

## Effectiveness of Institutional Policies for Academic Staff Retention: A Case of Three Selected Private Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the effectiveness of university policies in retaining academic staff in private higher learning institutions (HLIs) in Tanzania. The study employed a mixed-methods research approach, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data to examine incentives, training, research support, and career development policies as variables for motivating academic staff in Tanzanian private HLIs in three universities in Tanzania. Additionally, 132 respondents were selected through a combination of random and purposive sampling procedures from the total population of 180 academic staff. The findings revealed that all three universities lacked career development policies. The study further revealed that the practice of religious regulations within an institution had a significant impact on promoting academic staff retention, but this effect depended on one's religious affiliation. Additionally, it was revealed that training, research support, and career development policies had an impact on the retention of academic staff members at SEKOMU, SUMAIT, and ZU. The career development policy was observed as the most preferred policy among the others. The study concludes that retaining effective academic staff can give a university a competitive edge in recruiting qualified faculty. The study recommends that each private HLI in Tanzania should consider formulating and effectively implementing the relevant policies, such as training, career development, and research support, to attract and retain competent academic members of staff.*

**Keywords:** Academic staff retention, institutional policies, and higher learning institutions

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## **Introduction**

### ***Background of the study***

Retaining well-motivated academic staff is crucial for any higher learning institution (HLI) that aspires to thrive. This is because motivated staff will attract quality services, increase output and enhance the institutional productivity (Metcalf *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, the problem of academic staff retention is a global challenge, affecting both developing and developed countries (Tettey, 2006). A 2000 survey of full-time faculty members in the US found that more than 40% had considered changing careers. In a study carried out in Australian higher education institutions, 68 per cent of academic personnel indicated that they wished to leave higher education (Nge'the, 2013). Similarly, the situation of academic staff retention in many African countries appears to be particularly urgent and alarming (Tettey, 2006). This is because higher learning institutions are essentially more dependent on intellectual and creative abilities, including the commitment of academic staff, than most other organisations (Tettey, 2010). Also, higher learning institutions are expected to be repositories of the most specialised and skilled intellectuals (Metcalf *et al.*, 2005) as they serve as storehouses of knowledge for nurturing the nation's human resource needs and, hence, satisfying people's aspirations for a good human society (White *et al.*, 2018).

A study conducted by Ibrahim *et al.* (2019) revealed that most private learning institutions in Sierra Leone have, over the years, failed to retain their most talented and valuable employees. According to Ibrahim *et al.* (2019), the inherent retention strategies include spontaneous, sensitive, and agreeable behaviour, which is classified into three elements: power, achievement, and affiliation. In this scenario, power refers to supremacy and recognition. In contrast, achievement refers to personal standards of excellence that are to be fulfilled or overfulfilled, and affiliation refers to social relationships established (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019).

In South African higher education institutions, the issue of staff retention is evident, as the available data indicate that a substantial number (between 5% and 18%) of academics leave these institutions. It is reported that although public universities have developed alternative sources of funds, such as the self-sponsored programmes, the effect seems not to have reached academic staff, as a significant number of staff continue to quit in search of better working conditions (Nge'the, 2013).

Studies from East Africa also indicate that qualified academic staff have resigned from Kenyan public universities and secured better-paying jobs abroad. The Kenyan Public Universities Inspection Board has established that many qualified academic staff from public universities in Kenya emigrate each year. In many cases, Kenyan universities have found that graduates sent

abroad for training tend to remain abroad or join the private sector or quit shortly after their return in search of better remuneration (Nge'the *et al.*, 2012).

To be specific, the situation in Tanzania is not different; private universities also operate in a highly competitive environment, and one of the challenges they face is the retention of their academic staff. Mkude (2009), Istoroyekti *et al.* (2006), and Mkulu (2018) reported that in Tanzania, there is high academic staff turnover in private universities compared to public universities. Similarly, Muhoho (2014) showed that there is a high rate of turnover in Tanzania's work organisations and that those who stayed in the same organisation were from public organisations, particularly the higher learning institutions. Mkulu (2018) indicates that low remuneration in the workplace in private HLIs leads to a high rate of turnover and low retention, as well as delays in payment, a lack of job security, and low academic staff career development. The situation was even worrying in Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University (SEKOMU) and other private universities in Tanzania, where competent staff could not stay for a long time.

Private universities of Tanzania play the same role as public universities. The National Development Vision 2050, among others, envisions a well-educated and knowledgeable society. That means Tanzanian universities should produce high-quality graduates from both private and public higher learning institutions. Quality education will be produced by competent academics who can be well retained in the higher learning institutions. This is because academic staff retention plays an important role, and academic members of staff play a significant role in higher learning institutions.

It should be noted that retaining competent staff is crucial for any organisation striving to achieve its goals. Many of the challenges faced by modern organisations are closely linked to the nature of institutional policies designed to attract and retain employees. Irshad (2012) argues that the health of an educational institution depends on the retention of its quality employees. This suggests that the effective implementation of institutional policies and other incentives, including fringe benefits, is paramount for the welfare and career development of academic staff in HLIs. Tettey (2010) showed that one of the strategies expected by members of academic staff at higher learning institutions for retention is the presence of policies on academic staff: sabbatical leave, children's education programmes, research programmes, and training schemes.

### **Effects of University Policies on Academic Staff Retention**

University policies should not be overly rigid; instead, they should be fair, transparent, and flexible. Key policies that contribute to academic staff

retention include healthcare, research support, study leave, motivation and incentives, promotion criteria, transportation, and benefits for family members, among others (Dwyer, 2013). Ibrahim *et al.* (2019) report that several studies have indicated that most organisations are successful as a result of valuing their employees and investing in their capacity building. Some scholars believe that people with high achievement, motivation, and higher aspirations also quit their jobs due to a lack of opportunities for advancement and promotion.

This also applies to academic staff members. Apart from a good financial package, which academic institutions might offer, the academic staff will only remain in the institution if there are planned policies on training, advancement, incentives, and recognition (Dwyer, 2013). Short of this, academic staff members have opportunities to quit and join another institution with well-organised plans for career advancement (Tettey, 2010). An organisation views that retaining talented employees is a fundamental principle for achieving a competitive advantage (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019). Lyengi (2014) argues that the factors influencing an individual to stay in the same organisation include company policies, transparency, keeping promises made during hiring, orientation of new employees, working conditions, and job expectations. Other factors include support from fellow employees, management support, flexibility and freedom in work, technology, sufficient training opportunities, job satisfaction, salary and benefits, opportunities for personal growth, and opportunities to provide feedback and express concerns.

A study conducted by Metcalf *et al.* (2005) has shown that a well-designed institutional incentive policy will motivate staff, as it is considered a strong retention strategy and a predictor of retention for staff. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the effectiveness of institutional policies in the retention of academic staff in private HLIs in Tanzania. The primary objective of this study was to examine the effectiveness of institutional policies in retaining academic staff in Tanzania's private higher learning institutions. Specifically, the study focused on policies related to incentives, training, research support, and career development. Central to this investigation was the question: How effective are these institutional policies in promoting the retention of academic staff within private higher education institutions in Tanzania?

### **Statement of the problem**

The issue of academic staff retention has been a pressing concern in Tanzanian private higher education institutions. Records covering the period from 2013 to 2016 indicate that private universities had lost a substantial number of academic staff members through brain drain (Muhoho, 2024), both

internally and externally. For example, at SEKOMU, a total of 16 academic staff members left the institution, while SUMAIT lost nine academic staff, and Zanzibar University lost 15 academic staff. While the number may be insignificant, losing even one academic staff member, for whatever reason, means a loss in human capital by the concerned university because they might have invested in training that academic staff. Due to the issue of staff turnover, along with an overreliance on part-time and retired academic staff, private universities encounter substantial challenges in effectively carrying out their fundamental functions of teaching, research, and consultancy.

Numerous studies have examined academic staff retention (Mkude, 2011; Muhoho, 2014; Nnko, 2014; Tettey, 2010). However, a noticeable gap exists in the literature regarding specific factors that influence the retention of academic staff in private higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Therefore, identifying and understanding the factors that influence the retention of academic staff in Tanzania's private higher learning institutions is essential. This issue is critical to ensuring the sustainability and continued development of higher education in the country. Consequently, a thorough investigation into the key drivers and barriers to staff retention was both necessary and timely.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study adopted the Two-factor theory, which was pioneered by Herzberg (1954). The Two-Factor Theory posits that there are factors that contribute to job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction in the workplace. According to this theory, factors that cause job satisfaction, also known as *true motivators*, are intrinsic to the workplace (Herzberg, 1954). They include job satisfaction, achievements, recognition, challenging tasks, delegation of power, and authority through responsibility, freedom, and control during the execution of tasks as well as duties (Irshad, 2012). Factors causing dissatisfaction, which are also known as *hygienic factors*, mainly result from non-job-related variables that are called extrinsic variables (Metcalf *et al.*, 2005). These variables include salary/pay, co-worker relationships, company policies, supervisory or management style, and work environment (Mwita *et al.*, 2018).

According to the Two-factor Theory, it is argued that employees are motivated by internal values rather than external values (Irshad, 2012). In other words, remaining in the work is internally motivated and propelled by variables that are intrinsic to the work. When someone is internally satisfied, it is not easy to quit the job (Irshad, 2012). The two-factor theory was selected because it is relevant to the present study problem. It means that if employers in private HLIs in Tanzania do not have effective retention

policies for their academic staff, the rate of staff turnover will be high and vice versa.

### **Research Gaps**

Although several studies were conducted in Tanzania on retention of academic staff (Nnko, 2014; Mkude, 2011; Muhoho, 2014; Tettey, 2010), scholars have concentrated little on the effectiveness of institutional policies as a factor for retention of academic staff, especially in private higher learning institutions. The majority of them focused on staff satisfaction, promotion, career development, motivation, compensation, working conditions, workload, job security, and leadership styles as the primary retention factors for academic staff. As noted by Nnko (2014), many higher learning institutions in Tanzania have not conducted surveys on academic staff retention due to limited funding. This makes it particularly challenging to uncover the factors influencing staff retention in private higher learning institutions, especially since their retention programmes often differ from those of public institutions.

Several scholars (for instance, Metcalf *et al.*, 2005 and Tettey, 2010) put little consideration on university policies when they reviewed retention factors for academic staff. Institutional policies that are crucial for academic staff retention are often not adequately addressed by many scholars. This study identified a gap in the literature regarding specific university policies that should be implemented to retain academic staff. Moreover, while the Two-Factor Theory suggests that organisations should adopt retention strategies to address employee dissatisfaction, it fails to identify which specific policies are most effective, particularly in the context of academic staff. Therefore, this study was developed to address that theoretical gap by applying the Two-Factor Theory to explore effective institutional policies for academic staff retention. This study aimed to fill gaps, particularly in identifying effective policies for retaining academic staff in higher learning institutions.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The rationale for using a mixed-methods approach in this study is that the quantitative data and the qualitative data complement each other in providing a deeper understanding of statistical and detailed respondents' views. Data from SEKOMU, SUMAIT and Zanzibar University were collected effectively, which led to the conclusion of this study. Moreover, mixed methods give voice to the study's respondents and ensure that the study findings are well analysed. Using this approach, questionnaires and interviews were administered to the study's participants.

### **Study Design, study area, sample size and sampling procedures**

This study employed a case study design. This case study design enabled the researcher to gather sufficient information regarding institutional policies for the retention of academic staff at each university, categorised into three groups: employed academic staff, management leaders, and former academic staff. Moreover, Yin (2018) explains that the case study enables the researcher to study and collect information within an organisation in a detailed manner. Case studies emphasise detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Chiwamba, 2022).

The study was conducted in three PHLIs selected from Zanzibar and the Tanzanian Mainland, namely, Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University (SEKOMU) from the Tanzanian Mainland, and SUMAIT University and Zanzibar University (ZU), both located in Zanzibar. While SEKOMU was selected because of a critical shortage of lecturers and high staff turnover rates, SUMAIT and ZU were selected for two main reasons: first, they were the only private universities established in Zanzibar. Second, the two HLIs had frequent incidences of academic staff turnover (TCU, 2019). For this study, the target population consisted of all academic staff teaching at the three private universities in Tanzania as of December 2016. The total number of academic staff employed on both contractual and permanent bases varied across the universities. In 2016, SEKOMU employed 68 academic staff, SUMAIT had 48, and ZU had 64, resulting in a combined target population of 180 academic staff members.

The sample size for this study consisted of 180 employees from the three universities at the time of the study. The selected sample of 180 participants was deemed appropriate, as it aligned with the principles of a normal distribution, ensuring the sample was unbiased, adequate, and statistically reliable. From this population, a stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across relevant groups, resulting in a final sample of 132 respondents, as presented in Table 3.1. According to Singh and Masuku (2014), a specific formula exists for determining a sample size.

Thus, the sample was obtained through the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{180}{1 + 180 \times 0.045^2} \quad n = 131.9$$

$$n = 132$$

Where n = sample size, N = population and e = sampling error (99.55%).

**Table 2.1:** Population and Sample size

Category	Respondents Per university	Total number of expected respondents	Sampling technique employed to pick different categories of respondents
Permanent and contractually employed academic staff	30 from each university	90	Random sampling
Management: top 3 management leaders, senate and council members and deans of faculty,	6 from each university	18	Purposive sampling and random sampling
Academic staff who left their jobs from 2013 to 2016)	8 from each university	24	Random sampling
Total	44	132	

**Source:** Field Data (2018)

### Response Rate

A total of 119 out of 132 (90.1%) respondents filled the questionnaire, and they were involved in interviews. Then, 18 respondents from management leaders (members of the senate and council, and deans of faculty) were interviewed. On a permanent and contractual basis, 90 respondents were sampled, comprising 11 members of academic staff who were interviewed and 66 who completed the questionnaires. Such a stance made an 85.6 per cent response rate. In this regard, a total of 37 academic members of staff from three HLIs had quit their jobs during the period from 2013 to 2016. All 24 (100.0%) academic members of staff sampled for this study from the three selected HLIs filled the questionnaires and were interviewed accordingly (i.e., six were interviewed and 18 filled the questionnaires) (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2:** Response rate

Category	Sample Size	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage
Permanent and contractually employed academic staff	90	77	86%
Management: top 3 management leaders, Senate. Council members and Deans of Faculty	18	18	100%
Academic staff who left their jobs from 2013 to 2016	24	24	100%
<b>Total</b>	132	119	90%

**Source:** Field Data (2023)



### **Data collection methods**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively gather both qualitative and quantitative data from a targeted sample comprising academic staff (permanent and contractual), university management, and academic staff who had exited their positions between 2013 and 2016. The primary data collection tools included interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis.

Interviews were conducted with 29 purposively selected participants representing all three respondent groups. These included top university management officials, who play a central role in institutional decision-making processes, particularly regarding staff retention, as well as current and former academic staff who had resigned. Semi-structured interview guides facilitated the collection of in-depth responses while maintaining consistency across interviews. Depending on availability and convenience, interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telephone, and were held in either English or Swahili to accommodate the participants' preferences. Each session lasted approximately 40 minutes to one hour. The researcher personally conducted all interviews and documented responses through detailed note-taking.

Questionnaires were distributed to 113 respondents, encompassing the same target groups. A total of 90 completed questionnaires were returned, reflecting a strong response rate, while 13 were not recovered. The distribution and collection of questionnaires were carried out with the support of senior university personnel, including faculty deans at SUMAIT and Zanzibar University and the Human Resource Manager at SEKOMU. Their assistance ensured organised dissemination and the establishment of central collection points, minimising the risk of data loss. The questionnaires were designed to gather quantitative data and were administered primarily to currently employed academic staff and top university leaders. To enhance efficiency, questionnaire collection was coordinated to coincide with interview schedules.

Document analysis provided additional secondary data to complement the primary findings. The researcher reviewed a range of institutional and regulatory documents, including the Tanzania Commission for Universities' (TCU) reports—such as the Higher Education Students Admission, Enrolment, and Graduation Statistics (2012/13–2017/18)—as well as internal documents like schemes of service, salary structures, fringe benefit policies, training and incentive programs, employment contracts, and relevant TCU circulars. These documents were obtained through official channels at the respective universities and from their official websites. The document review

was instrumental in contextualising institutional practices and policies, thus enhancing the depth and validity of the research findings. Data collection was conducted sequentially across the three institutions, beginning with SUMAIT University, followed by Zanzibar University, and concluding with SEKOMU, allowing for a structured and systematic research process.

### **Validity, Reliability, Data Analysis, and Ethical Considerations**

To ensure validity, data were accurately recorded and presented without falsification or unwarranted modifications. Proper academic citation and adherence to research objectives guided the data analysis and interpretation. Reliability was reinforced by using uniform and objective questionnaires across all three universities. All 132 sampled respondents were selected through random sampling, and 119 (90.1%) completed the survey. The questionnaire consisted of 14 relevant questions, tested for consistency and clarity.

Data analysis for quantitative data was conducted using descriptive statistics, including percentages and bar charts, to identify patterns and support interpretation. Data were processed and analysed using SPSS version 20.0, chosen for its accessibility. Responses were coded, categorised, and tabulated in Microsoft Excel for clarity and comparability across respondent groups. In addition, qualitative data from interviews were organised, coded, and analysed using narrative analysis. This method allowed for thematic comparison across academic staff, management, and former employees, incorporating direct quotations and aligning findings with the literature and theoretical framework.

To uphold ethical standards, research clearance was obtained from the Open University of Tanzania, as well as from SEKOMU, SUMAIT, and Zanzibar University, where permission was granted to conduct the study. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Data were analysed objectively, maintaining the integrity of the research process.

### **Results and discussions**

This section presents the study's findings, utilising both descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis procedures as guided by specific research questions. The first question was formulated to determine the effectiveness of the university's policies for retention of academic staff in Tanzanian private HLIs. Table 3.1 indicates that more than half (55%) of respondents agreed that SEKOMU policies were effective in retaining academic staff. Besides, 52% disagreed that the university had a planned and effective career development policy for academic staff; 52% agreed that the university had planned and effective policies for training academic staff, while 52% agreed

that the university had plans and effective policies for research support for academic staff (see Table 3.1). Furthermore, 65% agreed that the university had good and effective incentive policies for academic staff, whereas 52% disagreed that the university's religious-related regulations influenced the retention of academic staff (see Table 3.1).

Furthermore, just over two-thirds (68%) of respondents from SUMAIT agreed that the university's policies were effective in retaining academic staff. However, 52% disagreed that the university had a well-planned and clear career development policy. In contrast, 80% agreed that the university had established clear policies for training academic staff, and 68% confirmed the presence of clear research support policies. Additionally, 75% agreed that SUMAIT had effective and transparent incentive policies for academic staff. Lastly, 48% of respondents acknowledged that the university's religious-based regulations influenced staff retention (Table 3.1). Moreover, 66% of respondents agreed that Zanzibar University's policies were effective in retaining academic staff. However, 52% disagreed that the university had a well-planned and effective career development policy. In contrast, 73% agreed that the university had clear and effective training policies for academic staff, and 59% confirmed the existence of a structured research support policy. Additionally, 45% agreed that the university had a good and effective incentive scheme. Notably, 84% of respondents agreed that the university's religious-related regulations had a significant influence on academic staff retention (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1:** Effectiveness of University Policies on Academic Staff Retention

Statement	Response			
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	TOTAL
University's policies are effective for academic staff retention	<b>SEKOMU</b>			
	17 (55%)	14 (45%)	0 (0%)	31 (100%)
	<b>SUMAIT</b>			
	30 (68%)	13 (30%)	1 (2%)	44 (100%)
This university has a planned and clear career development policy for academic staff.	<b>ZU</b>			
	29 (66 %)	15 (34%)	0 (0%)	44 (100%)
	<b>SEKOMU</b>			
	15 (48%)	15 (34%)	0 (0%)	31 (100%)
This university has a planned and clear policy for training academic staff.	<b>SUMAIT</b>			
	19 (43%)	23 (52%)	2 (5%)	44 (100%)
	<b>ZU</b>			
	21 (48%)	23 (52%)	0 (0%)	44 (100%)
This university has a planned and clear policy for research support for academic staff.	<b>SEKOMU</b>			
	16 (52%)	15 (48%)	0 (0%)	31 (100%)
	<b>SUMAIT</b>			
	35 (80%)	9 (20%)	0 (0%)	44 (100%)
This university has good and clear incentive policies for its academic staff.	<b>ZU</b>			
	32 (73%)	9 (20%)	3 (7%)	44 (100%)
	<b>SEKOMU</b>			
	16 (52%)	15 (48%)	0 (0%)	31 (100%)
This university has good and clear incentive policies for its academic staff.	<b>SUMAIT</b>			
	30 (68%)	13 (20%)	1 (2%)	44 (100%)
	<b>ZU</b>			
	26 (59%)	15 (34%)	3 (7%)	44 (100%)
This university has good and clear incentive policies for its academic staff.	<b>SEKOMU</b>			
	20 (65%)	10 (32%)	1 (3%)	31 (100%)
	<b>SUMAIT</b>			
	33 (75%)	10 (23%)	1 (2%)	44 (100%)
This university has good and clear incentive policies for its academic staff.	<b>ZU</b>			

Statement	Response			
This university's religious regulations influence the retention of academic staff.	20 (45%)	19 (43%)	5 (11%)	44 (100%)
	<b>SEKOMU</b>			
	15 (48%)	16 (52%)	0 (0%)	31 (100%)
	<b>SUMAIT</b>			
	21 (48%)	16 (36%)	7 (16%)	44 (100%)
	<b>ZU</b>			
	37 (84%)	7 (16%)	0 (0%)	44 (100%)

**Source:** Field Data (2023)

Table 3.1 illustrates that university policies have an impact on the retention of academic staff. It was also revealed that SEKOMU had three out of four selected policies, which are training, research support and incentive policies. The majority of respondents disagreed that SEKOMU had a career development policy. However, it was noted that the existence of a policy does not guarantee its effective implementation. Oral interviews revealed that SEKOMU faced challenges in implementing its training policies, primarily due to funding and sponsorship constraints. As a result, many eligible staff members were not sponsored adequately. Although training policies were in place, academic staff reported that only a few had received university sponsorship for further studies. It was further revealed that there were a few opportunities for academic staff to go abroad for studies on exchange programmes. This was substantiated by former members of staff from SEKOMU who narrated that:

I quit my job at SEKOMU because I was not given the opportunity for further training, despite the presence of the policy on staff training. (Former assistant lecturer from SEKOMU)

This quotation suggests that since training is important, SEKOMU should facilitate continuous professional development programmes for the growth and improvement of their staff, enabling them to acquire relevant training and appropriate skills. The SEKOMU, like other private higher learning institutions, was reluctant to sponsor its academic staff to study abroad, as many African academic staff did not return after training. Such a stance was argued by Tetey (2006), who suggested that training offered outside the country influenced staff to leave, as the majority did not return. As the Expectancy Theory posits, many academic staff join higher learning institutions with the expectation that they will develop their careers. If their hope fades, it is easy for them to leave and find another job.

Accordingly, Tetey (2006), who examined the work life of three sets of probationary faculty members at one university, emphasised three variables that shape the lives of academics and subsequently compel them to stay or leave their institutions. They include attacks on their professional priorities, a lack of confidence that their institutions will support and defend their personal as well as professional interests, and a deterioration in their quality of life (Tetey, 2006).

Furthermore, the results of this study showed that SUMAIT had three of the studied policies (incentives, training, and research support policies), but it missed the career development policy. The findings demonstrated that SUMAIT had attempted to implement policies to retain its academic staff. Therefore, academic staff are more likely to be satisfied when incentive,

training, and research support policies are effectively implemented. A well-structured incentive policy not only enhances motivation but also serves as a critical strategy for staff retention. Numerous studies have identified reward systems as significant predictors of employee retention and turnover, highlighting their importance in maintaining a stable and committed academic workforce (Metcalf *et al.*, 2005; Chivandire, 2019).

Research data in Table 3.1 showed that Zanzibar University, like other studied universities, had three out of four studied policies: training, incentive scheme, and research support policies. However, it lacked a career development policy. Because of this situation, academic staff who join Zanzibar University with aspirations for career advancement may be inclined to leave if they perceive greater development opportunities elsewhere, such as in public universities or other organisations. While data revealed that Zanzibar University provides sponsorships for staff pursuing master's and PhD programmes, both locally and internationally, the effectiveness and accessibility of these opportunities play a crucial role in influencing staff retention and long-term institutional commitment.

The findings also showed that Zanzibar University was attempting to implement a programme that could be effective for academic staff retention. The sponsorship was offered annually to a limited number of academic staff. One assistant lecturer who was employed asserted that: "Although the employer sponsored its academic staff, the number was still very low." Zanzibar University sponsored its academic staff, as the training acquired from successful organisations was deemed most important and of high value for the academic development of the institution. This finding aligns with the results of Chivandire (2019), who reports that to gain a competitive advantage in the international market, business organisations need to hire and retain proficient employees.

Elrasheed *et al.* (2017) add that employees' retention is controlled by elements that should be overseen compatibly: organisational culture, policies, salary and reward systems, together with training, including professional development systems. An era of "take it or leave it" has gone; Zanzibar University and other private higher learning institutions have no option. Instead, they need an attractive career development policy. This would help in attracting an employee to remain in an organisation. The retention of academic staff was beneficial to Zanzibar University, the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, as well as the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, at large. This is because the skills and knowledge of academic staff are significant to Zanzibar University.

Moreover, the results showed that all three universities had three out of the

four studied policies, namely, training, incentive schemes, and research support policies, but they lacked a career development policy. As academic titles depend on the attained education level, a career development policy is essential for any academic institution that aims to thrive. The findings also showed that academic staff were likely to leave these universities because the universities lacked effective career development plans. It is worth noting that in academic institutions, career development is closely tied to promotion practices. Chivandire (2019) argued that among other factors that influence the turnover of employees are poor promotion and a lack of career advancement policies. To avoid losing competent academics, universities need to identify and apply suitable retention programmes. One of the retention factors recommended in the literature is the implementation of career development programmes (Nyamumbarwa, 2013; Chiboiwa, 2009).

When reviewing the TCU (2019) document on standards and Guidelines for University Education in Tanzania, it was noted in clause number 1.7 that:

As the quality of staff is key to maintaining the quality of university education, every University shall establish inclusive human resource policies that ensure the recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of qualified and competent staff to achieve the mission and carry out the legal mandate.

The guideline further emphasises in its clause No.1.7.3 that:

Every University shall establish clear policies and procedures for staff development and continuous professional development.

Furthermore, academic staff members in private higher learning institutions desire to be employed by an organisation that has policies encouraging internal social relationships among employees, fostering interpersonal relationships that extend beyond work schedules. These benefits include study scholarships, annual leave, security, research opportunities, training opportunities, and permanent and pensionable employment.

The second research question aimed to reveal the preferred university policies in relation to the retention of academic staff in Tanzanian private HLIs. Respondents provided varied opinions on key institutional policies related to training, incentives, career development, and research support, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. The results indicated that nearly half (48%) of respondents from SEKOMU acknowledged the existence of a research policy, while 26% identified career development policies as a critical factor in retaining academic staff in private HLIs. The findings from this study emphasised that private higher learning institutions should consider that one of the important duties of academic staff is to conduct research. Thus, the research support policy should explicitly state that academic staff are entitled

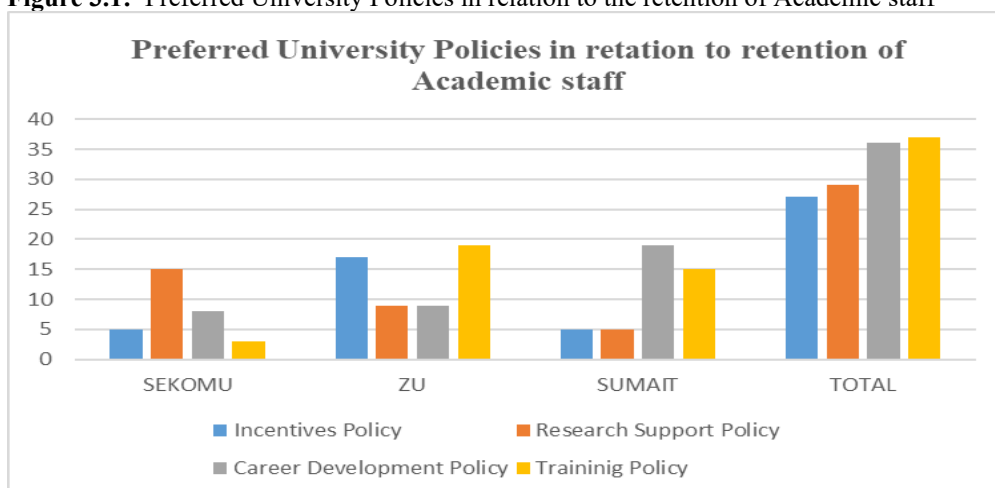


to institutional support for conducting research, whether within or outside the university. A majority of respondents emphasised the importance of this policy, highlighting the critical role of research in both individual academic careers and institutional development.

In a globalised world, research is essential for fostering knowledge-driven growth and innovation. It also enhances teaching quality and contributes significantly to the professional success of academic staff (Figure 3.1). When respondents from SUMAIT were asked about effective policies for retaining academic staff, career development policy (43%) and training policy (34%) were identified as the most effective policies for retaining existing staff and attracting new talent to join the university (see Figure 3.1). Figure 3.1 illustrates that the training development policy was crucial to Zanzibar University's academic staff retention and turnover reduction. This concurs with results from a study by Nge'the (2013), who observed that the level of employee turnover and training was expected to be inversely proportional; the higher the level of training, the lower the turnover intention. This assumes that the longer an employee stays with an employer, the higher the return on training will be (Mwita *et al.*, 2018).

The Zanzibar University programme, which offers sponsorship for training to its academic staff, creates an environment where academic staff feel recognised for their strengths, while also providing opportunities for them to enhance their skills and gain more knowledge for their institution. The training programme could be availed inside or outside the university (Mwita *et al.*, 2018). Private higher learning institutions can plan quarterly or annual training schedules for their academic staff, which internal or external experts will provide.

**Figure 3.1:** Preferred University Policies in relation to the retention of Academic staff



Training, development, and career development policies have a significant impact on the academic staff development. Thus, these two policies are crucial for retaining academic staff members in higher learning institutions. The present study argues that an appropriate training programme for academic staff members would contribute positively to academic staff retention, as training is one of the key motivational factors for employees. Career development policy involves the growth and advancement of academic staff from one level to another. Career development policy is at the heart of academic staff, as it enhances their professional knowledge and skills. Moreover, career development policy is important to academic staff because of its impact on compensation, promotion, and responsibility. For the academic staff's upward mobility, it is highly desirable since the majority of academic staff are career-oriented. Career-minded employees consider career growth and development as a crucial deciding factor in their decision to remain in an organisation or leave. Where growth is not guaranteed, employees leave for alternative employment. Career growth, particularly through promotion, enables employees to plan for the future and acquire the necessary skills to remain competitive (Mwita *et al.*, 2018). Private universities must invest in supporting their academic staff for career development. Therefore, private universities should seek scholarships to attract their academic staff members to stay at the institution where they are employed.

Employees are more likely to leave their current employer in favour of another organisation that offers better training and professional development opportunities. High job retention is generally reflected in an organisation where most established positions are consistently occupied, employees show minimal intention to leave, job stability is maintained, career development opportunities are accessible, and staff tend to remain with the organisation over an extended period. A study by Nyamumbarwa (2013) on turnover intentions of academic Librarians in Zimbabwe showed that 60% of the respondents in the lower-level grades indicated that there were no opportunities for progress in the profession in Zimbabwe. The apparent lack of career growth in the profession was cited as the reason why some academic librarians were considering leaving the profession.

Research support policy was mentioned as a third strategy for retaining employees. It was recommended by respondents from all three universities as an effective strategy for retaining academic staff in private higher learning institutions. Furthermore, research support policy helps to improve academic staff's skills, especially in academic, social, and economic issues, as academic staff and academic institutions have important duties in these areas, particularly in the development of a country. Universities should be generous

in their provision for externally funded research and the employment of research and teaching assistants to stimulate a research culture and free up teaching staff to undertake research. This can include schemes to encourage fast-track promotion, as well as a pleasant campus and a positive institutional ethos (Lyangi, 2014). The objective of retention policies should be to identify and retain committed employees for as long as it is mutually profitable to the organisation and the employee. The results indicate that academic staff can be retained when the HLI has in place the research support, training and career development policies. These policies were crucial for retaining academic staff members when they were effectively implemented.

Drawing inferences from the findings in all three institutions (SEKOMU, SUMAIT, and ZU), one can deduce that the presence of institutional policies, especially those related to career development, training, and research support for staff welfare, is an important strategy for staff retention. Conversely, the absence of these policies can motivate staff turnover. Tetey (2006) argued that three variables shape the lives of academics and subsequently compel them to leave their institutions: attacks on their professional priorities, a lack of confidence that their institutions will support and defend their personal and professional interests, and a deterioration in their quality of life. This means that staff's personal and professional interests must be defended and protected to retain competent staff in an institution. The finding aligns with what Nyamumbarwa (2013) found on the turnover intentions of academic Librarians in Zimbabwe. In that study, it was revealed that 60% of the respondents in the lower-level grades had no opportunities for developing their professions in Zimbabwe. Thus, the apparent lack of career growth in one's profession was cited as the reason why academic librarians were considering quitting their jobs. A study by Chiboiwa (2009) highlights that high academic staff turnover has a negative impact on the quality of university graduates, the achievement of institutional goals, and national educational development. In private higher learning institutions (HLIs), such turnover is often linked to the absence of relevant institutional policies or the ineffective implementation of existing ones, as observed in SEKOMU, SUMAIT, and ZU in this study. One of the key strategies recommended for retention is the establishment of robust career development programs (Chevindare, 2019; Chiboiwa, 2009). Career development is closely linked to promotion practices in academic institutions, both of which impact staff retention. Retaining academic staff is vital for effective university governance and national academic performance. Abeli et al. (2010) further argue that staff retention reduces the costs associated with recruitment, training, and onboarding of new employees. High job retention within an organisation is characterised by the consistent fulfilment of established positions, low or absent turnover intentions among employees, stability in job

status, access to career development opportunities, and employees maintaining long-term employment with the institution (Ng'ethe *et al.*, 2012).

The findings from this study are in line with results by Lyengi (2014) and Mwita *et al.* (2018), who reported that factors for retaining academic staff include participatory institutional governance, reasonable remuneration, research support, autonomy, recognition of performance, and hiring processes. Additional factors contributing to academic staff retention include a collegial work culture, transparent promotion and training pathways, access to publication opportunities, a positive and supportive work environment, and a democratic leadership style. Moreover, reasonable workloads, structured non-monetary reward systems, overtime compensation, comprehensive health benefits, retirement and pension schemes, as well as generous leave and vacation provisions—including extra paid days—were also identified as important retention drivers (Mwita *et al.*, 2018). To achieve a quality retention programme, organisations ought to determine the retention factors relevant to each of their employee groups. This suggests that private higher learning institutions should focus on preparing research support, training and career development policies to retain their academic staff.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The present study concludes that the financial and non-financial benefits are significant variables and should be considered together in the process of retaining academic staff in Tanzanian private HLIs. Research support, training, and career development policies were relevant for the retention of academic staff in all three selected universities, although the effective implementation of these policies was a prerequisite. However, the objective of retention policies should be to identify and retain committed employees if it is mutually profitable to the organisation and the employee (Chevindare, 2019). Furthermore, retention of academic staff in private HLIs is critical due to the increased number of HLIs in Tanzanian academic staff, for the higher education labour market is fundamentally competitive. Retention of effective academic staff can give a university a competitive edge in recruiting qualified academic talent. This is because the number of private universities and students' enrolments in Tanzania has significantly increased. It further revealed that the practice of adhering to religious regulations within an institution had a significant impact on promoting academic staff retention, depending on one's religious affiliation.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that each private HLI in Tanzania should consider formulating and effectively implementing the relevant policies, such as training, career development, and research support policies, that target attracting and retaining competent academic members of

staff. The career development policy outlines the university's plans and vision. In this era of a highly competitive labour market for academic staff, academic institutions, especially private HLIs, should prepare their internal plans for developing academic staff. To achieve quality retention programmes, institutions ought to determine the retention factors relevant to each of their employee groups and then focus their strategies on these factors by streamlining the needs into desired policies.

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