**RESEARCH PAPER**

# Job Embeddedness: A Framework For Understanding Factors Affecting School Teachers Retention in Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT**

Teacher turnover in Pakistan is a pervasive problem at all levels of the educational sector, which negatively influences the continuity of teaching, student outcomes, and overall school functioning. The paper explores job embeddedness as a framework for understanding and tackling teacher turnover. The study is quantitative, and a cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect data using the Job embeddedness scale as an instrument. Elementary school educators from two tehsils in Lahore district were the sample. Results revealed that male elementary school educators are more embedded than females. In urban areas, elementary school educators are found to be more embedded. It is also evident in the results that the higher degree is attained, the more embeddedness in the job is achieved. Hence, it is concluded that more supportive policies should be implemented to elevate the job embeddedness of female school teachers.

**Introduction**

Teachers play a fundamental part in determining the educational setup and nurturing a person's logical progression in society. Teacher turnover causes a noteworthy complication to the permanence and quality of education, mainly in areas like Pakistan. High turnover rates among school teachers upset the learning atmosphere and obstruct nations' development. Teacher turnover is a serious concern, with consequences affecting student success and overall school routine.

The fundamental elements causing teacher turnover remain multi-dimensional. The main reasons for turnover are inadequate salaries, lack of facilities, nonavailability of professional development programs, unfair distribution of work in organizations, and deplorable working conditions in teacher welfare programs (Datnow, 2020). Gender differences and impractical educational policies are also significant causes of turnover. Understanding employees' choices is essential for understanding their quit behavior. Job embeddedness provides a constellation of factors enabling researchers to understand why teachers stay on the job. Job embeddedness consists of many factors like Sacrifice, fit, and link. These factors present complicated interactions between an employee/ teacher and the organization, community, and family. Previous studies revealed turnover and job embeddedness in numerous settings. More investigation should be done on the job embeddedness of school teachers in Punjab, Pakistan. Accepting the particular challenges faced by the school education department in this province and exploring the reasons causative to their job embeddedness is very important for facilitating the expansion of teacher retention and improving the quality of education.

Consequently, the current study intends to analyze the latest investigations on teacher turnover and job embeddedness, concentrating on the school education department in Punjab, Pakistan. By investigating the present literature and classifying key themes and gaps in knowledge, this study proposes a new dimension for lawmakers and investigators to expand strategies for justifying teachers' intentions to leave their jobs in Pakistan.

**Literature Review**

Teachers hold an essential position in the lives of nations. They determine the destinations for nations. The teacher's key responsibility is to impart knowledge. Their primary role is to enable pupils to live happy and prosperous lives. They equip them with the latest skills (Datnow, 2020). Unfortunately, certain factors create hindrances in performing this task, because of which they leave their job. Turnover is relatively high among school teachers in Pakistan. In Pakistan, "turnover" usually refers to the number of teachers who leave their jobs or leave the profession quickly. Teachers who leave their jobs can significantly impact the education system in terms of continuity of teaching, student success, and school performance (Ahmad et al., 2020).

A high turnover signifies job dissatisfaction, lack of professional support or resources, and difficult working conditions. There are several reasons why teachers leave their jobs in Pakistan. The main reasons for teacher turnover in Pakistan are low salaries, lack of professional development opportunities, heavy workloads, limited opportunities for career advancement, poor working conditions, and changes in education policies (Zakar et al., 2020). It may help improve teacher retention in the school sector. Increased job conditions can help retain experienced employees and save organizational memory. In Pakistan, the teacher turnover ratio varies across the country. It varies in different regions and areas. Research proves that urban areas have a smaller turnover ratio than rural areas. In far-off Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan, low salaries and postings in areas far from teachers' native homes cause turnover (Parveen & Tran, 2020).

Gender inequalities can also be seen in teaching (Tusinska, 2020). Other factors, such as limited mobility for female teachers, social expectations, and safety concerns at the workplace, may contribute to frequent teacher turnover. Some policy responses include increasing salaries and motivating teachers to work remotely, making additional professional development opportunities available, and setting up support systems that meet teachers' immediate needs and concerns. The researchers should determine teacher turnover patterns for policy recommendations (Ahmad et al., 2020). Few empirical studies prove the effect of qualification on job embeddedness. However, a study by Tanova and Holtom (2008) proved that qualification does not affect an employee's decision to stay on the job. This dimension needs to be discovered. Evidence-based approaches and collaboration between government agencies, schools, civil society, and international partners can help to create a stable and effective teacher workforce that provides quality education to all children.

To address teacher turnover, a multi-pronged approach is needed to address both systematic issues in the education system and broader socioeconomic challenges teachers face (Mahmood et al., 2022). Turnover is a withdrawal behavior. Seitz et al. (2022) are of the view that drawl is a syndrome of behavioral patterns. It has been two decades since turnover literature explored a new dimension: job-embeddedness. It was in 1995 when Tom, Lee, and Mitchell explored this construct while working on the unfolding turnover model. Their rigorous research was the reason for the exploration of this construct. It was suggested by Lee et al. (2004) that their focus is on "why people

leave." It would be more effective and exciting to explore "why people stay." The research proposed why a worker should develop a link to the job rather than leave it. Now, the direction of their research was on "why people stay." These were the exact opposite of the factors of turnover. Job embeddedness enables the researchers to predict the causes of turnover better than any other construct. Kurt Lewin's field theory presents the exact figures that cause embeddedness. The figures in the theory are well-knitted and present a comprehensive picture of the systems that enable employees to stick to their jobs, families, and society. Field theory presents all the aspects of a person's life. The constellation of all the aspects of a person's life forms the field of a person. Lewin (1997) states that understanding a person's life becomes clear by considering the field surrounding a person. Another theory that portrays the job embeddedness construct in detail is—the ecological system theory by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci. (1994) presents all domains and systems of a person's life. This theory's micro and maso systems represent the same element in the job embeddedness framework.

Job embeddedness is comparatively a comprehensive construct. Crossley et al. (2007) believe that organizational commitment only represents an employee's attachment to a job. However, job embeddedness is a vast construct. It explains the embeddedness of a person with community, organization, and family. According to Crossley et al. (2007), job embeddedness can be distinguished from other constructs based on some qualities. This construct is cognitive instead of practical. Identification is not necessary for embeddedness. It focuses on the fit and association with the job community and family.

Job embeddedness discusses the magnitude to which employees feel associated and united with their jobs, organizations, and communities. It encompasses various factors that link individuals to their work, not just their salaries. These factors usually include the following.

**Fit**: The degree to which individuals' skills, values, and goals are aligned with those of organizations. Fit presents the comfort level one feels with family, society, and organization. Lee et al. (2004) believe that fit is a vast concept. It includes the compatibility of a person with goals, values, people, coworkers, boss, organization, community, and location. Research by Wagner et al. (1984) provided empirical evidence that a poor person's job fit leads to turnover.

**Link:** Individuals' formal and informal relationships within their workplace, including relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and mentors. Past research provides empirical foundations for further studies. Research by     George (2015) proves that old and experienced employees feel more attached to the organization.

**Sacrifices:** Investments made by individuals in their current jobs, such as time, effort, and personal commitment. The recognition of alternative employment opportunities outside the current organization. To what extent does an individual feel connected to a larger community or region where they work? The high job embeddedness often leads to greater job satisfaction, commitment, and retention. Employees who feel included in their jobs will be less likely to leave, even if offered better opportunities elsewhere because they have a strong link with their current job, organization, and community.

Many researches proved that Gender also strongly affects the intention to leave or stay on the job. A meta-analysis by Griffeth et al. (2000) provided evidence that females are more inclined to leave their jobs. A study by Faisal et al. (2020) proved that

gender strongly affects job embeddedness. Males are more likely to attach to jobs. Another study by Peltokorpi and Allen (2023) suggests that women in the labour class are more inclined to leave their jobs. However, compared to it, women in executive posts are less inclined to leave their jobs. There is a need to discover the causes of less embeddedness of labour women in jobs. There is mixed evidence provided by many studies in the literature about the effects of experience on employees' job embeddedness. Research by Ghaffar and Khan (2017) suggests that employees' educational qualification significantly affects job embeddedness. This study was conducted in Pakistan's cultural context. However, a study by Tanova and Holtom (2008) provided evidence that qualification only affects the job embeddedness of teachers. This aspect needs to be explored. Discovering the causes of differences in the results of different studies is essential. A previous study by Tanova and Holtom (2008) provides evidence that experience positively correlates with employees' job embeddedness. The same proof is provided in the research by Plooy&Roodt, 2013; Griffeth et al., 2000. However, this factor needs to be investigated in Pakistani culture. Studying the effect of community and locality is very important in job embeddedness. Community plays a pivotal role in the job embeddedness of an employee (Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010).In Pakistan, a study by Ghaffar and Khan (2018) suggests that locality plays a unique role in the job embeddedness of school teachers. This study explored all these factors in the school education department of Punjab, Pakistan. The school education wing is educating children from classes 1-12.

The following are the types of teachers in schools in Punjab.

Primary school teachers/Elementary school educators (PST/ESE)

Elementary school Teacher/Senior Elementary school educators (EST/SESE)

Secondary school teachers/Senior secondary school teachers (SST/SSE)

Subject specialists & senior subject specialists (SS & SSS)

Research in previous literature needs to provide a study that makes available the level of embeddedness of school teachers and the effects of different factors that play significant roles in the job embeddedness of school teachers. There is an empirical gap in the literature on this direction.

**Material and Methods**

The present research was quantitative. Quantitative research quantifies the characteristics of phenomena and evaluates the hypotheses. It was steered under the positivist paradigm (Litcman, 2023). The cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect data in a contrived setting.

**Population and sample**

The study population included all Elementary school educators working in the school education department in Lahore district, which is part of the Government of Punjab.

*Population of the study*

**Table 1**

| Sr. No | Category | Strength of teachers | Percentage |
|--------|----------|----------------------|------------|
| 1 | PST/ESE | 7611 | 48% |
| 2 | EST/SESE | 4581 | 29% |
| 3 | SST/SSE | 2856 | 18% |
| 4 | Others | 547 | 5% |
| 5 | Total | 15595 | 100% |

Retrieved from https://sis.punjab.gov.pk

### Sample of study

Seven thousand six hundred and eleven Elementary school educators (ESE) of tehsils Shalimar and Four thousand five hundred and eighty Elementary school educators of the city were selected as samples using a random sampling technique. There is an empirical and population gap in the literature about the effects of demographics on the turnover intentions of Elementary school educators (ESE). Contact numbers were gained from the school education department, and special permission was granted at the researcher's request. Teachers were sent a job embeddedness questionnaire via what is App using Google Forms. A declaration form was also attached to the instrument. In the declaration form, researchers claimed their identity and declared that all research ethics would be followed. Four hundred and sixteen responses were received.

**Table 2**
Demographic information of the study sample

| Variables | n (%) |
|-----------|-------|
| Gender | |
| Male | 221(54%) |
| Female | 195(46%) |
| Qualification | |
| B.A. | 214(52%) |
| Masters | 160(38%) |
| MPhil | 37(9%) |
| PhD | 5(1%) |
| School Locality | |
| Urban | 215(52%) |
| Rural | 201(48%) |

This table represents an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Male teachers comprised fifty-four percent of the whole sample. Female teachers comprised 195, representing 46 percent of the sample. Two hundred and fifteen participants possess a bachelor's degree. ESE, who was 160, had a master's degree. Thirty-seven elementary school teachers were MPhil; five served the school education department with PhD degrees. Two hundred and fifteen teachers were serving in urban areas of Lahore District. Two hundred and one teachers served in rural areas or villages in the district of Lahore.

## Research Instrument

Data were collected using a job embeddedness questionnaire developed by Ghaffar and Khan (2018). The questionnaire was exclusively developed for the Pakistani educational context.

**Table 3**
Reliability of Job embeddedness scale

| Factors of Job Embeddedness Questionnaire | Items | Cronbach alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Fit | 19 | .925 |
| Link | 16 | .895 |
| Sacrifice | 11 | .902 |
| Overall items | 46 | .905 |

Table 3 displays the reliability analysis results for the Job Embeddedness scale, which includes three factors: Sacrifice, Link, and Fit, along with the overall scale. The above table provides information about the number of items for each factor and the corresponding Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which indicates the scale's reliability and internal consistency.

The fit factor consists of 19 items, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .925, indicating high internal consistency. Similarly, the Link factor, comprising 16 items, demonstrates a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .895, indicating high reliability. With 11 items, the Sacrifice factor exhibits a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .902, indicating high reliability.

Moreover, when considering all 46 items of the Job Embeddedness questionnaire (the overall scale), Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .905, suggesting high internal consistency reliability for the entire scale.

These results indicate that the Job Embeddedness scale is highly reliable, with consistent measurements across various factors and overall scale. Thus, it is a robust tool for assessing job embeddedness among respondents.

This questionnaire has three factors: fit, link, and sacrifice. It has forty-six items in total. The questionnaire's factors and overall reliability were checked, showing the instrument's reliability.

**The procedure of the study**

The job embeddedness level of college faculty was checked by the JE scale, which was exclusively developed considering the scenario of Pakistan's educational organizations by Ghaffar and Khan (2018). A seven-point Likert scale was used to gain a deeper perception of the phenomena of the study. Participants were approached via cellular phones. The job embeddedness questionnaire was dispersed among the study participants. A random sampling technique was used. The return ratio of questionnaires was 416. The data was analyzed using the software SPSS 20. The perception of elementary school educators was sorted using items on the job embeddedness scale. Data provided a deep understanding of the participants' relationships and connections with their jobs, community, and organizations. It also indicated the levels of connectivity with family organization and community.

**Data analysis**

Quantitative techniques were used to understand the respondents' perceptions. Mean and standard deviation were found. Independent sample t-test, ANOVA, and Tukey's post hoc test were used to determine the noteworthy variance in the respondents' perceptions. Data was analyzed through SPSS 20 software.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics of research were followed. Ethics guide researchers in conducting research and providing rights to the study participants (Ramrathan et al., 2017). Researchers declared that the privacy and confidentiality of participants will be given priority. The study's results will be shared with the participants. Obtained data will only be used for research purposes and will not be shared with any government or private institution/department. All these principles were mentioned in the declaration form sent to participants.

**Results and Discussion**

The job embeddedness level of elementary school educators was explored by assigning a range of numbers to specific levels.

**Table 4**
Operationalization of the questionnaire

| Score | 0-3 | 3.1-5 | 5.1-7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Levels | Low | Medium | High |

A score from 0 to 3 specifies a low Level of job embeddedness. A range from 3.1 to 5 shows a medium level. A score from 5.1 to 7 indicates a high level.

**Table 5**
*Factor-wise mean score and levels on the Job Embeddedness scale (n=416)*

| Factors | | Level |
|---|---|---|
| Organization link | 5.22 | High |
| Community link | 4.70 | Medium |
| Family link | 4.81 | Medium |
| Organization fit | 5.23 | High |
| Community fit | 5.74 | High |
| Family fit | 4.57 | Medium |
| Organization sacrifice | 4.82 | Medium |
| Community sacrifice | 4.22 | Medium |
| Family sacrifice | 5.87 | High |
| The overall mean score of the study | 4.78 | Medium |

The above table presents the mean scores on different factors of the JE scale and corresponding levels of job embeddedness on the Job Embeddedness scale for a sample size of 416 participants. The factors assessed include organization link, community link, family link, organization fit, community fit, family fit, organization sacrifice, community sacrifice, and family sacrifice. Each factor's mean score and job embeddedness level, categorized as High, Medium, or Low, are provided. The results indicate that participants generally perceive higher levels of job embeddedness in organizational and community links and fit factors, with mean scores indicating high levels. On the other hand, sacrifice factors tend to be rated lower, with medium levels of job embeddedness. Family-related factors exhibit mixed perceptions; family fit was rated at a medium level, and family sacrifice was rated at a high level of job embeddedness. The overall mean score for the study is reported as 4.78, suggesting a medium level of job embeddedness across all factors collectively. These findings offer insights into how various organizational and personal connections contribute to teachers' perceptions of job embeddedness.

**Table 6**
*Comparison between Elementary School Educator's Perceptions of Job Embeddedness Based on Gender*

| Male | | | Female | | | Independent sample t-test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD | *T* | *P* |
| 221 | 170.86 | 30.22 | 195 | 163.78 | 31.81 | 2.024 | .044* |

*p<.05

Table 6 compares elementary school teachers' perceptions of job embeddedness based on gender. It shows sample sizes (n) by gender, mean scores, and standard deviations. An independent samples t-test was used to relate the mean scores between the two groups.

Male teachers' mean perception of job embeddedness was 170.86, and its standard deviation was 30.22. There were 195 female teachers in the sample; their mean score was 163.7, and the standard deviation was 31.81. The independent samples t-test created a t-value of 2.024 and a p-value of .044. It suggested a statistically substantial variance in the perception of job embeddedness between male and female teachers.

It proposes a prominent difference in male and female elementary school teachers' perception of job embeddedness because male teachers achieved a somewhat greater degree of job embeddedness than female teachers.

**Table 7**
*Comparison between Elementary School Educator's Perceptions of Job Embeddedness Based on Locality*

| Urban | | | Rural | | | Independent samples *t*-test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD | *T* | *P* |
| 221 | 200 | 32.09 | 216 | 171.78 | 27.81 | 2.021 | .015* |

*p<.05

Table 5 shows elementary school teachers' perceptions of job embeddedness based on locality. The mean scores between the two groups were compared using an independent samples t-test.

In the urban locality, the sample size was 221; the mean score was 32.09, and the standard deviation was 27.81. However, in the rural area, the sample size was 216, and the mean perception was 171.78, with a standard deviation of 27.81. The independent samples t-test formed a t-value of 2.021 and a p-value of .015, demonstrating a main variance in the perception of job embeddedness between urban and rural settings.

This suggests that elementary school educators' perceptions of job embeddedness differ meaningfully based on the locality of their organization. Urban teachers possess more job embeddedness than rural elementary school teachers.

**Table 8**
Academic Qualification Wise Mean Score of College Faculty Members

| Qualification | B.A. | M.A. | MPhil | PhD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean Score** | 167.51 | 169.12 | 157.76 | 191.11 |

Table 6 shows the mean scores attained by elementary school teachers classified by their academic qualifications, including B.A., M.A., MPhil, and PhD. Among the qualifications listed, elementary school educators with PhDs have the highest mean score at 191.11, followed by M.A. holders at 169.12, Bachelor degree holders at 167.51, and MPhil holders at 157.76. This suggests a potential positive correlation between higher

academic qualifications and mean scores among college faculty members, with PhD holders representing the highest average scores.

**Table 9**

Comparison between Elementary School Educators' Perceptions of Job Embeddedness Based on Academic Qualification

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean scores | *F* | *P* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 8622.08 | 2 | 3133.70 | 3.239 | .020* |
| Within Groups | 316734.23 | 212 | 874.80 | | |
| Total | 317168.28 | 214 | | | |

*p<.05

Table seven compares elementary school educators' perceptions of job embeddedness based on their academic qualifications. It provides information on the source of variation, sum of squares, degrees of freedom (df), mean scores, F-values, and p-values.

The analysis indicates a significant variation in educators' perception of job embeddedness based on their academic qualifications. The F-value, which measures the ratio of variability between groups to variability within groups, is 3.239, and the associated p-value is below the conventional threshold of significance ($p < .05$), indicating that the differences between groups are statistically significant.

**Table 10**

Pairwise Comparisons on Academic Qualification of Elementary School Educators' Perception of Job Embeddedness Based on Academic Qualification

| Academic Qualification (I) | Academic Qualification (J) | Mean Differences (I-J) | S.E. | *P* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| B.A. | M.A. | -2.18 | 3.71 | 0.93 |
| B.A. | MPhil | 8.84 | 4.20 | 0.22 |
| B.A. | PhD | -22.48 | 9.71 | 0.15 |
| M.A. | MPhil | 11.03 | 4.32 | 0.11 |
| M.A. | PhD | 11.03 | 10.35 | 0.02 |

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The above table presents pairwise comparisons of the perception of job embeddedness among elementary school educators, characterized by their academic qualifications. The mean differences, standard errors (S.E.), and p-values are provided for each comparison. The data reveals how educators with different academic qualifications perceive their job embeddedness. When comparing educators with Bachelor's degrees (B.A.) to those with Master's degrees (M.A.), there is a slight negative mean difference (-2.18), though not statistically significant (p = 0.93). However, significant differences emerge when comparing Bachelor's degree holders to those with higher degrees. Educators with M.Phil qualifications show a prominent positive mean difference (8.84, p = 0.22) compared to those with B.A., while those with Ph.D. qualifications display a considerable negative mean difference (-22.48, p = 0.15). Among educators with Master's degrees, comparisons with both M.Phil and Ph.D. holders show significant positive mean differences (11.03, p = 0.11; 11.03, p = 0.02, individually). These results propose that educators with higher degrees, mainly PhD holders, perceive their job embeddedness differently than those with Bachelor's degrees, representing possible implications for employment, retaining, and professional development plans within elementary education settings.

**Discussion**

It is a maiden study in the school setup of Punjab, Pakistan, that tested the level of job embeddedness of elementary school educators. The results were very of two kinds. The effect of gender on job embeddedness is confirmed. Data revealed that male elementary school educators were more embedded in jobs than female elementary school educators. It confirms the empirical evidence provided by Tusinka (2020). It highlights female educators' low level of job embeddedness, which should be explored. It should be empirically proved which policy gaps are causing less job embeddedness.

Educators living and serving in urban areas were found to be more embedded. This result confirms the results of the study conducted by Parveen (2020). It opens many avenues in this direction to explore reasons why educators working in urban areas are securing high job embeddedness levels. A contradiction was seen in the results of this study and previous research on the effect of qualification on employees' job embeddedness. The current research revealed that higher degree-holder educators have high job embeddedness levels. However, a past study by Tonova and Holtom (2008) proved that qualification does not affect the level of job embeddedness of employees. Why the results are different should be studied further. What are the causes of the difference? Is it due to the effect of culture? A cross-cultural study can be conducted to see the effects of qualification on the job embeddedness of faculty.

**Conclusion**

This is the maiden study in Pakistan's educational setup. It opens many avenues for stakeholders to retain school teachers. It fills the empirical gaps on many dimensions and provides a base for future research. It also provides a base for seeing the effects of different demographics in Pakistani and cross-cultural contexts. Better policies should be presented to improve educators' job embeddedness level.

**Recommendations**

The study presents interesting results and provides guidelines for stakeholders to design policies that favour elementary school educators. It is essential to improve the job embeddedness of female elementary school educators by giving them jobs near their native cities and home stations. It will lessen the challenges and sufferings faced by female elementary school educators. They will be able to balance their work and family life. Moreover, the rationale provided by the study helps us to recommend that educators should be provided with an opportunity to attain higher degrees. It will enhance their job embeddedness. Study leave with pay should be granted to educators if they wish to enhance their qualifications. Attaining a higher degree is directly proportionate to a high job embeddedness level. Cross-cultural studies should be conducted to see the effect of cultural elements on the job embeddedness of educators.

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