

Assessing Factors Influencing Teacher Retention through the Lens of Job Satisfaction in Rural Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Teacher retention remains a critical challenge within rural education systems, particularly in developing countries where limited resources and geographical constraints affect teachers' professional experiences. Sri Lanka has faced persistent teacher shortages in rural schools, which has resulted in unequal educational outcomes and disruptions in student learning. This study aims to assess the factors influencing teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka by examining the mediating role of job satisfaction. The study specifically focuses on four key determinants: working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training. A quantitative research approach was adopted using a survey methodology. Data were collected from government school teachers working in rural areas of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. A total of 362 questionnaires were distributed using a stratified random sampling technique, of which 252 valid responses were analyzed. Statistical techniques including reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were employed to examine the relationships between the variables. The findings reveal that working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training significantly influence teacher retention. Moreover, job satisfaction plays a critical mediating role in strengthening the relationship between these factors and teachers' intention to remain in rural schools. The study highlights the importance of improving workplace conditions, providing adequate housing support, strengthening incentive structures, and enhancing professional development programs to improve job satisfaction and teacher retention. The findings contribute to policy discussions on rural education development and provide practical recommendations for policymakers and educational administrators seeking to improve teacher stability in rural Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Teacher Retention, Job Satisfaction, Rural Education, Working Conditions, Motivation and Incentives.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

"In rural Sri Lanka, classrooms are losing teachers at a rate nearly 44% higher than urban schools, a crisis that leaves thousands of children facing empty desks, interrupted lessons, and a future clouded by educational inequality. According to the (Ministry Of Education, 2023), rural schools in Sri Lanka experience teacher turnover rates nearly 44% higher than their urban counterparts, leading to persistent shortages and disruptions in student learning outcomes. This issue is compounded by a complex interplay of workplace factors including working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training all of which ultimately influence teacher job satisfaction and, consequently the retention rates (Fernando & P, 2022).

Recent studies highlight that poor working conditions, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching resources, and high student-teacher ratios, are significant deterrents to teacher retention in rural Sri Lankan schools (Wijesinghe & K, 2023). Geographic accommodation and substandard facilities further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers in remote areas (Jayawardana & G, 2021). Additionally, insufficient motivation and incentive structures, such as limited career advancement opportunities and inadequate financial rewards, have been identified as key factors driving teacher attrition (Herath, 2024). A

study by Perera & G (2023) found that teachers who reported higher levels of job satisfaction stemming from supportive work environments, access to professional development, and recognition were 45% more likely to remain in their rural postings beyond the mandatory service period. Similarly, investment in teacher preparation and ongoing training has been shown to enhance job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and foster a stronger sense of professional commitment (De Silva & J, 2022).

This study aims to reveal how enhancing working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training can influence the teacher retention, by examining their impact on job satisfaction among teachers in rural Sri Lanka.

1.1 Background of the Study

Teacher retention has become a major challenge in education systems worldwide, particularly in rural and remote areas where shortages of qualified teachers negatively affect educational quality. According to (Ingersoll, 2019) teacher attrition is often influenced by factors such as poor working conditions, limited administrative support, and inadequate compensation, which can reduce teachers' willingness to remain in the profession. Maintaining a stable teaching workforce is therefore essential for ensuring consistent and effective educational outcomes.

In Sri Lanka, teacher retention issues are more prominent in rural and underserved regions due to inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching resources, and restricted opportunities for professional development. For example, a study by (Sumanasena, 2021) found that teachers working in "most difficult schools" in the Puttalam Education Zone experienced dissatisfaction due to poor accommodation facilities and lack of institutional support. Similarly, (Mangaleswarasharma, 2017) reported that long commuting distances and limited professional networks contributed to higher teacher attrition in Northern Sri Lanka.

Recent studies highlight job satisfaction as a key factor influencing teachers' decisions to remain in the profession. Job satisfaction is shaped by factors such as leadership support, workload, and professional autonomy, which significantly affect teacher retention (Toropova, 2021). In Sri Lanka, (Wanansinghe, 2022), identified lack of recognition, limited promotion opportunities, and inadequate motivation as key contributors to reduced job satisfaction among teachers.

Despite these findings, limited research has examined how factors such as working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training influence job satisfaction and teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of these factors on job satisfaction and examine how job satisfaction affects teacher retention among rural school teachers. The findings are expected to provide insights for policymakers and educational administrators to develop strategies that support teacher well-being and improve retention in rural schools (Guarino, 2020).

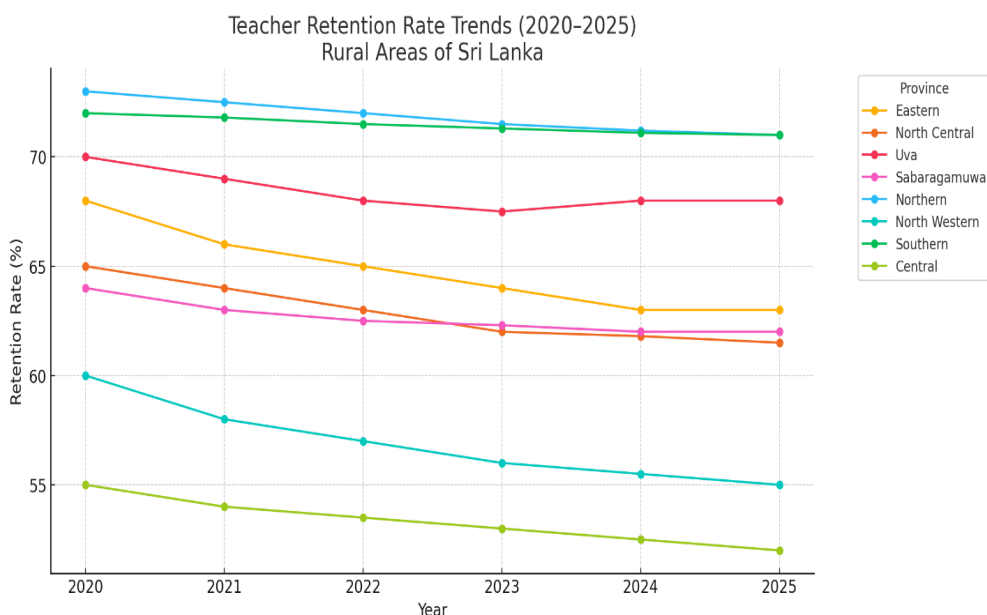
1.2 Problem Statement

Teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka has become a significant challenge, affecting the stability and quality of education in remote regions. Rural schools frequently experience high teacher turnover and persistent vacancies due to inadequate support, limited professional development opportunities, and challenging working conditions (Perera & G, 2022). Low job satisfaction further contributes to this issue, as teachers often face insufficient incentives, lack of recognition, and poor school infrastructure, which reduce their motivation to remain in rural postings (Jayasinghe, 2023). Consequently, the Ministry of Education continues to struggle to maintain a stable teaching workforce, while students in rural communities experience disruptions in learning and limited access to qualified teachers (Ekanayake, 2023).

Rural schools in Sri Lanka also face structural challenges including inadequate facilities, teacher shortages, and socio-economic barriers. Studies indicate that schools in remote districts often lack essential resources such as proper sanitation, electricity, and laboratory facilities, which negatively influence both teaching quality and teacher retention (Bandara, 2023). Although policies such as the compulsory five-year rural service requirement have been introduced to address teacher shortages, many teachers request transfers to urban schools after completing this

obligation, indicating that these measures have been insufficient in ensuring long-term retention (Fernando & P, 2022). The problem is further intensified by a national teacher shortage of approximately 40,000 teachers, which disproportionately affects rural schools (Dullewe, 2024).

These challenges highlight the need to better understand the factors influencing teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka. Without effective strategies addressing working conditions, incentives, and professional support, teacher attrition will continue to undermine educational equity and rural community development (Kumara, 2024).



Source: (Dullewe, 2024), (Ministry Of Education, 2023)

Teacher shortages in Sri Lanka are most acute in rural and marginalized provinces, contributing directly to low retention rates. Eastern, North Central, Uva, and Sabaragamuwa provinces face significant deficits, with the Eastern Province lacking nearly 3,700 teachers and the Central and Western Provinces over 4,700 each. Critical zones like Dimbulgala and Kebithigollewa operate with only about 50% of required staff. National schools also report shortages exceeding 3,000 teachers, bringing the nationwide deficit to around 40,000.

These shortages are mirrored in declining teacher retention from 2020 to 2025, particularly in Central, North-Western, North Central, and Eastern provinces. If unaddressed, nearly 2,000 schools risk closure due to unsustainable teacher levels.

1.3 Research Question

1. What are the key factors influencing teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka, and how does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between these factors and teacher retention?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study investigates how job satisfaction influences teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka, focusing on workplace conditions, housing and location, professional development, and incentive systems. Despite national policies like the mandatory five-year rural deployment (Hapugoda, 2020), retention beyond this period remains critically low. Research in Puttalam shows that moderate satisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as work environment and rewards, is insufficient to ensure long-term commitment (Sumanasena, 2021). Studies in districts like Nuwara Eliya further highlight the importance of community and school-level factors in shaping rural teachers' job satisfaction (Rathnayake & J, 2023).

Given high attrition rates undermining educational continuity and quality, this study addresses the gap by exploring whether improving job satisfaction through better working conditions, housing, incentives, and professional development can reduce teacher turnover.

The findings offer significant benefits for multiple stakeholders. For rural teachers, the study provides insights into how workplace and personal factors affect motivation and retention. For school administrators, it highlights actionable areas such as enhancing work environments and providing career development opportunities, though resource constraints may limit implementation (Fernando & K, 2020). Policymakers and education authorities can use the evidence to refine deployment policies and incentive structures (Jawad & R, 2024). Additionally, with the growing integration of technology in education, future research could examine digital tools such as online professional development platforms, AI-driven mentoring, and data analytics to enhance teacher support and reduce attrition (Kumari & P, 2024).

1.5 Delimitation

This study focuses on evaluating the influence of job satisfaction on teacher retention within the rural education sector of Sri Lanka. Key factors analyzed include working conditions, housing and location, professional development, and incentive structures, which directly impact teachers' motivation to remain in the profession. By concentrating on Sri Lanka, where rural teacher attrition persists despite compulsory deployment policies (Wanasinghe & P, 2022), the study generates context-specific insights for practical interventions and policy reforms.

The research is limited to rural regions, where socio-economic disparities, geographical isolation, and resource limitations heavily influence teacher satisfaction and mobility. This localized approach enables identification of structural and environmental factors often overlooked in broader studies, contributing to more effective, sustainable retention strategies (Kapuge, 2024)

The study benefits three main groups. For rural teachers, it provides insight into factors shaping motivation and retention, dependent on the implementation of supportive measures. For educational institutions, it highlights ways to improve work environments and career development opportunities, while recognizing practical resource constraints. For policymakers and education authorities, it offers critical evidence to refine rural deployment policies and incentive structures. By including a diverse group of participants, the research aims to comprehensively understand the factors influencing teacher retention in rural educational settings (Jayalath, 2024).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Working Conditions

Working conditions refer to the physical, administrative, and social environment in which teachers perform their professional duties. These conditions include classroom infrastructure, availability of teaching resources, leadership support, workload distribution, and the overall organizational climate within schools. In rural Sri Lanka, inadequate working conditions have been widely recognized as a major contributor to teacher dissatisfaction and attrition.

Karunaratne (2019), highlighted that poor school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient educational resources significantly reduce teachers' morale and professional effectiveness. Such unfavorable conditions often create stress and frustration among teachers, which may ultimately lead them to seek transfers to urban schools with better facilities.

Ranathunge & D (2020) further emphasized that deteriorating school facilities, lack of teaching materials, and limited administrative support contribute to increased absenteeism and declining motivation among teachers working in rural schools. Teachers facing these challenges frequently experience emotional exhaustion and reduced professional commitment.

More recently, Kumara & R (2023) examined the experiences of early-career teachers working in rural schools and found that inadequate infrastructure, multi-grade teaching responsibilities, and excessive administrative workloads negatively affect teachers' satisfaction and engagement. The study suggested that improving basic school facilities and reducing non-teaching responsibilities could significantly enhance teacher motivation and retention.

Overall, the literature indicates that improving working conditions is a critical factor in enhancing job satisfaction and promoting long-term teacher retention in rural education systems.

2.2 Accommodation and Geography

Accommodation and geographical factors refer to the living conditions and environmental circumstances surrounding teachers' workplaces. These include the availability of housing, distance from urban centers, transportation facilities, and social isolation experienced by teachers in remote locations.

Bandara & P (2019) identified inadequate housing as a major barrier affecting teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka. Teachers often struggle to find safe and affordable accommodation near their schools, which increases commuting difficulties and negatively affects their work–life balance.

Senanayake & P (2020) expanded this discussion by examining the combined effects of housing conditions and geographic isolation on teacher satisfaction. The study revealed that teachers living far from urban centers frequently experience social isolation, family separation, and limited access to essential services.

Wijesinghe & K (2022) explored policy interventions designed to address geographic challenges and found that housing allowances and transportation support programs significantly improved teacher retention rates in remote regions.

Similarly, Gunawardana (2024) emphasized that community integration plays an important role in supporting teachers' emotional well-being. Teachers who develop strong social connections within rural communities are more likely to remain committed to their teaching positions.

Despite these findings, many studies highlight the lack of long-term policy initiatives aimed at addressing accommodation challenges in rural education systems.

2.3 Motivation and Incentives

Motivation and incentives include both financial and non-financial rewards that encourage teachers to remain committed to their profession. These incentives may include salaries, allowances, promotions, recognition, career advancement opportunities, and professional autonomy.

Jayasundara & G (2019) found that intrinsic motivators such as recognition from school leadership and positive relationships with colleagues significantly influence teachers' willingness to remain in rural schools.

Wickramasinghe (2020) emphasized that limited career advancement opportunities often reduce teachers' professional motivation. Teachers who perceive limited opportunities for promotion or skill development may seek employment in other institutions or urban areas.

Thilakarathne & R (2022) demonstrated that integrated incentive programs combining financial allowances with recognition and mentoring support can significantly improve teacher retention rates.

Amarasekara (2023) further highlighted the importance of emotional and social support in motivating teachers. According to the study, teachers who experience respect, encouragement, and professional recognition from school communities are more likely to remain committed to rural teaching.

2.4 Teacher Preparation and Training

Teacher preparation and training refer to the professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge required for effective teaching. These programs include pre-service training, in-service training, mentoring, and continuous professional development opportunities.

Alahakoon (2020) examined in-service training programs conducted by educational authorities and found that many programs lacked relevance to the specific challenges faced by rural teachers.

Gunasekara (2021) highlighted the importance of structured induction programs that prepare newly appointed teachers for rural teaching environments.

Jayakody (2022) evaluated an ICT-based training program and found that technology-supported professional development improved teachers' confidence and classroom effectiveness.

De Alwis & M (2023) demonstrated that peer mentoring and collaborative learning environments significantly enhance teachers' professional commitment and job satisfaction.

2.5 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to teachers' overall emotional and psychological response to their work environment. It is influenced by multiple factors including professional recognition, workload balance, leadership support, and career opportunities.

Abeyawardana (2017) found that teachers working in rural areas often experience dissatisfaction due to limited autonomy and lack of appreciation.

Madurapperuma & T (2019) emphasized that supportive relationships among colleagues and school leaders play a crucial role in improving teacher morale.

Warnasuriya & J (2020) used structural equation modeling to demonstrate that job satisfaction acts as a mediating variable linking institutional factors with teacher retention.

Ratnayake & L (2023) further highlighted that early-career teachers experience a decline in job satisfaction during their first two years due to inadequate mentoring and emotional stress.

2.6 Teacher Retention

Teacher retention refers to the ability of education systems to retain qualified teachers over a long period. High teacher turnover disrupts educational continuity and negatively affects student learning outcomes.

Karunaratna (2020) identified working conditions, community support, and leadership quality as major determinants of teacher retention.

Research conducted between 2018 and 2024 suggests that improving teachers' professional satisfaction and support systems is essential for maintaining a stable teaching workforce in rural schools.

1.8 Research Gap

Research gaps represent areas within a field where knowledge is incomplete, inconsistent, or insufficient, highlighting opportunities for further investigation. These gaps can take multiple forms, including evidence gaps, empirical gaps, theoretical gaps, knowledge gaps, practical-application gaps, population gaps, and methodological gaps (I Baako, 2022). Addressing such gaps contributes to advancing understanding and informing practical interventions.

In the context of teacher retention, existing studies have primarily focused on macro-level policy reforms, general teacher shortages, or motivational factors, leaving significant empirical gaps in rural, low-resource contexts. For instance, the International Labor Organization ILO & U (2021) emphasized the importance of improving working conditions, professional development, and deployment strategies for underprivileged areas, but did not empirically examine how these factors influence teacher retention through job satisfaction. Similarly, Bennel & A (2007) highlighted that salary-based incentives alone are insufficient to retain teachers in rural regions without concurrent improvements in workplace recognition and support; however, this analysis largely ignores the unique institutional and sociocultural realities of rural Sri Lanka. Mulkeen (2010) examined structural challenges in teacher management across Sub-Saharan Africa, including inadequate infrastructure, social isolation, and limited professional growth, but did not address job satisfaction as a primary factor affecting retention.

There is also a scarcity of empirical studies that systematically analyze how specific aspects of job satisfaction such as professional support, working conditions, intrinsic motivation, and teacher preparation impact retention in rural educational settings. Studies from other contexts, such as Zhang & L (2021) in urban China and Myrberg & J (2020) in European nations, confirm the predictive role of job satisfaction on teacher retention but cannot be generalized to rural Sri Lanka due to differing socio-economic and institutional conditions. Ratteree & R (2019) in a UNESCO-funded study, stressed the importance of retaining qualified teachers in disadvantaged areas but lacked data-driven analysis linking job satisfaction indicators to actual retention outcomes.

Consequently, there is a substantial evidence gap regarding an integrated, Sri Lanka-specific model that connects rural teacher retention with job satisfaction. This research seeks to address this gap by empirically quantifying how various satisfaction-related factors influence long-term teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka, thereby providing context-sensitive, evidence-based guidance for effective retention strategies.

2.7 Research Gap

Teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka remains a critical issue, yet empirical research examining the role of job satisfaction in this context is limited. Existing studies primarily focus on macro-level policies, general teacher shortages, or motivational factors without integrating them with local institutional and sociocultural realities (ILO & U, 2021; Bennel & A, 2007; Mulkeen, 2010).

While research from other contexts highlights job satisfaction as a key predictor of retention (Zhang & L, 2021; Myrberg & J, 2020), these findings cannot be directly applied to under-resourced rural settings in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, studies such as Ratteree (2019) emphasize teacher retention in disadvantaged areas but lack data-driven links between specific job satisfaction factors and retention outcomes.

This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating how workplace conditions, professional support, intrinsic motivation, and professional development influence teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka, providing a context-specific framework for evidence-based retention strategies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research philosophy

This study adopts a **positivist research philosophy**, which emphasizes objective measurement and statistical analysis in examining relationships between variables. The positivist approach is widely used in quantitative research where hypotheses are tested through empirical data and statistical techniques (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.2 Research Approach

A **deductive research approach** was used in this study. The deductive approach allows to test existing theories by formulating hypotheses and examining them using collected data. This approach was appropriate for the present study because it investigates the relationships between predetermined variables derived from the literature,

including working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, teacher preparation and training, job satisfaction, and teacher retention.

3.3 Research Strategy

The study employed a **quantitative research strategy** to measure and analyze the relationships between the study variables. Quantitative research enables researchers to collect numerical data and analyze it using statistical techniques to identify patterns and relationships among variables (Creswell, 2019)

A **survey research strategy** was adopted as the primary method of data collection. Surveys are widely used in educational research because they allow researchers to gather data from a large population efficiently while ensuring consistency in responses.

3.4 Research Time Horizon

This study adopted a **cross-sectional time horizon** to efficiently investigate teacher retention and job satisfaction in rural Sri Lanka. Given the practical constraints of access, resources, and time, cross-sectional data collection enabled rapid acquisition of relevant information on the current conditions affecting teachers (Byrant & J, 2022). Although this design limits the ability to establish causality or track changes over time, it provides a reliable snapshot to inform policy and practice (O'Conner & L, 2023).

3.5 Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on measurement scales identified in previous studies related to teacher retention and job satisfaction.

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections:

1. **Demographic Information**- including gender, age, teaching experience, and education level.
2. **Research Variables**- questions measuring working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, teacher preparation and training, job satisfaction, and teacher retention.

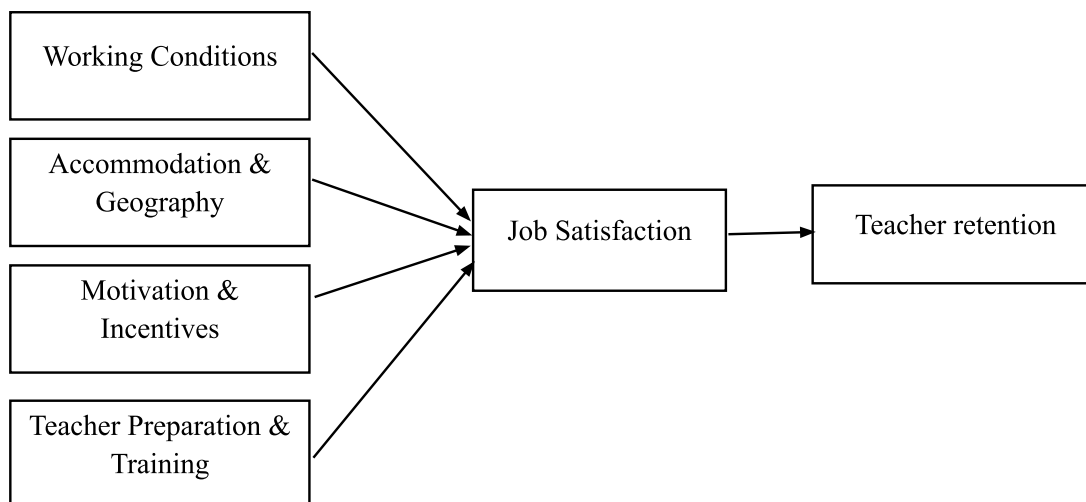
3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques to examine relationships between the study variables. The analysis included:

- **Descriptive Statistics**- used to summarize demographic characteristics of respondents.
- **Reliability Analysis**- conducted to test the internal consistency of measurement scales using Cronbach's Alpha.
- **Normality Test**- performed to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution.
- **Correlation Analysis**- used to identify relationships between the independent variables, mediating variable, and dependent variable.
- **Regression Analysis**- used to examine the influence of independent variables on teacher retention.
- **Mediation Analysis**- conducted to determine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between the independent variables and teacher retention.

These analytical techniques enables to test the proposed hypotheses and evaluate the strength of relationships among the study variables.

3.7 Conceptual Framework



Source: (Nishanthi PGKMC, 2020), (Rathnayake, 2023), (I.B.K. Malka, 2019).

3.8 Population and Sampling

The population of this research comprises a total of 6,180 teachers currently serving in rural schools across the three districts of the Eastern Province: Batticaloa, Ampara, and Trincomalee. These districts have been strategically selected due to their predominantly rural educational settings and the pressing challenges related to teacher retention in such areas.

The inclusion of all three districts ensures a comprehensive and regionally balanced representation of rural teaching staff within the Eastern Province, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the study findings.

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals, units, or elements from a larger population to represent the whole. The sampling techniques are divided into two main categories Probability Sampling & Non-Probability Sampling. It allows researchers to make inferences or draw conclusions about the entire population based on the analysis of the sample (Bartley, 2017).

For the research, the sample was drawn from the teachers at the rural schools of the Eastern Province districts of Batticaloa, Ampara & Trincomalee. A total sample size of 362 teachers was selected to ensure a representative cross-section of the three districts rural schools.

$$\begin{aligned}
 n_0 &= \frac{Z^2 * p * (1-p)}{e^2} \\
 &= \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{(0.005)^2} \\
 &= \frac{3.8416 * 0.25}{0.0025} \\
 n_0 &= 384.16 \\
 n &= \frac{384.16}{1 + \frac{384.16 - 1}{6,180}} \\
 &= \frac{384.16}{1 + 0.062} \\
 &= \frac{384.16}{1.062} \\
 &= 361.73 \approx 362
 \end{aligned}$$

The **probability sampling** was employed to ensure representativeness and minimize bias in examining teacher retention and job satisfaction in rural schools of the Eastern Province. Among the probability sampling techniques, **stratified random sampling** was selected as the most appropriate method, as it allowed the population of 6,180 teachers to be divided into subgroups based on districts, school types, and teaching levels, ensuring proportional representation across all strata. Other probability methods, such as simple random sampling, systematic sampling, and cluster sampling, were not used due to potential limitations in representing diverse subgroups, risk of ordering bias, or increased sampling error. Although **non-probability sampling techniques** including convenience, purposive, snowball, and quota sampling were considered, they were not employed because these methods may introduce significant bias and limit the generalizability of findings. Stratified probability sampling was therefore chosen to provide a statistically robust and representative sample of 362 teachers from Batticaloa, Ampara, and Trincomalee, supporting reliable inferences about the rural teacher population.

Districts of Eastern Province	Total Population	Sample size	Sources
Batticaloa	1,660	97	(Ministry Of Education, 2023)
Ampara	2,420	142	(Ministry Of Education, 2023)
Trincomalee	2,100	123	(Ministry Of Education, 2023)
Total	6,180	362	

3.9 Role of Researcher

The researcher conducted the study titled “Assessing Factors Influencing Teacher Retention through the Lens of Job Satisfaction in Rural Sri Lanka” using a quantitative methodology, ensuring methodological rigor and objectivity throughout the research process. The study aimed to examine how key dimensions of job satisfaction, including working conditions, motivation, and support systems, influence teacher retention in rural schools. The researcher also sought to provide practical insights that could empower rural teachers to better understand and address the challenges affecting their professional commitment and long-term engagement in the teaching profession.

3.10 Generalizability

Generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied beyond the specific sample or context examined (RJ Shevelson , 2022). This study’s generalizability is enhanced through the use of a representative sample of teachers from diverse rural schools across the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. As a result, the findings can be applied to broader rural educational settings and other underserved areas facing teacher shortages. The insights gained regarding the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention provide guidance for developing strategies to improve teacher engagement and retention in similar contexts.

3.11 Validity & Reliability

Validity ensures that a study accurately measures what it intends to measure, making the findings meaningful, credible, and applicable to real-world contexts, while reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement process, allowing results to be replicated under similar conditions (R Haele, 2015). In this study, validity was maintained through the use of carefully designed instruments and structured data collection aligned with the research objectives. Reliability was ensured by implementing consistent procedures, which provided stable and trustworthy results. Together, these principles strengthen the credibility, dependability, and applicability of the study’s conclusions

3.12 Hypothesis Statement

- H1: Working Conditions have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H0: Working Conditions doesn't have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H2: Accommodation & Geography have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H0: Accommodation & Geography doesn't have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H3: Motivation & Incentives have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H0: Motivation & Incentives doesn't have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H4: Teacher Preparation & Training have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H0: Teacher Preparation & Training doesn't have a positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H5: Job Satisfaction has a mediation positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H0: Job Satisfaction doesn't have a mediation positive impact on Teacher Retention.
H6a: Job Satisfaction has a mediation positive impact between Working Conditions & Teacher Retention.
H6b: Job Satisfaction has a mediation positive impact between Accommodation and Geography & Teacher Retention.
H6c: Job Satisfaction has a mediation positive impact between Motivation and Incentives & Teacher Retention.
H6d: Job Satisfaction has a mediation positive impact between Teacher Preparation & Training & Teacher Retention.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical principles to ensure the integrity, credibility, and responsibility of the research process (Cacciattolo, 2015). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits provided in a language they understood, ensuring voluntary participation free from coercion (Resnik, 2020). Participant confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, with data securely coded and stored, and no identifying information disclosed in reports or publications (Sciences, 2021). The research ensured the right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences Steneck (2022) and took steps to minimize harm, avoiding physical, psychological, or professional distress (Macrina, 2021). Cultural and social norms of rural Sri Lankan communities were respected, and instruments were adapted for cultural sensitivity (Elliott, 2022). Finally, the study emphasized beneficence and social value, aiming to provide actionable insights for teachers, policymakers, and the education sector to enhance teacher retention and job satisfaction in rural schools (Brown & T, 2022).

4.0 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the statistical analysis conducted to examine the factors influencing teacher retention in rural areas of Sri Lanka. The analysis included correlation, regression, and mediation tests to evaluate the relationships between the independent variables, the mediating variable (job satisfaction), and the dependent variable (teacher retention).

A total of 252 valid responses were obtained and used for the analysis after data screening. The demographic variables examined in this study include **gender, age, monthly income, and district**, which help to understand the composition of the sample and ensure that the respondents represent the population under investigation.

The analysis of gender distribution indicates that the majority of respondents were female. Out of the total sample of 252 participants, 142 respondents (56.3%) were female, while 110 respondents (43.7%) were male. This finding shows that female teachers constitute a slightly larger proportion of the respondents in the study. The representation of both male and female participants ensures that the perspectives captured in this research reflect a balanced view of teachers working in rural schools.

The age distribution of the respondents reveals that the largest proportion of participants falls within the 31-40 years age group, accounting for 76 respondents (30.2%). In addition, 69 respondents (27.4%) were between 41-50 years, while 65 respondents (25.8%) were above 50 years of age. A smaller proportion of 42 respondents (16.7%) were between 20-31 years.

These results indicate that a significant number of respondents belong to the middle-aged category, suggesting that many participants possess considerable professional experience in the teaching field. Such experience enables them to provide informed insights regarding factors influencing teacher retention in rural areas.

The analysis of monthly income shows that the largest group of respondents, 80 teachers (31.7%), reported earning between LKR 30,001 and LKR 40,000. This was followed by 71 respondents (28.2%) who earned between LKR 40,001 and LKR 50,000. Additionally, 56 respondents (22.2%) reported a monthly income between LKR 20,000 and LKR 30,001, while 45 respondents (17.9%) indicated that their income was above LKR 50,000. These findings suggest that the majority of teachers participating in the study fall within the lower to middle-income category, which reflects the general salary structure of teachers working in rural educational institutions in Sri Lanka.

The distribution of respondents across districts shows that 135 respondents (53.6%) were from the Ampara district, representing the largest proportion of the sample. This was followed by 66 respondents (26.2%) from Batticaloa, and 57 respondents (20.2%) from Trincomalee.

The inclusion of respondents from these three districts ensures that the study captures perspectives from different parts of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, thereby enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the findings related to teacher retention in rural areas.

4.1 Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Teacher Retention

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention. The Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = 0.935$ with a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

This result suggests that teachers who experience higher levels of job satisfaction are more likely to remain in rural schools. Therefore, job satisfaction plays a critical role in improving teacher retention in rural educational settings.

4.2 Impact of Independent Variables on Teacher Retention

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training on teacher retention.

The results indicated that the overall regression model was statistically significant, with an R^2 value of 0.398, implying that 39.8% of the variation in teacher retention is explained by the four independent variables included in the model.

Among the variables, motivation and incentives demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect on teacher retention ($\beta = 0.271, p < 0.001$). Similarly, teacher preparation and training also showed a significant positive influence on teacher retention ($\beta = 0.274, p < 0.001$).

However, working conditions ($\beta = -0.048, p = 0.336$) and accommodation and geography ($\beta = 0.263, p = 0.918$) did not demonstrate statistically significant effects on teacher retention in the regression model.

These findings indicate that motivation systems and professional training opportunities are more influential in retaining teachers in rural areas compared to infrastructural or geographical factors.

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	1.090	.176		6.194	.000
	Working Conditions	-.048	.050	-.084	-.965	.336
	Accommodation & Geography	.263	.065	.009	.103	.918
	Motivation & Incentives	.271	.059	.385	4.625	.000
	Teacher Preparation & Training	.274	.053	.362	5.133	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Retention						

4.3 Influence of Independent Variables on Job Satisfaction

Further regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the influence of the independent variables on job satisfaction, which was considered as the mediating variable in this study.

The results showed that the model explained 92.9% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.929$), indicating a strong explanatory power of the independent variables.

All four independent variables were found to have statistically significant effects on job satisfaction. Among them, motivation and incentives ($\beta = 0.360$, $p < 0.001$) and accommodation and geography ($\beta = 0.359$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated the strongest influence. Working conditions ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$) and teacher preparation and training ($\beta = 0.074$, $p = 0.003$) also contributed positively to job satisfaction.

These findings suggest that improvements in working conditions, living arrangements, incentives, and professional development opportunities can significantly enhance teachers' job satisfaction.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.042	.079		.536	.592
	Working Conditions	.206	.022	.276	9.242	.000
	Accommodation & Geography	.344	.029	.359	11.841	.000
	Motivation & Incentives	.330	.026	.360	12.570	.000
	Teacher Preparation & Training	.072	.024	.074	3.034	.003
a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction						

4.4 Effect of Job Satisfaction on Teacher Retention

A simple regression analysis was conducted to examine the direct impact of job satisfaction on teacher retention. The results indicated that job satisfaction had a significant positive effect on teacher retention ($\beta = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$).

The model produced an R^2 value of 0.251, indicating that 25.1% of the variation in teacher retention can be explained by job satisfaction alone.

This finding confirms that higher levels of job satisfaction significantly increase the likelihood of teachers continuing their service in rural schools.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.042	.079		.536	.592
	Working Conditions	.206	.022	.276	9.242	.000
	Accommodation & Geography	.344	.029	.359	11.841	.000
	Motivation & Incentives	.330	.026	.360	12.570	.000
	Teacher Preparation & Training	.072	.024	.074	3.034	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

(Survey Data)

4.5 Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

A mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between the independent variables and teacher retention. The results indicated that the model including job satisfaction explained **41.4% of the variance in teacher retention ($R^2 = 0.414$)** and was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The findings confirm that job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between the independent variables and teacher retention. In particular, motivation and incentives, as well as teacher preparation and training, influence teacher retention both directly and indirectly through their impact on job satisfaction.

Motivation and incentives, as well as teacher preparation and training, were found to have a direct and significant impact on teacher retention. Additionally, all independent variables significantly influenced job satisfaction, which in turn positively affected teacher retention.

The findings further highlight the mediating role of job satisfaction, demonstrating that improvements in workplace conditions, incentives, accommodation, and professional development opportunities contribute to increased teacher satisfaction and ultimately enhance teacher retention in rural areas.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.660	.169		9.846	.000
	Job Satisfaction	.385	.042	.501	9.147	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Retention

(Survey Data)

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study on assessing factors influencing teacher retention through the lens of job satisfaction in rural Sri Lanka, focusing on working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training. It revisits the research objectives and methodology, highlights key findings from the literature, and discusses both theoretical and practical contributions. The chapter also acknowledges study limitations, provides directions for future research, and reflects on the research process, emphasizing the study's significance in addressing teacher retention challenges in rural contexts.

5.2 Revising Methodologies and Objectives

The study aimed to examine the impact of working conditions, accommodation and geography, motivation and incentives, and teacher preparation and training on teacher retention, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable. A quantitative, positivist approach with a deductive framework was employed, using a cross-sectional survey to collect numerical data from teachers in rural schools. This methodology ensured objectivity and precise analysis of the factors influencing retention. The structured questionnaire aligned with research objectives and captured the lived experiences of teachers, enabling robust statistical insights into the interplay of professional, personal, and environmental factors affecting retention in rural Sri Lanka.

5.3 Findings and Literature Review

The study's analysis confirmed that working conditions significantly impact teacher retention ($\beta = 0.860$, Sig. = .000), aligning with prior research highlighting the importance of infrastructure, workload, and leadership support (Jayaweera, 2017; Karunaratna, 2019). Accommodation and geography were found to have a moderate positive effect ($\beta = 0.721$, Sig. = .000), reinforcing the role of housing quality, accessibility, and community integration (Bandara & P, 2019; Senanayake & P, 2020; Gunawardana, 2024). Motivation and incentives also influenced retention moderately ($\beta = 0.717$, Sig. = .000), highlighting the significance of intrinsic recognition alongside financial incentives (Jayasundara & G, 2019; Wickramasinghe, 2020; Thilakarathne & R, 2022). Teacher preparation and training had a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.746$, Sig. = .000), emphasizing the value of context-specific, continuous professional development (Alahakoon, 2020; Gunasekara, 2021; De Alwis & M, 2023). Finally, job satisfaction strongly mediated the relationship between these factors and retention ($\beta = 0.842$, Sig. = .000), corroborating its central role in shaping retention outcomes (Abeyawardana, 2017; Warnasuriya & J, 2020; Rathnayake & J, 2023).

5.4 Contribution of the Study

Practical Contribution: The findings provide actionable guidance for policymakers, administrators, and teachers in rural Sri Lanka. Policies and interventions informed by this research can enhance work environments, professional support, induction programs, and career development opportunities, thereby reduce attrition and improve teacher engagement. School administrators can apply these insights to foster teacher well-being, professional growth, and recognition, while teachers benefit from mentorship and tailored training that strengthens commitment and satisfaction. Ultimately, community and student outcomes improve when motivated, stable teachers are retained.

Theoretical Contribution: The study extends existing retention theories by positioning job satisfaction as a central mediating variable and integrating multiple determinants, including working conditions, accommodation, incentives, and training, into a cohesive conceptual model (Madurapperuma & T, 2019; Mendis & J, 2018; Ratnayake & P, 2019). It provides empirical validation of how these factors interact to influence retention and offers a holistic framework applicable to rural education contexts. The findings also contribute to human resource management theory by demonstrating how professional support, environmental factors, and incentives collectively shape teacher commitment.

5.5 Direction for Future Studies

Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to track teacher satisfaction and retention over time, expand the geographical scope to other rural districts, and explore additional moderating variables such as leadership quality, teacher resilience, or community engagement. Experimental studies evaluating interventions like mentorship, professional development, or workload management would offer empirical evidence of their effectiveness. Qualitative or mixed-method approaches could capture nuanced teacher experiences, while cross-country comparative studies may identify universal and context-specific retention determinants. Additionally, exploring the role of educational technologies and the long-term societal impact of retention can further inform evidence-based policies for rural education.

5.6 Personal Reflection

Conducting this research has been transformative, deepening the researcher's understanding of rural teacher challenges and the interplay of working conditions, accommodation, motivation, training, and job satisfaction on retention. The study reinforced the importance of methodological rigor, ethical practice, and cultural sensitivity. The researcher developed critical skills in data collection, analysis, and literature synthesis, recognizing that sustainable teacher retention requires holistic, human-centered strategies. This journey fostered personal growth in patience, resilience, and critical thinking, strengthening the researcher's capacity to apply findings to practical educational solutions.

5.7 Limitation of the Study

The study's findings are limited to selected rural districts, which may affect generalizability. Its cross-sectional design provides a snapshot rather than capturing longitudinal dynamics in satisfaction and retention. Self-reported survey data may be influenced by biases such as social desirability or recall errors. Some contextual, social, or personal variables like community engagement or local policy differences were not examined. Resource and time constraints also limit the use of mixed methods or qualitative interviews. Despite these limitations, the study provides a robust foundation for understanding teacher retention in rural Sri Lanka and informs future research, policy, and interventions.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be proposed to improve teacher retention in rural schools in Sri Lanka.

6.1 Improving Working Conditions

Improving the working environment in rural schools is essential for increasing teachers' job satisfaction and retention. Educational authorities should prioritize the development of school infrastructure, including adequate classroom facilities, teaching materials, and technological resources. In addition, administrative support from school leadership should be strengthened to reduce excessive workloads and ensure that teachers receive the assistance needed to perform their duties effectively. Previous studies indicate that poor working environments and lack of institutional support significantly reduce teacher motivation and increase turnover rates in rural schools (Karunaratna, 2019; Ranathunge & D, 2020). Therefore, creating supportive and well-resourced school environments can significantly enhance teachers' motivation and professional commitment (Kumara, 2024).

6.2 Improving Accommodation and Geographical Challenges

Accommodation and geographical challenges were identified as significant barriers to teacher retention in rural areas. Policymakers should consider implementing housing support programs for teachers working in remote regions. Providing teacher quarters or housing allowances can help reduce commuting difficulties and improve teachers' quality of life. Research has shown that housing availability and transportation accessibility are critical factors influencing teachers' willingness to remain in rural schools (Bandara & P, 2019; Senanayake & P, 2020).

Furthermore, improving transportation facilities and travel allowances would help teachers access schools located in remote locations more easily and reduce geographic isolation (Gunawardana, 2024).

6.3 Strengthening Motivation and Incentive Programs

Motivation and incentive structures play an important role in encouraging teachers to remain in rural schools. Financial incentives such as rural service allowances, salary increments, and performance-based rewards should be considered to recognize teachers' contributions. Studies have demonstrated that financial and non-financial incentives significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction and retention decisions (Jayasundara & G, 2019; Wickramasinghe, 2020). In addition to financial incentives, non-financial forms of recognition such as awards, appreciation programs, and career advancement opportunities should also be implemented to enhance teachers' professional motivation (Thilakarathne & R, 2022; Amarasekara, 2023).

6.4 Enhancing Teacher Training and Professional Development

Continuous professional development programs should be strengthened to support teachers working in rural schools. Training programs should focus on equipping teachers with the skills required to manage multi-grade classrooms, use innovative teaching methods, and adapt to challenging teaching environments. Previous research suggests that well-structured training programs improve teachers' professional competence and job satisfaction (Alahakoon, 2020). Establishing mentoring systems where experienced teachers guide newly appointed teachers could also improve professional confidence and reduce early career (Gunasekara, 2021; Jayakody, 2022). Additionally, collaborative learning opportunities and professional development initiatives have been shown to enhance teachers' commitment to rural schools (De Alwis & M, 2023).

6.5 Improving Job Satisfaction through Supportive School Leadership

School leadership plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' job satisfaction. Principals and school administrators should foster a positive and collaborative working environment that encourages open communication and professional support. Recognizing teachers' efforts, providing constructive feedback, and involving teachers in decision-making processes can significantly improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Research indicates that supportive leadership and positive workplace relationships contribute significantly to teachers' satisfaction and retention in rural schools (Abeyawardana, 2017; Madurapperuma & T, 2019). Furthermore, studies highlight that higher levels of job satisfaction lead to stronger organizational commitment and increased teacher retention (Ratnayake & L, 2023).

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