



Effect of Reward System on Employee Retention of Non-Teaching Staff: Evidence in Public Schools, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examined the effect of reward systems on employee retention among non-teaching staff in public secondary schools within Mumias East Sub-County, Kenya.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The target population of the descriptive survey design was 297 non-teaching staff members. The size of the sample population (170 respondents) was calculated by the formula developed by Yamane, and the stratified and simple random sampling methods have been used to ensure fair representation. Data collection was done using structured questionnaires and the validity and reliability of the instrument was also checked prior to its use. The analysis of the data included both inferential and descriptive statistical methods.

Findings: The findings revealed that reward systems have a positive and significant effect on the retention of non-teaching staff.

Implications/Originality/Value: The study recommends that policy makers in public secondary schools implement clear and proactive reward strategies that enhance employee welfare. A reward system that is well-organized is seen to improve morale and enhance better retention results. The results also provide useful information to organizations in the strategic human resource management environment, especially in relation to ensuring that their talent acquisition and talents retention plans are in sync with good reward systems.



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Introduction

Employee retention is a serious human resource issue in different fields, including the field of education where teaching and non-teaching personnel are crucial to the success of any institution (Baruch, 2019). Over the past few years, there has been more competition over the acquisition of

skilled talent and the attrition rates have only increased this pressure requiring the education systems to redefine how to go about attracting and retaining talent. Whereas non-teaching staff furnish the fundamentals of administration, operations, and technical roles, a large degree of data indicates that they have been underestimated in policy, practice, and research studies with regard to teacher motivation and retention (OECD, 2020).

Reward systems have been cited as one of the factors that affect employee retention around the world. In high-income nations like Finland and Canada, a reward system with competitive salaries and benefits, recognition schemes, and performance-based incentives has been found to result in high levels of satisfaction in jobs and organizational loyalty among non-teaching professionals in the education sector (UNESCO, 2021; Baruch, 2019). These systems may comprise an annual appraisal system, service reward, and access to subsidies in training, which makes support staff feel they are being treated fairly and that they have a future.

Nevertheless, there are still inequities in these settings, especially in resource-limited schools and regions where the rewards are implemented in unequal ways or are underfunded (De et al., 2019). The need is more urgent in developing countries. According to the World Bank, (2022), turnover of non-teaching school staffs is not usually addressed despite playing important roles towards school functionality. Inadequate or nonexistent reward schemes were observed across all public institutions in the form of low wages, little appreciation, and a general absence of incentives as a significant factor of voluntary employee departures (ILO, 2020).

Fiscal stresses, decentralized human resource management methodologies, and disparate reward systems add to the difficulties with maintaining non-teaching employees in the workforce of public schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Ugandan research point to low and irregular wages, the absence of performance incentives, and insufficient recognition of workforce efforts and resulting high turnover among support personnel (Ajayi, 2020; Baffour-Awuah, 2019). Moreover, management at the school level, which are usually under-resourced and insufficiently trained, finds it difficult to establish coherent reward mechanisms (Tettey, 2006; Magoma, 2022). The education reforms in Kenya such as the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) have tried to enhance service delivery by providing higher capitation grants and decentralization of staff (MoE, 2018; Republic of Kenya, 2020). Among these grants there are vote heads which are in form of personal emoluments to sponsor remuneration of the non-teaching staff. Nonetheless, it is not conclusive that these resources are effective when it comes to backing powerful reward systems. In spite of their critical roles in the school activities such as clerical services, security, sanitation and examination organization requirements, non-teaching personnel often do not have access to formally structured incentive programs, recognition schemes or performance bonuses (Ndungu et al., 2022; Nyaberi & Cheruiyot, 2024).

To be more precise, in the Mumias East Sub-County, the problem of the regular turnover of non-teaching staff still exists in the sphere of secondary education. School heads work under strict budgetary constraints and pressure to deliver results and it is usually not possible to manage the reward system well. Consequently, employee morale is low, and the retention is poor, with such crucial staffing roles as support staff as frequently left vacant or covered by someone who is not trained in the respective skills (TSC, 2021; Wanyonyi & Kipkoeh, 2020).

This paper will therefore be aimed at conducting an investigation on how reward systems will influence retention of non-teaching staff in the public secondary schools in Mumias East Sub-County. The insights that may be gained through the study of the impact of the measures on the scale of retention would enhance the human resource activities and result in stabilizing and motivating the support personnel in Kenya education sector.

Statement of the Research Problem

The Kenya public secondary schools should ensure they do not lose their qualified non-teaching appurtenance who is involved with important duties like administration, sanitation, security and provision of technical services. Policies such as the basic education act (2013) and the increased capitation within the FDSE program were meant to give sufficient assistance and payment in order to maintain this workforce adequately compensated (Ministry of Education, 2021; Kenya Vision 2030, 2020).

This is not materializing on the ground, however: many schools still experience high staff turnover among the non-teaching staff, through poor reward schemes, career structure, poor recognition, and inhospitable working practices. Although there is increased funding and resources, there remain issues of retention, which create situations of service interruptions and poor operational effectiveness (Education Sector Report, 2023).

Available literature suggests that much of the literature centers on teaching personnel leaving a research gap on factors that influence retention of the non-teaching personnel. There is limited empirical data on how reward systems influence their commitment, especially at the local level. This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of reward systems on the retention of non-teaching staff in public secondary schools in Mumias East Sub-County.

Main Objective

To examine the Effect of Reward System on Retention of Non-Teaching Staff: Evidence in Public Secondary Schools, Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

HO: Effect of Reward System has no significant effect on Retention of Non-Teaching Staff: Evidence in Public Secondary Schools, Kenya.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Organizational development, which enhances organizational culture, is the focus of Mc. Gregory's X-Y Theory (1985). Theory X describes any "authoritarian" management style used in the workplace, where typical workers dislike going to work. The employee is only compelled to carry out the assigned tasks by the threat of punishment. Employees in the Theory Y group have a participative management style. The theory Y Group's employees are self-directed in their pursuit of the organization's goals. They are motivated by their own desire to take on more responsibility. They have an attitude of self-motivation. Workers. Employees who lack self-motivation but may be retained and given incentives to work are categorized by Theory X. Sandhya (2011) contends that there are numerous additional ways for employers to inspire workers in addition to the various theories of motivation offered by various academics. He identifies key components of employee motivation that can be used to keep them on board, including pay, growth, support, Employee relationships and the workplace serve as a source of motivation for individual gains. It is a reward given to staff members who achieve the intended institutional outcomes. Talent is attracted and retained by compensation. This theory has implications for the current study because work-related factors, such as job satisfaction and motivation, directly affect whether or not employees are retained.

Conceptual Review

Reward System

A reward system refers to a structured approach through which organizations compensate and recognize employees for their contributions, aiming to motivate, retain, and align them with institutional goals. Reward systems typically include both intrinsic rewards such as recognition,

professional growth) and extrinsic rewards such as salary, bonuses, and allowances. Ali and Anwar, (2021) say that a properly organized reward system plays a significant role in promoting the employee satisfaction level and organizational devotion, which further diminishes turnover intent or desires. Reward systems in institution of learning schools, particularly state secondary schools, have been observed to be very considerable in shaping motivation and retention of its non-teaching staff who deem themselves to lack representation in terms of recognition and furthering their careers in comparison to the teaching staff (Osei & Ackah, 2020). On the same note, Ayodele and Adebayo, (2023), assert that institutional loyalty, enhancement of performance and creation of good working environment comes through consistent and fair reward systems.

Reward measures identified by previous studies include measures of fair in compensation, good engagement in paying compensation, access to benefits and benefit measures, with satisfaction on recognition mechanism (Mwangi and Wanjiku, 2022; Musa and Olowookere, 2019). With the exception of a small number of cases, surveys and Likert questions were employed to determine the employee perception on these indicators. Four principal measures of reward family were employed in the present study, these being: satisfaction with compensation, access to non-monetary payoffs (say recognition or food), timeliness of payment and perceived fairness in rewards distribution. This is because these indicators are what relate to the day-to-day lives of the non-teaching staff and what has already been identified as a factor imminent in determining staff retention in public sector institutions.

Retention of Non-Teaching Staff

Employee retention can be defined as the capability of an institution to sustain their personnel in the company over a given period of time and minimize voluntary turnover. Such non-teaching personnel groups as clerks, lab technicians, cooks, and guards are authorized to play crucial roles in schools to support learning environments and make sure that daily operations are conducted in a smooth way (Ndungu et al., 2022). Institutional stability, cost efficiency, and quality of services are essential when trying to retain them (Wanjiru, 2022).

Retention has been investigated in survey and descriptive research designs used previously. In the case of Ajayi, (2020), the study used questionnaires to determine the influence of work conditions on support staff turnover in Nigerian schools, and in the study by Baffour, (2019), the researcher examined the influence of reward systems to retention in Ghana. The article by Wanyonyi and Kipkoech, (2020) incorporated the correlational aspect of studying HR practices in Kenya.

Retention has commonly been measured through staff turnover intention, satisfaction levels, and length of service. Some studies use Likert-scale responses to assess the likelihood of staying in the job (ILO, 2020). This study measures retention through indicators such as intent to stay, job satisfaction with rewards, and frequency of staff exits, using a descriptive survey among non-teaching staff in Mumias East Sub-County.

Empirical Review

Reward System

The relationship between reward systems and employee retention has been a growing area of interest in recent organizational research. Mutua and Ombongi, (2024) conducted a study in Kenyan public health facilities and found that performance-based bonuses, structured allowances, and recognition schemes significantly influenced employee retention. Their quantitative survey, which targeted 200 clinical and administrative staff in Nairobi County, revealed a strong statistical relationship between well-structured reward mechanisms and reduced staff turnover. However, the focus on healthcare settings limited the generalizability of the findings to educational institutions, particularly public secondary schools. The present study addresses this gap by examining how reward systems influence retention among non-teaching staff in public secondary schools a context with different institutional policies, financial constraints, and operational structures.

Tome and Akello, (2022) extended the conversation by focusing on non-financial rewards in Uganda's public service sector. Using a mixed-methods approach involving both surveys and interviews from 150 civil servants, the study found that peer recognition, flexible working schedules, and access to professional development played a significant role in enhancing employee commitment and reducing turnover. Despite these insights, their research did not explore the dynamics within the education sector, especially among non-teaching staff whose motivation is often shaped by entirely different reward structures. This current study builds on these insights by exploring how similar non-financial rewards are structured and perceived within public secondary schools, thereby addressing both sectoral and contextual gaps.

Similarly, Kalunda and Mwangi, (2021) examined the reward systems in private secondary schools in Nairobi. In their descriptive survey, they found that the salary progression, recognition-based award and medical insurance were the determinants of the retention of non-teaching staff. The results indicated a positive correlation relationship between structured rewards and staff retention intentions which is very high. Nonetheless it can be said that as findings are drawn by using privately-owned institutions, the reward structures are less rigid and can be easily adjusted to the needs, thus outlining lower application to the government-regulated setting in the given context of schools. The present research closes this gap, as it examines the context of financial constraints and BOM involvement in reward design and implementation in the context of public Secondary school settings.

According to the study of public technical training institutions in Western Kenya conducted by Masheka, and Achieng, (2020) turnover intentions were reduced due to non-financial incentives including work environment and professional development. The researchers have used a descriptive design to analyze the data collected about 120 employees recruited in three colleges, highlighting the role of intrinsic motivators. Nonetheless, technical training institutions seem to be educational institutions under different governance and reward structures than secondary schools. Consequently, the given study is a source of new knowledge because it focuses strictly on non-teaching staff in the secondary schools of Eastern region of Russia and identifies rewards (both financial and non-financial) that determine their retention.

Finally, Odhiambo and Njuguna, (2019) investigated whether monetary and non-monetary rewards affect staff retention in Kenya banking sector. Their study indicated that there was a strong correlation between retention and compensation packages, pension schemes and leave entitlements because the statistical results were significant. Although the findings are very insightful, the betting sector is in a better position to adopt competitive reward systems as compared to the case with the education sector where budgetary constraints normally frustrate such alternatives. Practicing the same variables in a publicly funded institution of learning, the current paper sheds light on the mechanism of reward systems operated in compressed circumstances, compose a critical blank in the literature.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used in the study. The research focused on 297 Non-teaching staffs identified in Sub-county, found on a list of 27 secondary schools provided by the Mumias East Sub-County director of Education. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling were used in the study. A sample size of this study was calculated having used Yamane Taro (1967) formula which gave 170.44. Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data. The validity and reliability of the data collection instrument were explored. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical instruments (Mugenda, 2019). The findings were reported in tables and illustrations. The linear regression model used was as follows.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon \text{ where;}$$

α Constant

Y	Represents Retention of Non-Teaching Staff (dependent variable)
X	Represents Reward System (independent variable)
ε	Error term
β	Regression Coefficient

Ethical Consideration

A research permit was acquired from the National Council of Science and Technology prior to the study's start. Further approval was requested from the Kakamega County Teachers Service Commission and the County Directors of Education, respectively. After consulting with the principals of the participating schools, they were given the assurance that the study's findings would only be used for academic purposes and that neither their identities nor the findings would be shared with outside parties.

Results and Discussion

Response Rate

A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed out of which 158 were returned. This represented a response rate of 92.9 percent with a non-response rate at 7.1 percent which accounts for 12 questionnaires. This reinforces the assertion by Babbie, (2010), who recommended that a response rate of 70% or more are appropriate for an effective data analysis and presentation.

Reliability Test Results

Table 4.1

Item Statistics			
Variables	items	Cronbach Alpha Results	Remarks
Reward System	5	.757	Accepted
Employee retention	5	.732	Accepted

Source: Field Data 2025

The data collection tool was therefore considered reliable following a pilot study whereby the questionnaire had simplicity in yielding identical results in the same mode of doing things. Therefore, as represented in Table 4.1, high Cronbach alpha values of each of the variables to be used as dependent and independent variables in the study established the reliability of the scores. Having Cronbach alpha range of 0.732-0.757, the items are highly reliable in measuring the variables that they are to measure.

Descriptive results for Reward System

Table 4.2: Reward system

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Recognition if Targets are Surpassed	158	1.00	5.00	3.6203
A Job Promotion Policy for Employees	158	1.00	5.00	3.6329
Additional Certificate attracts salary Increment	158	1.00	5.00	3.7342
Rewards with benefits and Incentives for jobs well done	158	1.00	5.00	3.8354
Diligent and Timely Payment of Salaries	158	1.00	5.00	3.8924
Elaborate Reward Policy for Non-Teaching Staff	158	1.00	5.00	4.1329
Valid N (listwise)	158			

Source: Field data (2025)

Study results of the study in Table 4.2 show that non-teaching staff were in agreement (Mean is between 3.5- 4.5) that reward system provided by the public secondary school affected their

retention. This is illustrated by respondents' agreement with the following issues concerning reward system: Recognition provided if targets are surpassed; Existence a job promotion policy for employees; Additional certificate by staff attracts salary increment; Rewards with benefits and Incentives provided for jobs well done; Diligent and Timely Payment of Salaries to staff; and Elaborate Reward Policy for Non-Teaching Staff.

Descriptive Employee Retention

Table 4.3: Retention of non-teaching staff

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Job security guaranteed hence productivity	158	1.00	5.00	3.4684
Appointments Increase non-teaching staff morale	158	1.00	5.00	3.6392
Job security Improves morale	158	1.00	5.00	3.6899
Placement in the areas of competence boosts morale	158	1.00	5.00	3.7025
Career progression improves self-delivery	158	1.00	5.00	3.7215
Monetary and non-monetary reward increases productivity	158	1.00	5.00	3.7532
High morale to work due to adequate reward package	158	1.00	5.00	4.5759
Valid N (listwise)	158			

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 4.3 results depict that there is general level of agreement with a mean of between 3.5 and 4.5 that non-teaching staff are retained in secondary schools through provision of staff retention packages. The responses to support this entail: Job security is guaranteed hence productivity; Provision of appointments increase staff morale; Job security improves staff morale; Placement done in areas of competence boosts staff morale; Career progression improves self-delivery; Provision of monetary and non-monetary reward increases staff productivity; and High morale to work is due to adequate reward package.

Inferential Statistics

Pearson Correlation Analysis

The degree of association between the reward system and the retention of non-teaching staff was examined using Pearson coefficient analysis, as indicated in table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Reward system and retention of non-teaching staff correlation

		Retention of Non-teaching Staff
Reward System	Pearson Correlation	.524**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	158
Retention of Non-teaching Staff	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	158

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data (2025)

At the significant level of $p=0.000<0.05$ (2-tailed), the correlation coefficient between the reward system and non-teaching staff retention was 0.524. A critical threshold of 0.80, which indicates high multicollinearity, was never exceeded by this correlation.

Linear Regression

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the Influence Reward System has had in retention of Non-Teaching Staff: Evidence in Public Secondary schools in Mumias East Sub County, Kenya.

Table 4.5: Reward system and retention of non-teaching staff regression

Model Summary ^b						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.524 ^a	.275	.270	.50121		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Reward System						
b. Dependent Variable: Retention of Non-teaching Staff						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.833	1	14.833	59.047	.000 ^b
	Residual	39.189	156	.251		
	Total	54.022	157			
a. Dependent Variable: Retention of Non-teaching Staff						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reward System						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.560	.293		5.316	.000
	Reward System	.587	.076	.524	7.684	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Retention of Non-teaching Staff						

Source: Field data (2025)

According to the model summary results in Table 4.5, the reward system is responsible for 27.5% of the variation in non-teaching staff retention, with an R-Square value of 0.275. The findings also indicate that reward systems and non-teaching staff retention are positively correlated ($R=0.524$). According to ANOVA results, the overall regression model was significant in assessing the model's suitability for measuring the variables under study ($F=59.047$, $\alpha=0.000$, which is less than the p-value of 0.05). This indicates that the reward systems' effects on non-teaching staff retention are satisfactorily well-suited. Therefore, it makes sense to use a regression model to determine whether the research hypothesis is accepted or rejected.

$Y=1.560+0.587X_2$ is the equation for the linear regression model, which can be expressed in light of the findings in Table 4.5. In this case, Y stands for non-teaching staff retention, X_2 for the reward system, and e for the error term. One unit of non-teaching staff retention is correlated with every 0.587 units of reward system use, according to a beta of 0.587.

Reward systems and non-teaching staff retention in public secondary schools are positively and significantly correlated, according to the researcher's rejection of the second null hypothesis based on the significant t-value ($\alpha=0.000$). The results of the study are consistent with earlier research by Khan and Aleem (2014) and Olumuyiwa, Adelaja, & Oluwatosin (2012), who discovered that incentive packages lead to employee retention.

Conclusion

The study established a positive and statistically significant relationship between the reward system and the retention of non-teaching staff in public secondary schools in Mumias East Sub County. With an R-square value of 27.5%, reward systems explained a notable portion of the variation in staff retention. Descriptive results further confirmed that respondents agreed reward practices such as timely pay, promotions, and recognition enhanced their morale and commitment. The reliability of the instruments was also confirmed through acceptable Cronbach's alpha scores above 0.7. These

findings affirm that effective reward systems are critical for sustaining a stable and motivated non-teaching workforce.

Recommendations

The study recommends that school Boards of Management (BoMs) and the Ministry of Education institutionalize structured reward systems tailored to non-teaching staff. This includes clear promotion pathways, regular and timely salary payments, recognition for performance, and both monetary and non-monetary incentives. Such practices will strengthen employee loyalty, reduce turnover, and enhance operational efficiency in public secondary schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should explore the influence of other human resource practices such as training, career development and work-life balance on the retention of non-teaching staff. Researchers may also consider conducting similar studies in private secondary schools or other counties to allow for comparative analysis. In addition, using longitudinal or mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insights into how reward systems influence retention over time. Exploring the moderating role of organizational culture or leadership styles is also recommended to understand contextual differences in employee retention outcomes.

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