

Underpaid and overworked: The challenges of private schools' teachers in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: It is therefore necessary to evaluate the challenges that private school instructors encounter as a result of heavy workload and low salary.

Research methodology: The research is a cross-sectional survey, descriptive in nature. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the selected sample using a multi-stage sampling technique. Simple frequency and percentages were employed to describe the data.

Results: Pay and working conditions offered to private school teachers do not reflect their abilities. Teachers in private education experience accumulation by dispossession as a result of the privatization of educational systems and frequently lack long-term job security. The findings reveal that the workload is excessive compared to remuneration, with limited benefits and minimal professional growth opportunities.

Conclusions: The study concludes that the disparity between teachers' efforts and rewards contributes to dissatisfaction and instability in the private education sector. These conditions may undermine the quality of teaching and long-term sustainability of the profession.

Limitations: The paper only describes the experiences of private school teachers and therefore could not ascertain the degree of relationship between challenges faced by private teachers in working under conditions of being underpaid and overworked.

Contribution: The study will be useful in understanding factors underlying the working conditions of private school teachers. It contributes to knowledge in the fields of industrial relations, human resources management, and the education industry, offering valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders to improve teacher welfare and retention.

Keywords: *Challenges, Overworked, Private Schools, Teachers, Underpaid*

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1. Introduction

Private secondary schools have proliferated in Nigeria over the last few decades due to the poor quality of instruction in public schools, the length of the school year in public schools, incessant strikes, and poor and inadequate infrastructure (Olagbende, 2022). Consequently, many private secondary schools have developed to offer a superior education as a substitute. Even if attending private schools to complete students' secondary education is more expensive, parents would think that the increased price

would translate into better education and working conditions for the staff members at these institutions (Olagbende, 2022).

The private sector in Nigeria has steadily absorbed elementary and secondary education industry subsectors. The number of privately owned pre-primary, primary, and post-primary educational institutions has increased significantly throughout the nation, with enrollment levels far surpassing those of public schools in most of the South-West, South-East, and South-South regions. However, these private schools also have certain fundamental difficulties, which typically include the following: inadequate funding, a dearth of physical facilities, and inadequate compensation for their staff (Anukaenyi, Modebelu, & Mama, 2018).

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, private school teachers were severely impacted by their employers' incapacity to continue paying their salaries, which ultimately resulted in famine and the destruction of several houses. Teachers felt particularly abandoned by their employers because of their inability to support their families, which forced them to think creatively and look for other ways to survive. Without a doubt, teachers' perceptions of the fundamentals of work and education are impacted by negligence. If educators want to thrive in classrooms in the twenty-first century, they must have the proper mindset or viewpoint on education (Olujuwon, Bamiro, Akudo, & Anagun, 2021).

Ultimately, many educators decided to stop in-person instruction. As a result, after the lockdown was lifted, Nigeria's private schools began to face teacher shortages. Globally, schools are often faced with the problem of teacher attrition (Gallant & Riley, 2017). Given that the teacher attrition rate in Sub-Saharan Africa ranges from 3% to 10%, this has impacted teacher turnover (Kasau, Kaloki, Kitoo, Mutinda, & Kalai, 2016). It is pitiful that 20% to 50% of new teachers quit within the first five years of starting their careers (Elyashiv, 2019). Like many governments worldwide, the Nigerian federal government believes that education is a powerful weapon in the fight against poverty and crime (Adewale, Adebayo, & Afolabi, 2023). Unfortunately, eradicating poverty and criminality is becoming more difficult due to the attrition of male teachers. Teacher attrition is the intentional choice of teachers to quit the teaching profession for other, more profitable occupations, among other reasons.

In Nigeria, education is offered by both public and private institutions. As Härmä (2013b) accurately points out, more parents from both high and low socioeconomic strata are sending their children to private schools, making private schools a major source of education in Nigeria. Numerous studies indicate that parents' preference for private schools appears to be a reaction to their children's poor results on public assessments at the senior school certificate level (Härmä, 2013a). The results show that students in private schools routinely outperform those in public schools because parents believe that private school teachers are more dedicated to their work than their public school counterparts. This suggests that teachers in private schools are more pressured to work than their public school counterparts. When they receive lower pay than their colleagues with the same qualifications, and when their contributions do not match their compensation and welfare, private school teachers will wish to quit (Benon, Barigye, & Bahati, 2024). Adamu (2015) asserts that low academic attainment among Nigerian students is caused by the public's negative perception of educators generally and teachers' lack of motivation as a result of insufficient welfare benefits. Thus, this study assesses the challenges that private school instructors encounter as a result of heavy workloads and low salaries.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the number of private schools has increased due to the perception of public schools' shortcomings. However, teachers working in these private schools are generally underpaid, unmotivated, and dependent on other income sources to cover their daily expenses. Unlike now, when teachers' involvement is mainly driven by incentives, in the past, they were instructed to await their reward in paradise. Private school teachers cannot be happy in their jobs without sufficient pay and improved working circumstances, resulting in tardiness, absenteeism, and subpar instruction quality. This means that private school teachers frequently switch schools without considering the effects on students if they perceive unfair treatment at their current workplace. Without considering the effects on instruction, student achievement, and learning, these teachers regularly change schools before the

school year ends in search of better opportunities elsewhere. They remain in schools where they believe they are treated fairly (Omotayo, Ojo, & Aliyu, 2024). Furthermore, many teachers are leaving the teaching profession, and inexperienced and unskilled educators are filling the gaps left behind.

According to current evidence, many talented and competent teachers in Nigeria quit their jobs after only a few years of work; this means private school teachers regularly leave the schools they work in due to poor working conditions (Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Nevertheless, this frequent change of schools has never been good for the children or the consistency of the programme. Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap in examining the challenges encountered by private school teachers, such as low pay and poor working conditions. Consequently, two research questions were set to guide this study:

- 1) Is there a relationship between staff salaries and the challenges faced by private school teachers?
- 2) Can working conditions be a challenge for private school teachers?

2. Literature review

2.1. Concept of Private School

In education, private schools have a rich legacy that varies significantly across nations and areas. According to Srivastava (2013), private schools, often called independent or non-governmental schools, are educational establishments funded and run by the private sector (Srivastava, 2013). Unlike their public school colleagues, these institutions depend on funding from donations, endowments, and tuition. To further this perspective, private schools are any formal educational institutions that are not part of the public system and may be established, owned, run, and funded by entities other than the government (Abubakar, 2024).

This term highlights the independence of private schools from government support, underscoring their autonomy. Therefore, unlike public schools, private schools are autonomous educational establishments that are privately financed and run. Srivastava (2013) pointed out that these institutions depend on private financing sources, emphasizing the complexity of these organizations. This scholarly investigation offers a basis for comprehending the complex features of private schools and their position within a larger educational system (Abubakar, 2024).

The quality of the school and its accessibility, depending on its proximity to the parents' house, are important factors in their decision to send their children to a private school. Providing education is the main goal of both public and private institutions in India. However, there is huge business potential in starting private schools, which causes unwholesome private schools to proliferate and require more staff and infrastructure. Since several studies have shown that pupils attending private schools obtain more remarkable academic results than those attending public schools, the comparison of the quality of private and public schools is no longer up for debate (Härmä, 2013b). According to Ehigiamusoe (2012), private schools that cater to low-income students' needs continue to do better than the majority of public schools.

Tooley and Dixon (2005) discovered that students attending private schools perform better in math and other pertinent scientific disciplines than their public school counterparts. This also demonstrates that private schools continue to have a slight edge over public schools, irrespective of their classification. The rise of private schools has helped to alleviate the issue of overcrowded classrooms, which is frequently associated with public schools, as seen by the drop in public schools enrollment (Abdul-Hamid, Baum, Lusk-Stover, & Wesley, 2017).

The occasional growth of private schools, particularly in elementary and secondary education, serves as a global indicator of severe issues that the public educational system cannot address. Greater public schools are needed to meet the demand for education in both developed and emerging nations, which has put a greater strain on the current system. Private school establishments developed in response to these expanding demands and the need for high-quality education. Except for a small number of schools, the majority of private schools lack funding for hiring skilled teachers and the development of instructional and infrastructure facilities (Ugwulashi, 2012). The few private schools in Nigeria that

have this distinction are either owned by missions, corporations, or affluent individuals. Although a greater percentage of these private schools are obviously poorly run, they have significantly contributed to the ongoing need for education. Even with the quality of personnel and the available infrastructure and educational facilities, they maintained high standards and took disciplinary actions. They made an effort to uphold standards since several eminent academics attended these sporadic private schools spread across the globe (Ugwulashi, 2012).

Due procedure was necessary for the creation of private schools in the state. There is a valid belief that schools, particularly private ones, must fulfill the specified conditions prior to their establishment (Igwe, 1999). Numerous factors, such as the dedication of teachers, the high level of discipline between teachers and students, early child training opportunities, good physical facilities, instruction, and the use of appropriate media, have been found to influence parents' support of private schools. For these reasons, expensive tuition was not a disincentive for parents (A. O. Onuka & Arowojolu, 2008). The fact that private education is accepted shows how seriously the study's conclusions are taken, which is now evident. Even if they fall inside the constitutional rights of freedom of property ownership, the establishment of private schools must be regulated despite these and other arguments presented in various books today. However, the so-called established school will be able to offer inmates the academic content required for intellectual development for national development without discrimination, as long as it offers and promotes educational accessibility for everyone, which is crucial regardless of location. The creation of private schools has undoubtedly assisted in resolving the many issues with public school mapping that lead to geographical inequities (Ugwulashi, 2012).

In essence, unequal interests in political decision-making and its effects on education worldwide are the reasons for educational differences across tribes, states, regions, and/or geographical clusters. Since school mapping has become a technique for gaining political support and influence in most developing nations, it is often politically motivated. Another aspect is demography, which has resulted in certain locations being overcrowded with basic facilities that draw creative workers, such as metropolitan areas, whereas rural and semi-rural areas remain underdeveloped. Importantly, A. O. Onuka and Arowojolu (2008) identified seventeen characteristics that influence parents' choice of private schools, including: (i) Ways to properly raise a child (ii) Inquisitiveness is taught (iii) Educational activities are available (iv) Future educational standards are secured (v) Children develop more ethically, socially, and academically; (vi) Home-school transitions are smooth; (vii) Children establish values and social norms; (viii) Attractive uniforms (ix) Kids are more well-behaved (x) There is a chance to be accepted into the best secondary school (xi); qualified teachers (xii); workbooks are reviewed; each student is given attention (xiii); learning is promoted in the classroom (xiv); the immediate surroundings are made appealing (xv); there is no teacher shortage (xvi); there is no strike (xvii). Since public school activities have grown so gloomy that many people feel they are no longer appropriate learning environments, these factors favor the establishment of private schools (Ugwulashi, 2012).

2.2. Private Schools and Educational Development

Even tiny towns now have easier access to high-quality education, something that public schools in the area cannot guarantee, thanks to the establishment of private schools. This trend has commodified education to the point that even the lowest classes compete with the middle classes and the middle classes compete with the higher classes over which schools to send their kids to. Regardless of the size of private schools, they have significantly improved the system and reduced the gap by standardizing educational outcomes that public schools were unable to provide the country as a whole due to the decline in education management. Because of these benefits that come with the private school system, parents in Nigeria can now afford private education despite its high cost.

Despite the high cost of most private schools, many parents greatly value this effort because it sets standards in light of the chaotic circumstances that public schools endure, namely at the elementary and secondary levels. Criticism of public education's future has arisen as a result of its declining condition. The greatest teachers are found in the majority of public schools, but their position in society causes them to lose their excitement to teach. Additionally, the organization's performance is impacted because

there are no finances and cannot effectively create cash for its administration, making it very difficult to satisfy school needs (Ugwulashi, 2012).

Funding, which was essential before private schools were established, is one problem that compromises the effective operation of public schools. Unlike public schools, which depend on government support in the face of a struggling economy, private schools are fully funded by private sources. After examining the costs of private education, A. O. Onuka and Arowojolu (2008) made the case that the government should support nonprofits to stop the profit-driven craze in the subsector. Furthermore, most investors in the education industry are more interested in the net present value of the return on investment. The cost of private education must be covered to give society the opportunity to benefit from lifelong learning.

2.3. Salary disparities between private and public school teachers

To guarantee that all teachers receive equitable compensation that equips them to comprehend the requirements of society, think critically, and engage in democracy, several scholars have argued that significant reform is required to address the level of salary gap (Benon et al., 2024). However, many of the recommended methods propose essentialist paradigms that only transfer conventional value structures. Structural and causative reasons that prevent teachers from working together to improve their efficacy have not been adequately addressed by reforms. One factor influencing the intention to leave is staff pay, which is essential for rewarding and retaining top-performing teachers (Ekabu, 2019). According to A. Onuka and Ajayi (2012), staff salary directly affects turnover intention as a moderating variable that affects secondary school teachers' job satisfaction and efficacy, and pay is a powerful predictor of job satisfaction. Benon et al. (2024) assert that teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and teamwork are encouraged by equitable remuneration. One of the things that employers and educators need to agree on in order to guarantee employee loyalty, dedication, and retention is compensation satisfaction (Regin, Rajest, Shynu, & Steffi, 2023). Staff members who are happy and dedicated rarely leave secondary schools.

Poor teamwork may result from an unfair and discriminatory pay structure. Poor teacher performance in secondary schools can also result from inadequate evaluations and the giving of increased remuneration to new hires at the expense of current employees. If secondary school teachers are not paid equally for their labor, they may quit. Therefore, when teachers are dissatisfied with their unequal pay, they are less likely to work well in teams, which can result in discontent and lower performance (Mwosi, Eton, Olupot, & Ogwel, 2024). In the discourse surrounding academics and politics, the role of teachers in improving educational outcomes is widely recognized (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). Additionally, researchers have demonstrated that teacher turnover negatively affects American educational systems and student performance (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Collectively, these studies lend credence to the idea that recruiting and retaining the best educators is essential to ensuring long-term and sustainable educational achievement (Chudgar, 2015). Numerous studies have shown that providing teachers with favorable working conditions is essential for attracting and retaining highly skilled and driven individuals in the teaching profession. Therefore, both financial and non-financial factors frequently affect decisions regarding hiring and retaining teachers (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Understanding the working conditions of educators in the private sector is crucial, especially as the number of instructors working in this sector continues to rise. As the private education sector continues to grow, private schools employ teachers worldwide (UNESCO, 2021).

Most studies concur that instructors in the Global South receive lower salaries from commercial providers than they do from the public sector (Crawford & Pugatch, 2021). However, there is a lack of information regarding the working conditions of private school instructors in low- and middle-income countries compared to those of government teachers, other than salary comparisons. Chudgar (2015) revealed that private school teachers had more difficult working conditions than their public school counterparts in terms of collective bargaining, job security, and pay and non-pay benefits. They also reported being less satisfied with their jobs. According to studies on compensation, money is still a significant factor in attracting and retaining the finest applicants for teaching positions, even though it is not the primary or only motivator. This is especially relevant given the waning popularity of teaching

and the circumstances in which instructors may be paid less than those in other professions (Hanushek, 2011). According to Crawford and Pugatch (2021), who examined data from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, the teacher supply curve “slopes upwards,” as a salary function. In several low- and middle-income countries, they also found a positive cross-national correlation between teacher competency and wage premiums. In other words, this indicates that higher salaries are positively correlated with both the number and category of available teachers.

Related research indicates that government contract teachers, who are paid less than regular government instructors and are engaged on a contract basis, are more likely to work in non-teaching occupations to augment their income (Chudgar, 2015). Mugizi, Ogaga Dafiewhare, Manyange, and Kiyundo Zikanga (2020) assert that pay disparities have a major effect on teachers' motivation and performance. The study found that teachers who were paid more performed better and were more motivated than those who were paid less were. Furthermore, disparities in pay among instructors negatively affect their job satisfaction, which in turn affects their performance (Benon et al., 2024). Despite these findings, several studies have suggested that wage disparities may not significantly affect teacher performance.

2.4. Effect of Remuneration on Private School Teachers' Motivation and Job Satisfaction

According to Amah (2006), motivation is a psychological factor that propels, guides, and maintains an individual's efforts toward achieving their goals. It is the cause of a person's actions or specific behaviors. A person's motivation determines the voluntary behavior they may choose to participate in among several options. It also establishes how high a person is prepared to go to accomplish a certain objective. It is evident from the above that without motivation, no one can effectively finish work on time. This is true for organizations as well; without motivated employees, no organization can thrive in the long run. An organization's success depends on a motivated workforce because highly motivated employees strive to produce at the highest level and exert greater effort than employees who are not motivated (Agi & Adiele, 2015).

Therefore, the motivation and work happiness of teachers are crucial for the advancement of education globally, and specifically, in Nigeria. This is in addition to the fact that student enrollment has increased dramatically and education is an essential component of the state's overall development. Given this situation, the researcher is eager to learn more about the connection between job satisfaction and teacher motivation in Nigerian private secondary schools. The development and expansion of educational systems worldwide, and specifically in Nigeria, depend heavily on job satisfaction. According to Amah (2006), “Job satisfaction is a pleasant feeling that arises from the perception that one's job fulfills or allows for the fulfillment of one's important job values,” Amah (2006) It has to do with how teachers, whether they are paid well or badly, feel more content and motivated if they are given the proper support, which improves instruction, particularly in private schools.

Extrinsic and intrinsic sources are the two main sources of motivation, which are a two-way street. Intrinsic motivation, also known as internal motivation, is driven by internal factors that encourage individuals to participate in activities for their own benefit. Consequently, internal factors that are independent of the environment are referred to as intrinsic motivators. When someone feels satisfied with what they are doing and is strongly urged to continue doing it for their own fulfillment and personal happiness, that person is intrinsically motivated. Individuals are propelled to act by their internal motivators.

Pandya (2024) defined extrinsic or external motivation as anything produced by external sources. It serves as an incentive to perform an action to achieve a goal. Praise, rewards, and other extrinsic methods are often used to motivate people. This is shown by someone who puts in a lot of effort to advance in the public sector and get a decent wage or pursue a prestigious profession or job in later life. Individuals are drawn toward achieving their objectives through extrinsic motivation or incentives. Whether an individual is motivated internally or externally depends on their personality; some people are readily persuaded and moved to complete a task or find a solution, whereas others are difficult to persuade to take action. Employers find it simpler to inspire workers who are eager to learn, take initiative, have a mastery competency, and a cognitive and self-enhancing drive to achieve.

- **Housing:** Housing is one of a person's fundamental requirements, and it must be met before other demands are readily met. At this point in a person's career, it seems to have a greater impact than any other requirement. This implies that it is critical for school administration to understand how much each Kobo matters to each employee. The heads of schools or other educational administrators may assist in meeting demands by paying enough for staff members to rent or buy homes.
- **Pay:** To meet their necessities, individuals labor primarily for pay, benefits, and bonuses. By paying wages, incentives, and allowances consistently and on time, educational administrators and school heads may encourage their staff to meet their demands.
- **Safety:** Protection against physical danger, job loss, and threats to work security are all part of the demand for safety. A person may want to know, for instance, whether their job is temporary or permanent. Indeed, a person may have a tremendous desire for safety and security. Through the provision of medical facilities, job security, and other benefits, educational administrators may assist in meeting their staff's safety requirements.
- **Joy:** This is the craving for success, accomplishment, self-respect, and acknowledgment. The person wants their coworkers and management to acknowledge and value their accomplishments. By giving promotions and acknowledging achievements within the school system, school administrators may reward personnel for their contributions to the achievement of organizational objectives.

According to Han, Yin, and Wang (2015), teachers' motivation is determined by their intrinsic values, which they use as a basis for selecting and continuing to teach. The level of motivation is shown by the amount of effort they put in, which is impacted by various contextual factors. Nonetheless, there does not seem to be an agreement on our understanding of motivation, given its intricacy (Anwar, Suwarno, & Harianti, 2023). For workers to give their all at work and contribute to the success of the organization, they must believe that their employers genuinely care about their welfare. People who are happy with their jobs are more likely to have good attitudes toward their positions and organizations overall. On the other hand, discontent might result in unfavorable sentiments that impact both organizational morale and work performance (Udodiugwu, Nwosu, Obiakor, & Nwumeh, 2024).

Teachers' motivation may be separated into two categories: sustaining motivation, which describes attempts to continue or persevere in doing something, and initial motivation, which deals with reasons for doing something and deciding to do something (Anwar et al., 2023). As a result, teachers' motivation affects the rationale behind their choices, the amount of time they are willing to dedicate to a job, and the zeal with which they pursue it. One motivating factor that might act as a catalyst is the wages that private school teachers receive. Teachers at private schools receive salaries that are not commensurate with the job they do; that is, the average private school teacher wage in this nation does not provide a good living. If the proprietors of private schools sufficiently reward and inspire their staff, fewer teachers will quit their jobs to pursue other employment opportunities. Consequently, most private school teachers also take part-time jobs elsewhere in addition to their jobs as educators. Some teachers perform odd jobs, have several occupations, and are employed part-time outside the teaching profession. It seems that they desire to provide a good life for their families. Poor motivation results from low private teacher salaries, inadequate security guarantees, and the ill health of private teachers.

Although tenure-track teachers should ideally stay in their current institutions for at least five years before considering leaving, this is not always the case in practice. One of the primary reasons for the increasing challenges in private organizations is the high incidence of employee turnover. Even if they stay with the same organization, persistent frustration and discontent can lead to negative worries that are detrimental to performance and productivity (Mwosi et al., 2024). Thus, before the year is done, teachers routinely switch schools, especially private schools, in search of better opportunities elsewhere, sometimes without considering how this may affect instruction, student achievement, and learning. Therefore, educators only consider remaining at a particular school if they believe they are receiving fair treatment there and if other schools provide equal opportunities for students with comparable talents (Omotayo et al., 2024).

2.5. Private School teachers work-life balance

It is sometimes complicated for teachers to maintain a good work-life balance because of the demands of their careers. "Work-life balance" refers to the capacity to effectively manage and distribute time and energy between obligations related to one's job and personal life, including relationships, family, and well-being. To provide high-quality education and ensure overall job satisfaction, educators must maintain an excellent work-life balance. Long workweeks, heavy workloads, and the need for teachers to work outside the regular classroom schedule are well-known characteristics of the teaching profession (Jomuad et al., 2021).

Teachers often spend much time arranging lessons, supervising extracurricular activities and grading assignments. Teachers sometimes experience high stress and weariness due to these obligations, making it difficult for them to find time for themselves and their personal lives. Therefore, maintaining a positive work-life balance is crucial for the well-being of private teachers. Overworked teachers may experience increased stress and burnout, negatively impacting their relationships and health. Conversely, educators who adopt a balanced approach report greater job satisfaction and improved capacity to manage their personal and professional responsibilities.

According to Hafeez and Akbar (2015), workplace culture, intense global rivalry, and socioeconomic shifts make it difficult for teachers to strike a balance between their personal and professional lives. Their personal and professional lives are no longer balanced because of this constant strain. Therefore, private school teachers and teachers, in general, need to optimize work-life balance indicators, such as long working hours, pressure and stress at work, intention to change employment, and flexible working arrangements. Workplace productivity is frequently impacted by a complex interaction of elements such as motivation, job satisfaction, and career fulfillment; therefore, it is imperative to understand these dynamics (Ichdan, 2024). It is crucial to comprehend how the layout and organization of work areas, equipment, and duties affect workers' physical and mental well-being as well as their general job satisfaction (Osita, Chukwuemeka-Onuzulike, Olayinka, & Onyeizugbe, 2024). If workers believe that their employer will provide them with adequate training and pay, allow them to participate in significant decision-making, and maintain a safe and secure work environment, they will be more inclined to stay. The emotional aspect of job satisfaction is highlighted by the broad agreement that keeping staff increases morale (Darko, Bans-Akutey, Amoako, & Affum, 2024).

2.6. Theoretical Framework

The changing dynamics of labor in reaction to contemporary economic systems are the main focus of contemporary labor theories. These theories, which have their roots in previous Marxist ideas, have been developed by academics such as David Harvey, who examines labor exploitation in the framework of neoliberal capitalism, especially through the idea of accumulation by dispossession. Another important contribution is Guy Standing's work on the precariat, which highlights how casualization and labor insecurity produce a new class of vulnerable workers. Marxist principles are frequently incorporated into contemporary labor theories, emphasizing how capital accumulation is sustained through contemporary forms of exploitation. Karl Marx's idea of primitive accumulation is the foundation of David Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" argument. Harvey contends that financialization, privatization, and government redistributions that prioritize capital holders over workers are some of the ways in which neoliberal capitalism maintains wealth concentration. His research highlights how this process perpetuates labor precarity and economic inequality, particularly in the service and education sectors, where institutions are becoming increasingly privatized (Harvey, 2017).

In response to the increasing instability and insecurity in labor markets brought about by globalization, technological advancements, and deregulation, contemporary theories of precarity became widely recognized in the early 2000s. By linking societal and identity vulnerabilities to precarity, scholars such as Judith Butler have advanced our knowledge of precarity beyond the realm of the workplace. An important part of this discussion is also the flexicurity model, which was created by Scandinavian academics in the early 2000s and attempts to strike a balance between social security and labor flexibility (theories of precarity focus on instability in job and life conditions). The term "precariat,"

coined by Guy Standing in *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, refers to a developing social class facing uncertain prospects, insecure employment, and limited rights (Standing, 2016). By linking vulnerability and precarity and linking existential circumstances to socio-political recognition, Judith Butler makes a substantial contribution. In their investigation of dispossession and its effects on human interdependence, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) argue that social norms exacerbate labor precarisation by excluding particular groups from financial stability (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

According to modern labor theories, teachers in private schools frequently endure systemic exploitation, typified by poor pay and heavy workloads. Based on the theory of accumulation by dispossession, private schools usually underpay instructors while requiring them to perform a large number of unpaid administrative duties to maximize institutional profits at the expense of workers' rights. Their emotional and intellectual labor is undervalued, which is indicative of larger neo-liberal practices that prioritize cost-cutting over worker welfare (Harvey, 2017). Contemporary precarity theories also clarify employment insecurity, lack of contractual stability, and limited prospects for professional advancement that private school instructors encounter. Given that teachers frequently experience both financial instability and a lack of institutional support, which impact their mental health and sense of self as professionals, Judith Butler's larger concept of precarity is relevant in this situation. This is consistent with the larger cultural trend of precarization in formerly steady jobs.

3. Research methodology

This research was a cross-sectional survey that was descriptive in nature. It was designed to appraise the influence of being overpaid and overworked on the challenges faced by private school teachers in the Ado-Ekiti Metropolis of Ekiti State. A self-structured questionnaire was used because it enabled the researchers to gain first-hand information from the respondents. The research design entails gathering data to answer the research questions. This strategy involves studying a group of people or items by gathering and analyzing data from only a few people or items that are thought to be representative of the entire group. This study focuses on the population of private school teachers in the Ado-Ekiti metropolis, which is 14,040, as revealed by the Association of Private School Owners 2024 estimates. A multistage sampling technique was used for the study. The study area was first clustered into zones (1-7), and from each zone, 10 schools were systematically selected (70 schools). Two respondents from each school, 2 respondents were purposively selected based on their characteristics. Based on the above, a sample size of 140 respondents was chosen for the study. This study relied on both primary and secondary data. Simple frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data.

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Result

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage
Sex:		
Male	56	40.0
Female	84	60.0
Total	140	100%
Marital Status:		
Single	85	60.7
Married	55	39.3
Total	140	100%
Educational Qualification		
SSCE/GCE	6	4.3
ND/Diploma	18	12.9
NCE	47	33.6
B.ED/B.Sc/HND	45	32.1
Post-Graduate	24	17.1
Total	140	100%
Age:		

18-24	11	7.9
25-31	38	27.1
32-38	42	30.0
39-45	35	25
46-above	14	10
Total	140	100%
Salary Range in Naira		
10000 – 19000	26	18.6
20000 – 29000	40	28.6
30000 – 39000	37	26.4
40000 – 49000	27	19.3
>50000	10	7.1
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic data. Based on sex, 40% of the respondents were male, while 60% were female. This implies that more females are involved in the teaching profession, particularly at the basic education level. Based on their marital status, 60.7% of the respondents were single, while 39.3% were married. This implies that respondents who are single dominate private schools. Educational qualifications, indicates 4.3% have secondary school certificate (SSCE/GCE) 12.9% had National/Ordinary Diploma, while 33.6% of the respondents hold National Certificate of Education (NCE), 32.1% of the respondents hold B.Ed, B.Sc/HND, 17.1% of the respondents hold Postgraduate degrees. This implies that NCE holders were more identified among the respondents, which is the least qualification to teach at the elementary level. Based on their age, 7.9% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-24, 27.1% were between the ages of 25-30, 30% were between the ages of 31-35, 25% were between the ages of 35-40 while 10 of the respondents were aged 46 years and above. This indicates that respondents between the ages of 25-30 were more identified.

Based on the range of salaries, 18.6% of the respondents earned between 10000-19000 naira per month, 28.6% were earning between 20000-29000 naira per month, 26.4% of the respondents were earning between 30000-39000 naira per month, 19.3% earned 40000-49000 naira per month, and only 7.1% earned more than 50000 naira, which is below the approved minimum wage in the country.

Table 2. Relationship between staff salaries and challenges of private school teachers

S/N	Challenges of Private school teachers as a result of low salaries	A	SA	U	DA	SDA	Decision
1	Turnover intention and efficacy	30%	28%	2%	25%	15%	Accepted
2	Meeting their needs	41%	29%	1%	18%	11%	Accepted
3	Financial exploitation	51%	19%	10%	11%	9%	Accepted
4	Housing	28%	32%	7%	21%	12%	Accepted
5	High rate of poverty	38%	32%	1%	16%	13%	Accepted
6	Unpaid overtime	39%	28%	3%	17%	13%	Accepted
7	Social devaluation	43%	22%	1%	20%	14%	Accepted
8	Emotional and financial instability	38%	31%	0%	12%	19%	Accepted
9	Economic deprivation	31%	38%	8%	15%	8%	Accepted
10	Job satisfaction	28%	39%	4%	9%	20%	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the respondents' opinions on the relationship between staff salaries and the challenges faced by private school teachers in the Ado-Ekiti metropolis. The analysis shows that

- 1) Regarding turnover intention and efficacy, 30% of the respondents agreed, 20% strongly disagreed, 2% were undecided, 25% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that the respondents believed that staff salaries determined turnover intention and efficacy of private teachers.
- 2) Regarding meeting their needs as a factor of their salaries, 41% of the respondents agreed, 29% strongly disagreed, 1% were undecided, 18% disagreed, and 11% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the response indicates that the respondents believed that staff salaries were related to meeting their needs in the study area.
- 3) With regards to financial exploitation, 51% of the respondents agreed, 19% strongly disagreed, 10% were undecided, 11% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that the respondents believed that staff salaries were related to financial exploitation in the study area.
- 4) Regarding housing challenges among private school teachers as a result of their low salaries, 28% of the respondents agreed, 32% strongly disagreed, 7% were undecided, 21% disagreed, and 12% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that the respondents were of the opinion that the challenges of housing are determined by staff salaries.
- 5) With regards to high poverty rates, 38% of the respondents agreed, 32% strongly disagreed, 1% were left undecided, 16% disagreed, and 13% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that the respondents believed that there is a relationship between staff salaries and the high rate of poverty among private school teachers.
- 6) Regarding unpaid overtime, 39% of the respondents agreed, 28% strongly disagreed, 3% were undecided, 17% disagreed, and 13% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that the respondents believed that unpaid overtime is one of the challenges faced by private school teachers.
- 7) With regard to social devaluation, 43% of the respondents agreed, 32% strongly disagreed, 1% were undecided, 20% disagreed, and 14% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that the respondents believed that private school teachers' salaries diminished their social respect.
- 8) With regard to emotional and financial instability, 38% of the respondents agreed, 31% strongly disagreed, 0% were undecided, 12% disagreed, and 19% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that emotional and financial instability is one of the challenges faced by private school teachers as a result of low staff salaries.
- 9) With regard to economic deprivation, 31% of the respondents agreed, 38% strongly disagreed, 8% were undecided, 15% disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the response indicates that the respondents see economic deprivation as a challenge resulting from poor salaries.
- 10) Regarding job satisfaction, 28% of the respondents agreed, 39% strongly disagreed, 4% were undecided, 9% disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicated a relationship between staff salaries and challenges of job satisfaction.

Table 3. Relationship between working conditions and challenges of private school teachers

S/N	Challenges of private school teachers	A	SA	U	DA	SDA	Decision
1	Work-life balance	39%	25%	1%	19%	16%	Accepted
2	Inadequate security guarantee	45%	20%	1%	20%	14%	Accepted
3	Lack of rights and uncertainty	47%	18%	2%	19%	14%	Rejected
4	High work stress	33%	42%	1%	14%	10%	Accepted
5	Long hours without receiving fair pay	46%	35%	2%	12%	5%	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the respondents' opinions on the relationship between working conditions and the challenges faced by private school teachers. The table above shows that

- 1) Regarding the issue of work-life balance as dependent on working conditions, 39% agreed, 25% strongly agreed, 1% was undecided, 19% disagreed, and 16% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicated that the respondents believed that there was a relationship between working conditions and challenges of work-life balance.
- 2) Regarding the challenge of inadequate job security as a factor of working conditions, 45% agreed,

- 20% strongly agreed, 1% were undecided, 20% disagreed, and 14% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that there is a lack of job security in private schools, which constitutes a challenge for teachers.
- 3) Regarding whether lack of rights and uncertainty are factors of working conditions, 47% agreed, 18% strongly agreed, 2% were undecided, 19% disagreed, and 14% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicates that private school teachers lack basic rights and are confronted with uncertainties. There is no collective bargaining in negotiating wages and allowances. They either accept whatever is offered or leave the organization entirely.
 - 4) Regarding whether high work stress was related to working conditions, 33% agreed, 42% strongly agreed, 1% were undecided, 14% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of the responses indicated that working conditions predispose work stress; 46% agreed, 35% strongly agreed, 2% were undecided, 12% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed on whether long hours without receiving fair pay contributed to work stress. The mean rating of the response indicates that the respondents believed that working conditions determine the number of hours to work without receiving commensurate pay as part of the challenges faced by private teachers.

4.2. Discussions

Teachers in private education experience dispossession due to the privatization of educational systems. Profits may take precedence over fair compensation in schools, which could result in underfunding of teacher wages while increasing capital projects and administrative costs. This leads to teachers working long hours without receiving fair pay, which is consistent with Harvey's theory of capital accumulation through labor exploitation (Harvey, 2017). Teachers in private schools frequently do not have long-term job security because their contracts are renewed based on management discretion or changing student enrollments. This issue is highlighted by Standing's precariat framework, which emphasizes the lack of rights and uncertainty that educators suffer in such precarious circumstances. Teachers may, for example, be fired without receiving significant severance pay or be required to work unpaid overtime, which exacerbates their emotional and financial instability (Standing, 2016). The undervaluation of teachers' labor is related to Butler's concept of dispossession. Teachers' professional identity and social respect are diminished because they are frequently viewed as "replaceable" by less experienced, lower-paid employees. Their contributions are undervalued by the invisibility of work, which exacerbates the unstable circumstances that Butler and Athanasiou contend worsen more general structural injustices (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

5. Conclusion

Historically, private schools have operated as profit-driven businesses, often under the ownership of private individuals, collaborating individuals, nonprofit organizations, or faith-based groups. Gradually, private school ownership is taking over the nation's educational system. However, the pay and work-life balance offered to private school teachers do not reflect their abilities or contributions. To assist them in providing quality results, several private schools now work with official examiners or specific centers. On the other hand, untrained teachers are hired to teach at private schools because of the unemployment rate in the educational system. However, since their income from teaching is so low, they utilize their spare time to look for employment elsewhere to supplement their income, which lowers their performance and commitment to the organization or school where they teach. It is undeniable that raising teachers' salaries and improving their working conditions is one way decision-makers can contribute to their welfare. Another is that elevating teachers' living status is a necessary component of maintaining their profession's respect and improving their public image. To overcome these challenges, educational policies must be changed systemically, equitable compensation must be guaranteed, and teachers' labor must be valued as essential. Stakeholders can more effectively promote labor reforms that protect educational equity and teachers' rights in private schools.

5.1 Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- 1) There is an immediate need to protect private school teachers in Nigeria from the negative effects of low pay, poor working conditions, and low motivation.

- 2) The well-being and respect of teachers must be prioritized by the government, school administrators, and the general public. They should also endeavor to implement laws and procedures that conform to the best global practices.
- 3) Private school teachers ought to receive the same compensation as their public school counterparts. The Nigeria Union of Teachers' (NUT) state branch must guarantee that the Teacher Special Salary Scale is fully applied in both public and private institutions.
- 4) Private school owners and operators should simultaneously increase the incentives offered to teachers, such as regular salary payments, promotions, and improvements to the physical workspace.
- 5) To improve teachers' service delivery, the NUT should cooperate with relevant authorities at the national level to set minimum working conditions for teachers in private schools. This would increase their high level of work motivation.

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