

Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions of Expatriate Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers in China

Miloš Marković^{*} , Jorge López-Carratalá 

Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia, Murcia, Spain

*Corresponding author: mmarkovic@alu.ucam.edu

Abstract

Introduction. This study explores the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China. With the increasing demand for international educators, particularly in China, improving teacher retention is essential. While turnover in international schools has been studied extensively, research on expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China remains limited.

Methods. A mixed-methods approach was used to survey 158 expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China, employing the Job Satisfaction Survey and Turnover Intention Scale for quantitative data, alongside an open-ended question for qualitative insights. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations, multiple regression, and thematic coding. **Results.** A significant negative correlation was found between job satisfaction and turnover intentions ($r = -0.712$, $p < 0.001$). Both extrinsic factors (e.g., pay, working conditions) and intrinsic factors (e.g., relationships with coworkers, communication) were identified as key drivers of turnover intentions. The regression model revealed that job satisfaction accounted for 50.7% of the variance in turnover intentions, emphasizing its substantial role in teachers' decisions to leave. **Discussion.** These findings highlight the importance of improving both extrinsic and intrinsic factors to reduce turnover intentions among expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers. Strategies such as stay interviews and enhanced career development opportunities can help retain teachers and boost job satisfaction. By addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction, schools can reduce teacher turnover intentions, ensuring stability and continuity in education.

Keywords

job satisfaction, turnover intentions, expatriate teachers, non-native english-speaking teachers, teacher retention, international education, China

For citation

Marković, M., & López-Carratalá, J. (2025). Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions of Expatriate Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers in China. *Russian Psychological Journal*, 22(1), 177–194. <https://doi.org/10.21702/vqbx898>

Introduction

The global demand for qualified educators has led to increased mobility of teachers internationally. Additional pressure on this state is intensified by UNESCO's (2024) prediction that 44 million more teachers will be required by 2030 to ensure that every child has access to education. Teacher shortage has been observed in many regions, forcing schools to rely on temporary or even unqualified teachers to fill vacancies. While international schools offer unique opportunities for educators, they are not immune to this global trend. In fact, some of the greatest challenges they face are attracting and retaining qualified teachers (Mancuso et al., 2010).

Teacher turnover in international schools is influenced by various factors, including leadership styles, compensation and benefits packages, working conditions, as well as challenges related to cultural adjustment (Mancuso et al., 2010). High teacher turnover significantly impacts education systems. Frequent staff transitions disrupt continuity, hinder students' academic progress, and complicate the consistent implementation of curricula and instructional strategies (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Furthermore, turnover can destabilize school culture, weaken a sense of belonging, and place financial burdens on schools due to the costs of recruitment and training (Lee et al., 2012). Understanding factors that influence turnover intentions among expatriate teachers can help educational institutions in creating effective retention strategies.

Job satisfaction is a critical factor when it comes to understanding why teachers choose to stay in or leave their jobs. Studies show that satisfied teachers are more likely to remain in their roles, while dissatisfied teachers tend to leave (Ingersoll, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Various factors influence job satisfaction within the teaching profession. Aspects such as equitable compensation, reasonable workloads, supportive administrators, and professional development opportunities all contribute significantly (Loeb et al., 2005; Mancuso et al., 2011). By prioritizing these elements, schools can effectively reduce turnover.

For expatriate teachers, job satisfaction is even more important. They deal with challenges that go beyond the classroom, like adjusting to a new culture, adapting to

unfamiliar workplaces, and often living without strong social or family support systems (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Dos Santos, 2019). When teachers feel satisfied with their jobs, they tend to overcome these challenges. Conversely, if they lack satisfaction, they are more likely to consider leaving.

The global number of international schools has surged by 50%, reaching over 14,000, with student enrolment increasing by 57% to a total of 7.3 million (ISC, 2024). Asia leads this expansion, particularly Eastern Asia, which covers 57% of all international schools and experienced a 16% growth even during the pandemic (ISC, 2023). As a result, the need for qualified teachers has grown significantly. ISC (2024) predicts that the international school workforce, which has expanded by 60% over the past decade, will need an additional 160,000 teachers by 2028. A large portion of these roles will likely be filled by expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers. Holborow (1999) points out that most of the global population resides in countries where English is a second language, and Braine (2010) estimates that 80% of English teachers worldwide are non-native speakers. However, much of the existing research has focused on native English-speaking teachers, often neglecting the broader experiences of expatriate non-native English-speaking educators. These teachers bring unique perspectives, shaped by their cultural experiences, teaching styles, and language skills, that can greatly enhance the learning environment. Ignoring their roles and challenges leaves a gap in the literature, which fails to fully capture the diversity of international teaching contexts. Expanding research to include these voices is crucial for a more complete understanding of global educational dynamics.

This lack of research is problematic because expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers face unique challenges in the international school setting. They often deal with biases related to their non-native speaker status, which can affect their confidence, job satisfaction, and even how they are treated by students, parents, and administrators (Selvi, 2010). Additionally, expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers might receive lower salaries or fewer benefits compared to their native-speaking counterparts, which can further impact their satisfaction and likelihood of staying in their roles (Maganaka, 2023).

The current study addresses this gap by focusing on expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China's international schools. With the growing importance of these teachers in meeting the demand for qualified educators, understanding their job satisfaction and its impact on turnover intentions is essential. By examining this underrepresented group, this research aims to provide insights that can help schools better support expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers and reduce turnover.

Theoretical Framework

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory explains how job satisfaction operates by categorizing its determinants into two groups: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators, such as recognition, professional growth, and achievement, are intrinsic factors that actively enhance job satisfaction. In contrast, hygiene factors, including salary, working conditions,

and job security, do not inherently increase satisfaction but can cause dissatisfaction when absent (Herzberg et al., 1959). For expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers, hygiene factors like adequate pay, sufficient support for cultural adjustment, and stable working conditions are foundational to maintaining satisfaction. At the same time, motivators, such as career advancement opportunities and acknowledgment of their professional skills, can boost engagement and commitment. This study applies Herzberg's framework to analyze how these factors jointly contribute to job satisfaction and subsequently affect turnover intentions.

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) focuses on the reciprocal nature of workplace relationships. According to this theory, employees evaluate their workplace based on the balance of what they give—such as effort, loyalty, and expertise—and what they receive, such as fair treatment, support, and opportunities (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When the perceived balance is fair, employees feel valued and are more likely to remain with their organization. However, when the exchange feels inequitable or insufficient, dissatisfaction and turnover intentions increase. For expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers, factors like inclusion, organizational support, and fair treatment play a critical role in shaping these perceptions. This study uses Social Exchange Theory to explore how perceived reciprocity and workplace support influence expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers' satisfaction and their decision to stay or leave.

Literature Review

Job satisfaction is a complex concept that reflects how employees view and experience their roles. It includes various elements, such as the work environment, interpersonal relationships, pay, growth opportunities, and the alignment of job roles with personal values (Spector, 1997; Herzberg, 1968). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) offers a useful framework for understanding job satisfaction. According to Herzberg, job satisfaction is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors, such as recognition and career development, serve as "motivators" that encourage employees to perform well and stay in their jobs, while extrinsic factors, like salary, working conditions, and job security, act as "hygiene factors" that prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily drive motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Research on job satisfaction in education has shown that a variety of factors contribute to teachers' satisfaction, including their work environment, relationships with colleagues, and opportunities for professional growth (Guoba et al., 2022; McJames et al., 2023; Toropova et al., 2021). Specifically, in international schools, additional factors such as cultural adjustment and integration into the host community, positive interaction with school leaders, and supportive colleagues play a pivotal role in shaping job satisfaction (Yoshihara, 2018).

However, while extensive research has been conducted on teacher job satisfaction, studies specifically addressing expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers, especially

in rapidly growing educational markets like China, remain scarce. Thus, exploring the factors contributing to job satisfaction of expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China presents an opportunity to fill a significant gap in the literature and provide practical recommendations for schools and policymakers.

Turnover intention, defined as the conscious decision to consider leaving an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993), is a strong predictor of actual turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Kaur et al., 2013). Numerous factors contribute to turnover intentions, including low job satisfaction, lack of organizational support, unmet expectations, and stress (Mobley, 1977; Hom et al., 1992). Recognizing and addressing turnover intentions early is crucial for retention.

Factors influencing turnover include teachers' desire for mobility, short-term contracts, misrepresentation during recruitment, and inadequate professional support (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Dos Santos, 2020; Tkachyk, 2017). Moreover, economic factors, including compensation and work-life balance, as well as working conditions and school support, are also significant predictors (Loeb et al., 2005; Mancuso et al., 2011). Additionally, uncertainty about job security, such as unexpected budget cuts or terminations, intensify turnover intentions (Amodio, 2015; Rey et al., 2020). Given the diverse range of factors that affect teacher turnover, a holistic approach is essential for effective early detection and intervention.

International schools are particularly susceptible to high turnover rates, with some regions in East Asia reporting turnover rates as high as 20% to 50% (Tkachyk, 2017). Similarly, Near East South Asia (NESA) international schools have documented average turnover rates of 17%, with some schools experiencing turnover rates as high as 60% (Mancuso et al., 2010). Studies of South American international schools indicate an annual turnover rate of 28% (Desroches, 2013), while in Thailand, turnover rates range from 16% to 20% (Ngotngamwong, 2012). Bunnell (2014) reported a 30% turnover rate in Dubai. In the context of international schools, high turnover rates are frequently linked to challenges like isolation, misalignment with organizational culture, and inadequate support systems (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009).

High turnover intentions can have wide-reaching consequences for both educational institutions and students. For individual teachers, the desire to leave can lead to professional burnout and emotional distress, particularly when compounded by cultural and professional challenges. Moreover, dissatisfaction of this kind can lead to disengagement and actual turnover, reinforcing the idea that turnover intentions often originate from cumulative dissatisfaction (Hayden & Thompson, 2008) and as a psychological process of withdrawal (Fang & Wang, 2006).

High turnover disrupts learning continuity, increases recruitment costs, and affects overall school performance (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). International schools face additional hurdles as they invest heavily in recruiting expatriate teachers, often offering higher salaries, relocation benefits, and housing allowances to attract candidates (Odland &

Ruzicka, 2009). In a case study by ISC Research (2021), one head of a school in Shanghai stated that recruiting new expatriate teachers is still a major challenge, and one of the ways to meet the demand is paying over the odds initially to attract staff. Consequently, when these teachers leave prematurely, investments are lost, creating both financial and organizational strain. In the context of international schools in China, this can be particularly problematic as the demand for qualified teachers continues to rise, and the pool of qualified expatriate teachers remains limited. High turnover can result in a less experienced and less stable workforce, schools have no choice but to hire unqualified teachers, often young and inexperienced, or second-career educators lacking proper training, often on short-term contracts (Marinell & Johnson, 2014; Troesch & Bauer, 2020). According to Teach Away (2023), 48% of teachers presently do not possess a teaching license. Darling-Hammond (2022) indicates that a significant proportion of new teachers hired without formal preparation, are more likely to exit the teaching profession. Eventually all of this may impact the school's ability to deliver high-quality education consistently. Thus, there is an urgent need for comprehensive teacher preparation programs, since inexperienced educators lacking adequate training are two to three times more likely to exit teaching profession compared to those who go through formal training (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions is well-documented in the literature. Studies have shown that lower job satisfaction is a strong predictor of higher turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 1993; Steel, 2002). In the teaching profession, dissatisfaction with leadership support, workload, or opportunities for professional development often translates into intentions to leave (Bunnell & Poole, 2021; Dos Santos, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Dissatisfaction is a strong predictor of turnover intentions, with factors like lack of recognition, limited growth opportunities, and poor work conditions driving employees to seek alternative employment (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom et al., 1992).

This study broadens the existing literature by examining non-native English-speaking expatriate teachers in China, a group that has been underexplored in the context of job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Understanding this relationship is crucial for identifying actionable strategies to enhance teacher retention and mitigate the negative effects of high turnover on schools.

Research Objective

To examine the levels and relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among non-native English-speaking expatriate teachers working in China.

Research Hypotheses:

- H_0 : There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among non-native English-speaking expatriate teachers in China.
- H_1 : There is a significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among non-native English-speaking expatriate teachers in China.

Methods

Participants

The study involved 158 expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers from international schools across China. Most participants were male (61.4%) and aged between 25–34 years (55.1%). Regarding marital status, 47.5% were single, 36.1% married, and 16.4% were in other relationships. In terms of teaching experience, 34.2% had 1–3 years of domestic experience, and 36.7% had 4–6 years of international teaching experience. Almost half had lived in China for over five years (49.4%). The majority of teachers worked in kindergartens (34.8%) and held bachelor's degrees (60.8%). The sample was highly diverse, with participants coming from 60 nationalities, including those from Europe (80), Africa (38), Asia and Oceania (26), and Latin America/Caribbean region (14). These demographics reflect a highly diverse sample, providing a comprehensive representation of expatriate teachers working in China.

Research Design

The research design employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between the variables while also providing nuanced insights from open-ended responses. The survey started with a section gathering demographic information, followed by Turnover Intention Scale and Job Satisfaction Survey, ending with an open-ended question.

Instruments

Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6), adapted from Roodt's (2004) original 15-item scale, was used to measure participants' turnover intentions. The TIS-6 consists of six items that assess the likelihood of participants leaving their job. The scale utilizes a 5-point semantic differential scale and has shown excellent reliability and validity in various studies (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) is a 36-item scale developed by Spector (1985) to measure job satisfaction. It consists of nine subscales: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Operating Procedures, Coworkers, Nature of Work, and Communication. Each subscale is measured with four items. The JSS has been widely used in research across various sectors, showing strong validity and reliability (Spector, 1985).

Both the TIS-6 and JSS have demonstrated high reliability and validity in previous studies. The TIS-6 has shown strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 in the current study, which is consistent with the findings of Bothma and Roodt (2013) who reported an alpha of 0.80. For the Job Satisfaction Survey, comprising 36 items across

nine subscales, overall Cronbach's alpha in this study was 0.92, demonstrating excellent reliability, ensuring that it provides a valid measure of various facets of job satisfaction.

Open-ended Question: A single open-ended question was included to gather qualitative data regarding participants' experiences and views on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Responses were coded manually and categorized into domains based on recurring themes related to the study's objectives.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a six-week period from January to February 2024 using an online survey hosted on Google Forms. Participants were recruited through chain referral sampling, where initial participants shared the survey link within their professional networks, particularly in online expatriate teacher groups. Prior to completing the survey, participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The survey was distributed with an optional contact email for participants interested in receiving study results.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics were first computed to summarize the demographic characteristics and the key variables (TIS-6 and JSS). To examine the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions, Pearson's correlation was employed to test the strength and direction of the relationship between the total job satisfaction score and turnover intentions.

Next, multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore how the subscales of job satisfaction predict turnover intentions. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were checked before performing the regression analysis. In addition to the quantitative analyses, open-ended responses were manually coded to identify recurring themes related to job satisfaction and turnover intentions. These responses were used to provide qualitative insights that complement the quantitative findings.

Results

The study involved 158 expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the overall Job Satisfaction scores and its subscales, as well as for the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6). The mean job satisfaction score was 132.4 (SD = 17.5), with the highest mean reported for the Contingent Rewards subscale (M = 14.6, SD = 2.3) and the lowest for Promotion (M = 11.5, SD = 3.7).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention Scales (n = 158)

Scale	Mean \pm SD	α
Nature of Work	17.3 \pm 2.8	.79
Coworkers	17.2 \pm 2.7	.69
Supervision	16.8 \pm 2.1	.75
Contingent Rewards	14.6 \pm 2.3	.74
Communication	14.4 \pm 3.1	.78
Pay	13.9 \pm 2.9	.70
Operating Conditions	13.7 \pm 2.7	.56
Fringe Benefits	12.9 \pm 2.9	.71
Promotion	11.5 \pm 3.7	.63
Job Satisfaction	132.4 \pm 17.5	.92

Regarding Turnover Intentions, Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the TIS-6 scale including each survey item. The mean turnover intention score was 3.16 (SD = 0.80). The highest mean score was observed for "dreaming about another job" (M = 3.77), suggesting frequent consideration of alternative employment opportunities. Conversely, the lowest mean score was reported for "job satisfaction in fulfilling personal needs" (M = 2.91), signifying notable dissatisfaction in this area.

Based on the threshold score of 18, participants were divided into two groups: low turnover intention (≤ 18) and high turnover intention (> 18). The results indicated that 43.7% of participants reported low turnover intention, while 56.3% had high turnover intention.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for TIS-6 Survey Items (n=158)

Survey Item	Mean \pm SD
How often have you considered leaving your job?	3.22 \pm 1.26
How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?	2.91 \pm 1.02

ПСИХОЛОГИЯ ТРУДА

Survey Item	Mean \pm SD
How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?	2.97 \pm 1.08
How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?	3.77 \pm 1.18
How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?	3.08 \pm 1.25
How often do you look forward to another day at work?	3.04 \pm 1.10
Turnover Intention Score	3.16 \pm 0.80

The results of the correlational analysis between Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions are presented in Table 3. A strong negative correlation was observed between Job Satisfaction score and Turnover Intention ($r = -0.712$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher job satisfaction is associated with lower turnover intentions. Furthermore, all subscales of Job Satisfaction exhibited significant negative correlations with turnover intentions, with Pay ($r = -0.665$) and Communication ($r = -0.593$) showing the strongest correlations. The correlation effect sizes were predominantly large ($r > 0.5$), except for Promotion and Operating Conditions, which were moderate.

Table 3
Correlation Between Job Satisfaction Subscales and Turnover Intentions ($n = 158$)

Variable	r	p-value
Job Satisfaction	-0.712	< 0.001
Coworkers	-0.545	< 0.001
Pay	-0.665	< 0.001
Promotion	-0.407	< 0.001
Supervision	-0.485	< 0.001

Variable	r	p-value
Fringe Benefits	-0.500	< 0.001
Contingent Rewards	-0.574	< 0.001
Operating Conditions	-0.398	< 0.001
Nature of Work	-0.441	< 0.001
Communication	-0.593	< 0.001

Further analysis, including simple linear regression, was conducted to assess whether Job Satisfaction significantly predicted Turnover Intentions. The results, shown in Table 4, revealed that Job Satisfaction score explained 50.7% of the variance in turnover intentions ($R^2 = 0.507$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient for JS was -0.128 ($\beta = -0.712$), indicating that an increase in job satisfaction is associated with a decrease in turnover intentions. These results reject H_0 and support the H_1 hypothesis that job satisfaction significantly predicts turnover intentions.

Table 4
Regression Analysis for Job Satisfaction Predicting Turnover Intentions ($n = 158$)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	T	p-value	R^2
Constant	35.932	1.364	-	26.340	<0.001	
Job Satisfaction	-0.128	0.010	-0.712	-12.671	<0.001	0.507

Next, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore whether the subscales of Job Satisfaction (including Coworkers, Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Operating Conditions, Nature of Work, and Communication) predicted Turnover Intentions. As shown in Table 5, the subscales explained 55.9% of the variance in turnover intentions ($R^2 = 0.559$, $p < 0.001$). Pay and Communication emerged as the most significant predictors of turnover intentions, with $\beta = -0.447$ and $\beta = -0.222$, respectively, both with large effect sizes.

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis for Job Satisfaction Subscales Predicting Turnover Intentions (n = 158)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	T	p-value
Constant	33.886	1.273	-	26.626	<0.001
Pay	-0.509	0.100	-0.447	-5.104	<0.001
Communication	-0.225	0.074	-0.222	-3.055	0.003
Coworkers	-0.276	0.086	-0.217	-3.213	0.002

Note: $R^2: 0.559$, Adjusted $R^2: 0.532$, $F(3,154) = 60.224$, $p < 0.001$

In addition to the quantitative findings, the analysis of qualitative responses revealed key factors influencing expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers' job satisfaction and turnover intentions in China. Compensation and benefits emerged as a major concern, particularly the pay discrepancies based on nationality. As one teacher put it, "I feel salaries shouldn't be so different just because of passport" (R 28), illustrating frustration with unequal treatment. Equal hiring policies were also highlighted, where many expatriate teachers felt non-native speakers were unfairly overlooked in favor of native speakers, despite possessing equal or superior qualifications. One respondent shared, "It makes me angry when local leadership changes something at the last minute... it was just about the passport" (R 44). Discrimination at work further compounded the dissatisfaction, as participants felt their value as educators was undermined by biases based on their nationality.

Another recurring theme was the pay scale, with several teachers expressing concern over non-transparent salary structures. One teacher noted, "I moved to a smaller city for less competitiveness, but realized a far less qualified person is getting paid almost double what I am only because of the nationality and race" (R 8). Communication with local and foreign staff was another issue, with many reporting miscommunications due to cultural differences. "The Chinese staff is not frank and keeps problems until the last second" (R 6), highlighting how this lack of openness affected workplace dynamics. Moreover, trust, honesty, and support from school HR and leadership were significant concerns, contributing to a sense of disengagement. Workload was also cited as a critical factor affecting job satisfaction, with one teacher mentioning, "The workload is unimaginable, and it's affecting my mental health as I have to teach four different subjects each semester" (R 9). Motivation to stay in the profession was low, exacerbated by lack of advancement opportunities. "There is no room for advancement in this school" (R 9) pointed to how stagnation led to frustration. Finally, visa issues were seen as a constant

source of insecurity, with one respondent stating, "Visa issues are a big risk for me to lose my job as the government is changing policies all the time" (R 13). These factors collectively influenced turnover intentions, demonstrating how dissatisfaction with both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of the job contributed to the decision to leave

The results of this study reveal a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The regression analyses suggest that both overall job satisfaction and specific subscales, such as Pay and Communication are important predictors of turnover intentions among expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China. These findings are discussed further in the next section.

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China. Findings highlight a significant negative relationship between these variables, where higher job satisfaction corresponds with lower turnover intentions. This aligns with the substantial body of literature that links job satisfaction with employees' intention to leave an organization (Griffeth et al., 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Furthermore, this study fills an important gap in the literature by focusing on a population that is often overlooked—expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China, a demographic that is becoming increasingly relevant due to the expansion of international schools.

The findings of this study demonstrate that several facets of job satisfaction, including pay, coworkers, and communication, are strongly related to turnover intentions. Most of all, the subscales of 'pay' and 'coworkers' showed the highest correlations with turnover intentions ($r = -0.665$ and $r = -0.737$, respectively), indicating that teachers who are dissatisfied with their compensation or have poor relationships with colleagues are more likely to consider leaving their jobs. These results align with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which posits that external factors such as pay and interpersonal relationships are key contributors to job dissatisfaction. This is particularly relevant in the context of expatriate teachers, who may face additional stressors related to living and working abroad, such as cultural differences and separation from family. The study further reinforces Herzberg's idea that extrinsic factors play a crucial role in teacher retention in the context of international schools in China which aligns with previous research (Mancuso et al., 2011).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) also provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics between job satisfaction and turnover intentions in this study. SET suggests that employees expect fair exchanges with their employers, where the rewards they receive are proportional to their efforts. When expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers sense that their efforts are not reciprocated, whether through inadequate compensation, lack of support from colleagues, or unclear communication, their intention to leave the job increases. This explains why factors like 'pay' ($r = -0.665$) and 'coworkers' ($r = -0.737$) had such a strong influence on turnover intentions in this study. Teachers who feel

undervalued or unsupported in their roles are likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, which can create a cycle of high turnover in schools. These findings are consistent with that of Bunnell and Poole (2021) and Dos Santos (2020) who emphasized the importance of school leadership for expatriate teachers.

The implications of these findings are significant, particularly considering the continued growth of international schools in China. With more schools opening each year and a growing demand for teachers, retaining a stable and satisfied workforce becomes crucial. The high turnover intentions observed in this study suggest that many international schools may struggle to keep their teachers, which could lead to decreased student achievement, increased recruitment costs and financial instability. Schools should, therefore, implement retention strategies such as stay interviews which allow administrators to identify and address teachers' concerns before turnover intentions solidify. Additionally, better compensation packages, mentorship programs, and increased support for teachers' professional development can enhance a sense of belonging. This approach could mitigate dissatisfaction and improve retention by fostering a supportive work environment and addressing issues early.

Moreover, the results underline the need for greater attention to the specific needs of expatriate teachers in China, particularly those from non-native English-speaking backgrounds. As the pool of available teachers expands to include more non-native speakers, it becomes even more important for schools to address the factors that impact job satisfaction. Ensuring that teachers feel respected, supported, and fairly compensated will be essential for minimizing turnover and fostering long-term teacher retention.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without its limitations. The use of self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants may not always accurately reflect their true job satisfaction or intentions to leave. Further research could also examine the role of leadership in influencing job satisfaction among expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers. Specifically, studies could explore whether different leadership styles impact teacher retention and whether cultural differences in leadership approach affect expatriate teachers' job satisfaction. Future studies could explore the role of social and cultural integration on expatriate teachers' job satisfaction, as cultural adjustment is a significant factor in expatriates' experiences. Additionally, longitudinal studies could help to capture the long-term effects of job satisfaction on turnover intentions and provide deeper insights into the causal relationships. Finally, research comparing expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers' job satisfaction and turnover intentions across different countries could provide a more global perspective on the issue, offering insights into how international schools in various regions manage teacher retention.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among expatriate non-native English-speaking teachers in China, revealing a strong link: higher job satisfaction correlates with lower turnover intentions. These results align with

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Social Exchange Theory, confirming that teachers who feel satisfied with aspects like pay, coworkers, and communication are less likely to consider leaving their positions.

The findings highlight the critical role of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors in shaping teachers' satisfaction and retention. With the rapid growth of international schools in China, the demand for qualified teachers is rising. To meet this demand, institutions must focus on improving both salary and benefits, as well as professional development, career growth, and work-life balance. Addressing these areas not only enhances job satisfaction but also significantly reduces turnover, which, in turn, helps maintain a stable and effective teaching workforce.

The consequences of low job satisfaction and high turnover are far-reaching: they lead to disruptions in teaching quality, financial costs for schools, and a loss of institutional knowledge. Schools must prioritize strategies to boost satisfaction by ensuring fair compensation, offering clear career progression, and fostering supportive working environments. These measures will promote teacher retention and contribute to the overall stability and success of educational institutions.

This study contributes valuable insights to the limited body of research on expatriate teachers in China, particularly non-native English-speaking teachers. By highlighting the importance of job satisfaction in reducing turnover intentions, this research provides actionable recommendations for schools to improve retention strategies, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

References

- Amodio, M. J. (2015). *The role of incentives on teacher intentions to re-sign in American overseas schools in Europe*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Lehigh University, <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd/2485>
- Bothma, C. F. C., & Roodt, G. (2013). The validation of the turnover intention scale. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v11i1.507>
- Blau, P.M. (1964). Justice in Social Exchange. *Sociological Inquiry*, 34, 193-206. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1964.tb00583.x>
- Braine, G. (2010). *Nonnative Speaker English Teachers: Research, Pedagogy, and Professional Growth*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203856710>
- Bunnell, T., & Poole, A. (2021). International Schools in China and teacher turnover: the need for a more nuanced approach towards precarity reflecting agency. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. 43(2), 463–478. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1940840>
- Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/454.278>
- Chu, C. K., & Morrison, K. (2011). Cross-cultural adjustment of Native-speaking English teachers (NETs) in Hong Kong: A factor in attrition and retention. *Educational Studies*, 37(4), 481–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2010.539667>
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M.S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 874–900. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2022). Breaking the legacy of teacher shortages. *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/breaking-the-legacy-of-teacher-shortages>

- Desroches, S. (2013). *Exploring Teacher Turnover in American-Accredited Schools in South America* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Lehigh University <https://preserve.lib.lehigh.edu/>
- Dos Santos, L. M. (2019). Recruitment and retention of international school teachers in remote archipelagic countries: The Fiji experience. *Education Sciences*, 9(2), 132. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020132>
- Dos Santos, L. M. (2020). Stress, burnout, and turnover issues of black expatriate education professionals in South Korea: Social biases, discrimination, and workplace bullying. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(11), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17113851>
- Fang, Y., & Wang, Y. (2006). Teaching performance and turnover: A study of school teachers in Singapore. *Employment Relations Record*, 6(1), 1–30. Retrieved from <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.285232931233691>
- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents and Correlates of Employee Turnover: Update, Moderator Tests, and Research Implications for the Next Millennium. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 463–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600305>
- Guoba, A., Žygaitienė, B., & Kepaliene, I. (2022). Factors Influencing Teachers' Job Satisfaction. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 4(4), 234–241. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jhss.2022.4.4.30>
- Hayden, M., & Thompson, J. J. (2008). *International schools: growth and influence*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000180396>
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1959). *The motivation to work* (2nd ed.). John Wiley.
- Herzberg, F. (1968) One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees? *Harvard Business Review*, 46, 53–62.
- Holborow, M. (1999). *The politics of English*. SAGE.
- Hom, P. W., Caranikas-Walker, F., Prussia, G. E., & Griffeth, R. W. (1992). A meta-analytical structural equations analysis of a model of employee turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(6), 890–909. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.77.6.890>
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher Turnover and Teacher Shortages: An Organizational Analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 499–534. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312038003499>
- Ingersoll, R. M., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2014). What are the effects of teacher education and preparation on beginning teacher attrition? Research Report (#RR-82). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved from https://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/researchreport/2018_prepeffects2014.pdf
- ISC. (2021). The growing demand for international schools within a mid-market fee point. ISC Research. Retrieved from www.iscresearch.com
- ISC. (2023). Why more international schools keep opening. ISC Research. Retrieved from www.iscresearch.com
- ISC. (2024). What data tells us about international school market. ISC Research. Retrieved from www.iscresearch.com
- Kaur, B., Mohindru, & Pankaj. (2013). Antecedents of Turnover Intentions: A Literature Review. *Global Journal of Management and Business Studies*, 3(10), 1219–1230. <http://www.ripublication.com/gjmb.html>
- Lee, M., Hallinger, P., & Walker, A. (2012). Leadership challenges in international schools in the Asia Pacific region: Evidence from programme implementation of the International Baccalaureate. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 15(3), 289–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2011.605475>

- Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. (2005). How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80(3), 44–70. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327930pje8003_4
- Maganaka, A. (2023). Native Speakerism and Employment Discrimination in English Language Teaching. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 14(1), 119–130.
- Mancuso, S. V., Roberts, L., & White, G. P. (2010). Teacher retention in international schools: The key role of school leadership. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 9(3), 306–323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240910388928>
- Mancuso, S. V., Roberts, L., White, G. P., Yoshida, R. K., & Weston, D. (2011). Strategies to Improve Teacher Retention in American Overseas Schools in the Near East South Asia Region: A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of School Leadership*, 21, 819–844. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461102100604>
- Marinell, W. H., & Johnson, S. M. (2014). Midcareer entrants to teaching: Who they are and how they may, or may not, change teaching. *Educational Policy*, 28(6), 743–779. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904813475709>
- McJames, N., Parnell, A., & O'Shea, A. (2023). Factors affecting teacher job satisfaction: a causal inference machine learning approach using data from TALIS 2018. *Educational Review*, 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2200594>
- Mobley, W.H. (1977) Intermediate Linkages in the Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Employee Turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62, 237–240. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.62.2.237>
- Ngotngamwong, R. (2012). Effects of participative leadership on teacher job satisfaction. *AU Journal of Management*, 10, 15–30.
- Odland, G., & Ruzicka, M. (2009). An investigation into teacher turnover in international schools. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(1), 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240908100679>
- Rey, J., Bolay, M., & Gez, Y. N. (2020). Precarious privilege: personal debt, lifestyle aspirations and mobility among international school teachers. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 18(4), 361–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1732193>
- Roodt, G. (2004). Turnover intentions. Unpublished document. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4–36. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212463813>
- Selvi, K. (2010). Teachers' Competencies. *Cultura* 7 (1), 167–175. <https://doi.org/10.5840/cultura20107133>
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(6), 1029–1038. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.04.001>
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2017). Dimensions of teacher burnout: Relations with potential stressors at school. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 20(4), 775–790. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-017-9391-0>
- Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2020). The Hidden Costs of Teacher Turnover. *AERA Open*, 6(1), 233285842090581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420905812>
- Spector, P. (1985). Measurement of Human Service Staff Satisfaction: Development of the Job Satisfaction Survey. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 13, 693–713. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00929796>
- Spector, P. E. (1997). Job Satisfaction: Application, Assessment, Causes, and Consequences. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231549>

- Steel, R. P. (2002). Turnover Theory at the Empirical Interface: Problems of Fit and Function. *The Academy of Management Review*, 27(3), 346–360. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4134383>
- Teach Away. (2023). *K-12 Education Recruitment report 2023*. Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Building and Strengthening the Teacher Workforce. Retrieved from www.teachaway.com
- Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intention, and Turnover: Path Analyses Based on Meta-Analytic Findings. *Personnel Psychology*, 259–293. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1993.tb00874.x>
- Tkachyk, L. M. (2017). *Perceptions of international teacher turnover in East Asia Regional Council of Schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Walden University. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>
- Toropova, A., Myrberg, E., & Johansson, S. (2021). Teacher job satisfaction: the importance of school working conditions and teacher characteristics. *Educational Review*, 73(1), 71–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1705247>
- Troesch, L. M., & Bauer, C. E. (2020). Is teaching less challenging for career switchers? First and second career teachers' appraisal of professional challenges and their intention to leave teaching. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03067>
- UNESCO. (2024). *UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. 2024. Global Report on Teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession*. <https://doi.org/10.54675/FIGU8035>
- Yoshihara, K.F. (2018). Teacher Satisfaction And Staff Morale In International Schools. All Theses And Dissertations. 203. <https://dune.une.edu/theses/203>

Received: January 21, 2025

Revision received: March 05, 2025

Accepted: March 05, 2025

Author Contributions

Miloš Marković: research planning, literature review, preparing and writing text of the article, data processing, analysis of the results, final approval of the version for publication.

Jorge López-Carratalá: critical revision of the article's methodology, critical revision of the article's content, supervision.

Author Details

Miloš Marković – PhD Candidate, Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia, Murcia, Spain; ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6525-3965>; mmarkovic@alu.ucam.edu

Jorge López-Carratalá – Professor Dr, Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia, Murcia, Spain; ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9944-9884>; jlcarratala@ucam.edu

Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.