teacher education and ongoing professional development.

Social Capital

The role of social capital is evident in the strong collegial relationship and support systems that contributed to teacher retention. The findings of the current study highlighted the value of fostering a collaborative and supportive culture in strong connection to teacher retention. This aligns well with the literature (Shuls et al., 2020) that teachers who felt supported by their peers and senior staff are more likely to remain in their teaching positions. On the contrary, negative relationships and lack of support systems are significant factors in teacher attrition which aligns with Garcia et al (2019) findings that challenging work environments, inadequate compensation, limited professional development, lack of mentoring and support, and negative school culture were significant factors contributing to teacher attrition. This calls for school administrations to prioritize building strong, supportive networks among teachers and providing mentorship programs for new and experienced teachers alike.

Structural Capital

The literature notes that structural capital relative to effective school management and leadership, has profound impact on teacher retention rates (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop and Darling-Hammond (2018), whereas authoritarian and biased leadership styles led to increased attrition (Kule, 2024). According to the findings, the role of the principal in developing unity and close relationship amongst staff members cannot be overemphasized. This aligns with the literature (Nguyen et al. 2019, Shuls and Flores 2023) highlighting administrative support and supporting principals as vital in retaining teachers. Findings suggest the importance of school leaders adopting inclusive and participative leadership practices to create a positive work environment as opposed to authoritarian and biased leaders who drive teachers away. This view is well supported by Kule, et al (2024), who highlights that authoritarian and biased leadership styles are linked to increased teacher burnout, which in turn contributes to higher attrition rates. Findings also stressed the importance of improving work conditions, teaching workloads and addressing student behaviors if teachers are to be retained. Therefore, there is a need for policies aimed at ensuring manageable workloads and respectful student interactions to enhance teacher job satisfaction.

Positive Psychological Capital

Positive psychological capital, including resilience, motivation, and personal well-being, is a significant determinant of teacher retention. With respect to teacher wellbeing, the study highlighted the importance of well-being in connection with teacher motivation. Many teachers in the study seem to suffer from too many responsibilities. For example, in the unique fabric of the Samoan culture, most adults wear more than one hat, such as caring for the elderly and the extended family in addition to major roles in church and within the community. It is fair to suggest that the collective nature of the Samoan culture, where one looks out for other family members, in addition to other family commitments (faalavelave) can be economically draining for individuals. Economically, teachers' salaries are considered the lowest compared to other government wages hence many teachers in this study lamented about insufficiency of the low salary they received to cater for their

and family needs.

Given the significant role those personal commitments (such as family, church and community obligations) play in teacher retention, it is crucial to strike a balance between the teachers' professional and personal commitments. Studies found (Mathews et al., 2021) that teachers who could balance their professional and personal lives exhibited high level of motivation and job satisfaction. They were better able to cope with the demands of the profession and were more likely to stay in the profession. On the contrary (Janzena and Phelan, 2019) teachers who face significant personal obligations without sufficient support are more prone to attrition. As a number of teachers seem to leave due to the inability to balance personal life and work demands, it is crucial for schools to consider flexible policies that help teachers balance their personal and professional lives. For example, programs that support teachers' well-being and foster a positive psychological climate in schools, can help reduce stress and improve job satisfaction.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study which aimed at exploring teachers views on teacher retention and attritional factors found that elements from each of the four capitals factor into teachers' decision to leave or remain in the profession. For example, the notions connected to professional development, supportive leadership and work environment, as well as the issue of work and life balance were all significant to teachers' decision to leave and or stay in the profession. These findings have several practical implications for schools and policymakers. Hence investing in human capital through professional development and adequate teaching resources is essential for retaining qualified teachers. Moreover, building social capital by fostering supportive relationships and mentorship programs can enhance teacher morale and reduce attrition. The importance of improving leadership practices and work conditions, as part of structural capital, are critical for creating a positive work environment. Finally, supporting teachers' psychological well-being and accommodating their personal commitments can further enhance retention. By addressing these factors holistically, schools and policy makers can implement more effective strategies to retain teachers and improve educational outcomes.

This research is limited by the small numbers of teachers who were involved. Therefore, extensive data from both rural and urban schools is needed for generalizability purposes. Furthermore, future research should continue to explore the interplay between these capitals to develop targeted interventions that support teacher retention.

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