

# A Study of Social Environmental Support and Turnover Intention among Rural Primary School Teachers in China

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## Abstract

The quality of education in rural areas is negatively impacted by teacher attrition. An in-depth study of the issue of rural teacher turnover intention is of great significance to the promotion of educational equity. The main research objective is to identify the level of social environmental support and turnover intention of rural primary school teachers in China. The current study utilizes a quantitative survey methodology. Simple random sampling was used to select 132 rural primary school teachers in Pingyin County. The survey instrument was developed based on prior research. Questionnaires were distributed among participants, and data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.0 to derive the mean, standard deviation, and frequency. The findings of this study indicate that there is a medium level of turnover intention among rural teachers. In terms of social environmental support, respondents acknowledged that their satisfaction with the social support they received from family and supervisors was lower than that of their peers, the majority of teachers expressed a moderate level of social environmental support. The findings enrich knowledge about turnover intention among rural teachers and inspire us to create a more supportive atmosphere to meet teachers' working needs and reduce the turnover rate.

**Keywords:** Social Environmental Support, Turnover Intention, Rural Teachers

## Introduction

A high rate of teacher attrition presents a significant challenge to the educational system (Hoang, 2020). In recent years, a lot of rural teachers all over the world regularly intend to quit their existing positions and seek new opportunities because they believe that the second option would provide better benefits, job stability, and experience, or that it will help them avoid conflicts at their current employment. Chinese impoverished countries frequently struggle with issues of high teacher attrition rates. Evidence showed that 71.56% of rural teachers in 35 counties in China intend to resign from their positions, in certain districts with significant levels of poverty, this percentage even approaches 80% (Fu & Zeng, 2019). The

quality of education is negatively impacted by teacher attrition (Aulia & Haerani, 2023). The high turnover rate makes the schools confront a number of dilemmas, such as a shortage of skillful educators and high costs of recruitment and training. Teacher turnover also has a negative impact on student's mental health and academic performance (Ibragimov et al., 2021).

Turnover intention is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of non-economic factors, such as the working environment at the school (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). Based on a significant amount of empirical research on employee turnover, the researcher discovered that social environmental support is consistently associated with turnover intentions and actual turnover (Le et al., 2023). Generally speaking, social environmental support is a working condition that reduces turnover intention. Employees who felt supported and cared for by their social networks at work showed higher levels of satisfaction and a desire to stay longer. Teachers may be more likely to quit their jobs if they feel that their district or school does not support them in their work or if they do not have the resources and assistance they need to be successful (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Prior research on turnover intentions has mainly examined factors like job satisfaction, job burnout, or organizational commitment, however, relatively few studies have investigated turnover intentions from the perspective of social environmental support. Furthermore, there remains a paucity of evidence on the level of social environmental support for rural teacher populations. Thus, the present research aims to further the findings of the past research and expand on it using a rural environment. This study will determine the level of rural teachers' social environmental support from family, peers, and supervisors as well as the degree of turnover intention.

### **Literature Review**

Turnover intention refers to the likelihood that employees will stay with or leave the management organization (Hussain et al., 2022). Turnover refers to the behavior of employees who quit their jobs after experiencing dissatisfaction, uncomfortable, and less loyalty. Employee turnover is a two-dimensional notion that encompasses both voluntary and involuntary turnover behaviors. Underperformers leaving the company is a healthy turnover; however, outstanding employees quitting suggests internal issues within the organization. In any organization, a staff member's decision to leave can negatively impact other employees' commitment levels and result in a loss of human resources for the business. Prior to their official departure, employees will usually express their intention to resign. Voluntary turnover of employees will result in demoralization and loss of human capital investment. Given that resignation affects personnel's lives, families, and careers in significant ways, people generally choose to resign after giving it considerable thought. Additionally, teachers with high turnover intention will be plagued with self-doubt, which will diminish their teaching quality and cause difficulty for school management. It also disrupts the establishment of stable teacher-student relationships. According to certain studies, several factors such as social support, job satisfaction, work experience, marital status, and job analysis may influence turnover intention. It has been widely acknowledged by scholars that the analysis of an employee's turnover intention gives human resources the chance to adopt a proactive strategy to improve retention.

Social environmental support refers to the behavior of interactions or relationships that provide people with positive material and spiritual assistance (Xie et al., 2022) or a feeling of attachment to a person or group they regard as caring. Support from the social environment

is frequently encountered in the context of strong connections with people who are close to the subject, like friends, family, and the local community (Hamid et al., 2019). People are better equipped to handle stress and environmental obstacles when they have greater social support. Social environmental support can be measured by a person's perception of accessible and actual support, or by how well a person is integrated into a social network. Over the past two decades, research on social support and its beneficial impacts in the workplace has grown in popularity. Social support is a vital workplace resource that enables individuals to improve their social adaptation, protect themselves from negative environmental hardships, and successfully manage their careers. A person's intention to leave their job could be influenced by how much they support and cooperate with one another. According to Fiorillo et al (2020), people report feeling alone or undervalued by their peers tend to have higher turnover rates. On the other hand, individuals who feel that they are encouraging and cooperative are more likely to stay in their positions (Alonso-Garca et al., 2019). People who are supported by their social environmental networks are better able to feel satisfied with their professional prospects, overcome obstacles at work, and have lower turnover intentions.

### **Research Design**

The main objective of this research is to identify the level of social environmental support and turnover intention of rural primary school teachers, The main research method is the quantitative methodology with the survey. The quantitative survey method has the advantage of quantifiable results high accuracy, and less subjectivity of the investigators. This study collected quantitative information about the level of rural teachers' social environmental support and turnover intention among rural teachers through the use of online questionnaires. Statistical analysis of the data gathered will also be done in this study using SPSS.

### **Research Sample**

The target population for this study is teachers from rural primary schools in Pingyin County, China. Simple random sampling (SRS) was used in this study to facilitate the inquiry process. Because each sample in the population has an equal and known chance of being chosen as a subject in simple random sampling procedures. The population size (N) consisted of 200 respondents, and 132 respondents were randomly selected as the sample size (S) to obtain a 95% confidence interval. The sample size was determined in accordance with the table proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). All respondents were chosen at random from a list of full-time teachers in various positions. There are 52 men (39.4%) and 80 women (60.6%) in the sample. 20.5 percent of the sample (27 participants) are over the age of 50, and 47% of the sample (62 participants) is between the ages of twenty and thirty. and 32.6% of the sample (43 participants) is between the ages of thirty-five and fifty. Most of the sample's members are married. Among the participants, 78 have bachelor's degrees (59.1%) and 54 have postgraduate degrees (40.9%).

Table 1  
*Respondents' Profile*

Demographic	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender(n=132)</b>		
Male	52	39.4
Female	80	60.6
<b>Age Range (n=132)</b>		
20-35	62	47
36-50	43	32.6
More than 50	27	20.5
<b>Education Level (n=132)</b>		
Bachelor	78	59.1
Master or above	54	40.9

### Data Collection Method

Modern technology has made it most effective to collect data for this study using mail surveys. 132 teacher participants were given the chance to respond to an online closed questionnaire by email. This method of collecting data is incredibly inexpensive, and allows respondents to react at their convenience. Based on a thorough literature review, existing and established instruments have been employed. The questionnaire consisted of 3 independent sections including measurement scales designed to assess the constructs of this study and demographic information. All data that has been collected is analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 27.0). For the purpose of data analysis, descriptive statistics have been employed. Descriptive statistics are used to report demographic data and summarize the response to all independent and dependent variables. Frequency measures such as percentage, mean and standard deviation are used in this phase.

**Demographic Variables:** In the first section of the questionnaire there are demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational level to gain general information about the respondents.

**Measurement of Social Environmental Support:** Social Environmental Support Questionnaire, a 25-item scale which is developed by Leung et al. (2020), Bateman (2009), and Greenhaus et al. (1990) to measure participant's level of social support from family, peers, and supervisors, is used. All of these subscales are measured from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with the 5 statements on a 5-point scale.

**Measurement of Turnover Intention:** The turnover Intention Scale which was designed by Ali and Anwar (2021) is used in this study. Respondents were asked to rate these items on a 5-point scale where 1 denotes "strongly agree," 2 agree, 3 are "undecided," and 4 are "disagree." It measures how frequently and seriously individuals are thinking about leaving their current position.

Table 2 shows that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy of social environmental support scale' items are 0.829 and  $\chi^2$  (df = 105) = 428.354,  $p < .0001$  for Bartlett's test of sphericity and turnover intention' items is 0.818 and  $\chi^2$  (df = 21) = 179.827,  $p < .0001$  for Bartlett's test of sphericity. These values were above the cut-off level of 0.5, indicating that the sample was adequate enough to test factor analysis. The reliability statistics of social environmental support and turnover intention were tested by using Cronbach's alpha average resulted in 0.941 and 0.939 respectively in Table 3, which are

significant. In general, the instrument used had alpha values above 0.90 indicating an excellent level of reliability. which indicates good internal consistency.

Table 2

*KMO and Bartlett's Test of all items*

	<i>Social Support</i>	<i>Environmental</i>	<i>Turnover Intention</i>
<i>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</i>	.829	.818	
<i>Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square</i>	428.354	179.827	
<i>Sphericity</i>	<i>df</i>	105	21
	<i>Sig.</i>	< .001	< .001

Table 3

*Reliability of Instruments*

<b>Reliability Analysis</b>		
<b>Dimension(s)</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of items</b>
<b>Social Environmental Support</b>	.941	15
<b>Turnover Intentions</b>	.939	7

## Findings

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics in the form of mean and standard deviation for the main factors of social environmental support of rural teachers calculated from the 15 items. According to the analysis, the majority of teachers expressed a moderate level of satisfaction with their social environmental support, as evidenced by an overall average mean of 2.6843 with a standard deviation of .6994, while the result indicates that supervisor support satisfaction is likewise at a moderate level, with an average mean of 3.111 and a standard deviation of 1.2816. The level of satisfaction with family support is also modest with a mean score value of 2.8989 (0.8977). Teachers, on the other hand, reported higher levels of satisfaction with their peer support, with an average mean of 2.0433 and a standard deviation of 0.9054. A detailed examination of the analytical data revealed that teachers' levels of social environmental support varied depending on the source of social support. The family support responses from the rural teachers showed a mean value ranging from 2.7273 to 3.0455. Among the support behaviors that were surveyed, rural teachers' family members are helping them take on additional domestic responsibilities (M=2.7576, SD=1.48335) and family members' positive attitudes toward their work (M=2.7273, SD=1.48833) ranked highest in terms of satisfaction, and followed by item that family members let them know that they understand how they're feeling when something at work is upsetting them which recorded the mean of 2.9091 and a standard deviation of 1.60844. The two items with the highest levels of dissatisfaction are rural teachers feeling better after talking to family about work-related issues (M=3.0152, SD=1.43556) and family members exceeding expectations and contributing to their professional success (M=3.0455, SD=1.64323). The satisfaction of peer support among rural teachers reported a mean value of 1.7727 – 2.2273. The highest satisfaction level, with a mean value of 1.7727 and a standard deviation of 1.10233, was reported from peers who typically provided insightful and helpful feedback during collaborative processes. The item indicating that peers typically provide them with beneficial knowledge or advice was ranked second-highest (M=2.0152, SD=1.47749). Item D4 which is

" Your colleagues are happy for me when I am successful at work " recorded a mean score of 2.1212 (1.48802), followed by an item about which the colleagues will be understanding and caring toward them 2.1970 (1.42196). The least satisfied was when coworkers frequently offered practical assistance with work tasks; the mean value was 2.2273, and the standard deviation was 1.4174. The mean values of supervisor support for teachers in rural areas varied from 3.7273 to 3.0455. Of the supportive behaviors of supervisors surveyed, the supervisor who provides them with helpful advice about improving performance received the highest level of satisfaction from the survey respondents, the mean value was 2.9848, and the standard deviation was 1.63914. It was followed by the supervisor who keeps them informed about various career opportunities within the organization (M=3.0076, SD=1.66461). The two items about which rural teachers were least satisfied with their supervisors ensure they receive credit for significant work accomplishments (M=3.2273, SD=1.57068) and their supervisor encourages them in their endeavors to further their careers by obtaining more education or training (M=3.1970, SD=1.69615).

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics of Social Environmental Support*

	Mean	SD
<b>Social Environmental Support</b>	2.6843	.69942
<b>Family Support</b>	2.8939	.89730
<i>Family members have a positive attitude toward your work.</i>	2.7273	1.48833
<i>You feel better after discussing your work problems with a family member.</i>	3.0152	1.43556
<i>When something at work is bothering you, your family members show that they understand how you feel.</i>	2.9091	1.60844
<i>If your work becomes very demanding, a member of your family will take on extra domestic responsibilities.</i>	2.7576	1.48335
<i>Family members often go beyond what is normally expected to contribute to your professional success.</i>	3.0455	1.64323
<b>Peer Support</b>	2.0364	.90252
<i>If you have a problem at work, your colleagues usually give you helpful information or advice.</i>	2.0152	1.47749
<i>Your peers will show sympathy and concern for you when you are experiencing difficulties at work.</i>	2.1970	1.42196
<i>Your peers usually provide you with clear and helpful feedback during collaborative processes.</i>	1.7727	1.10233
<i>Your co-workers often provide practical assistance with your work tasks.</i>	2.2273	1.41740
<i>Your colleagues are happy for me when I am successful at work.</i>	2.1212	1.48802

<b>Supervisor Support</b>	3.1061	1.28371
<i>Your supervisor keeps you informed about different career opportunities in the organization.</i>	3.0076	1.66461
<i>Your supervisor makes sure you get the credit when you accomplish something substantial on the job.</i>	3.2273	1.57068
<i>Your supervisor gives you helpful advice about improving your performance.</i>	2.9848	1.63914
<i>Your supervisor provides assignments that give you the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills.</i>	3.1136	1.58547
<i>Your supervisor supports your efforts to acquire additional training or education to further your career.</i>	3.1970	1.69615

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of turnover intention for rural teachers, estimated as means and standard deviations from the 7 items. According to the data, most teachers have a moderate level of turnover intention, as evidenced by the overall mean score of 2.9545 and the standard deviation of .68977. The range of mean values for the various motivations for turnover intention was 2.7121–3.0985. The highest level of agreement was ranked by rural teachers who feel that their current jobs do not fulfill their life expectations, the mean value was 2.7121, with a standard deviation of 1.41707. The item indicating that they have frequently thought about leaving their jobs was ranked second-highest (Mean=2.8636; SD=1.2342). Item which is "I'm going to leave this work as soon as I can find something better" recorded a mean score of 2.8939 (SD=1.21226), followed by an item indicating that educators would leave their positions in favor of a comparable role in a different school or location (Mean=3.0758; SD=1.35704) and followed by item stating that they most likely will be searching for a new position Within the next year, the mean value was 3.0985, with a standard deviation of 1.36399. The two items with the lowest levels of agreement were that rural teachers will probably start their own business (Mean=3.2576, SD=1.23944) and that they have no intention of staying in the teaching profession, and the item's mean value was 3.1742, with a standard deviation of 1.28108.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics of Turnover Intention*

	Mean	SD
<b>Turnover Intention</b>	2.9545	.68977
<i>You believe that continuing with your present employer does not fulfill your life expectations.</i>	2.7121	1.41707
<i>You have often considered quitting your job.</i>	2.8636	1.23420
<i>You would quit your job for a similar position in another school or in another area at the least opportunity.</i>	3.0758	1.35704
<i>You will probably look for a new job in the next year.</i>	3.0985	1.36399
<i>As soon as I can find a better job, I will quit this job.</i>	2.8939	1.21226
<i>You have no intention of continuing in the educational profession.</i>	3.1742	1.28108
<i>You will probably start your own business within the next 3 years.</i>	3.2576	1.23944

**Discussion**

According to survey data, teachers in rural areas have a modest level of satisfaction with the social environmental support that they receive, and the majority of rural teachers intend to leave their jobs at a moderate rate. Peer support is the most satisfying among them, with moderate amounts of family support following in second. However, a significant portion of teachers express discontent with supervisor support, and teachers' satisfaction with supervisor support at schools is comparatively low. It is evident that rural teachers require more family and school supervisor support. This result was consistent with prior research suggesting that higher levels of family support among employees decreased the probability of turnover (Aulia & Haerani, 2023; Shrestha et al., 2019; Le, 2020). Furthermore, with regard to past empirical studies, the findings in this study also correspond to those reported by Jun et al (2023); Ilyas et al (2020), indicating that there is a significant interaction between care and the supervisor support in relation to turnover intention, and higher levels of supervisor support are associated with lower turnover intentions. There is a reciprocal relationship between the support from the work domains and family. One of the most essential social support networks for teachers is their families. The fundamental element of teachers' well-being is their families' comprehension of and compassion for their work. Family support can help individuals reduce negative emotions and lessen the harmful effects of stress (Uddin 2021). Teachers in rural areas who experience love and acceptance from their families are more able to recognize their own abilities and are less likely to intend to leave their jobs. Moreover, supportive supervisors play a major role in enhancing teacher performance, and career development benefits greatly from supervisor assistance. Administrators of schools ought to prioritize the development of social support networks for their staff. Teachers who have strong family and supervisor support may experience less fatigue, and stress, and be inclined to leave their jobs.



## Conclusion

This research may help rural schools in determining the degree of support that primary school teachers receive from their social environments and their turnover intention. School administrators are able to utilize this study as a resource for discovering more about teachers' intentions to leave their profession. The study's theoretical ramifications contribute to our comprehension of how support from peers, supervisors, and families affects turnover intentions. The rationale behind this is that by determining the level of support that teachers receive from their social environment, work quality, and satisfaction can be increased, and exit intentions can be decreased. Furthermore, the study's findings make it abundantly evident that rural teachers' turnover intentions are medium-high and their level of family and supervisor support is medium-low, both of which have been supported by earlier studies. Rural school administrators ought to foster a positive atmosphere, offer a channel for collaboration and communication, and support their staff.

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