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## *TEACHERS PERCEPTION ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND RETENTION*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated public school teachers' perceptions of school safety in Kadingilan II District for the school year 2025-2026, specifically examining the presence of security personnel, supportive school culture, and preparedness for emergencies. It also assessed teachers' retention levels and explored the relationships among these variables. Utilizing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 121 teacher-respondents using an instrument adapted from Zhang and Yu (2020), which included items on demographic profile, effects of continuing professional development, and collective efficacy satisfaction. The data were analyzed using means, standard deviations, and the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The study found that teachers' perceptions of school safety—specifically in terms of the presence of security personnel, supportive school culture, and preparedness for emergencies—were all at a high level. Teachers' retention levels were likewise high. A significant relationship was established between school safety perceptions and teacher retention. These results suggest that high levels of safety perception contribute to a stable and supportive school environment that strengthens educator commitment, with supportive culture and emergency preparedness emerging as more influential factors than physical security alone. Based on findings, it is recommended that teachers continue promoting inclusivity and actively participate in safety drills to enhance preparedness. School administrators are encouraged to invest in holistic safety and well-being programs that nurture trust, collaboration, and professional stability. Future researchers are advised to explore underlying mechanism through qualitative inquiries and longitudinal designs to deepen understanding of how school safety influences teacher retention over time.

**KEYWORDS:** *Teacher perception, School safety and Retention In School.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

School safety has become an increasingly important concern in many educational systems around the world. Teachers, who directly interact with students on a daily basis, play a crucial role in creating and maintaining a secure learning environment. Their perception of school safety significantly influences school climate, student behavior, classroom management, and overall job satisfaction. When teachers feel safe and supported, they are more likely to stay in their institutions, perform effectively, and contribute positively to students' academic growth. On the other hand, concerns about violence, bullying, harassment, or lack of safety policies can negatively affect teacher morale and contribute to high turnover rates.

Several studies have highlighted the relationship between school safety and teacher retention. According to research by McGee, J. (2023), positive perceptions of school safety are associated with higher teacher stability and improved school culture. Another study by Bastian, K. C., & Fuller, S. C. (2022) found that unsafe school environments increase emotional stress among teachers, leading to burnout and an increased likelihood of resignation. Additionally, Smith and Baker (2021) emphasized that schools with strong safety measures tend to have better teacher-student relationships and lower dropout rates among both students and staff. These findings show that school safety is not only a student-centered issue but also a critical factor shaping teachers' professional commitment.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how school safety affects teachers' decisions to remain in their schools. Addressing teachers' safety concerns is essential for minimizing teacher turnover, which is costly and disruptive to student learning. By examining teachers' perceptions, school leaders and policymakers can develop appropriate strategies to strengthen support systems, improve school climate, and retain qualified teachers. Furthermore, the study supports the need to enhance professional environments where teachers can work without fear, distraction, or emotional strain, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

However, despite existing research, many studies tend to focus primarily on student safety rather than teacher perspectives. Limited literature explores school safety as a determinant of teacher retention, especially in developing contexts where safety challenges may differ from those in more developed regions. There is also a lack of localized studies examining how

teachers' feelings of security influence their professional commitment, productivity, and long-term engagement in the educational system. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how safety perceptions directly shape teachers' intention to stay or leave.

Thus, the objective of this study is to analyze teachers' perceptions of school safety and determine how these perceptions influence teacher retention. Specifically, the study aims to understand the key factors that shape teachers' feelings of safety, evaluate how these factors affect job satisfaction and decision-making, and provide recommendations that schools can implement to improve their working environment. By doing so, the study seeks to generate insights that can inform future policy development, school leadership practices, and teacher support programs.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

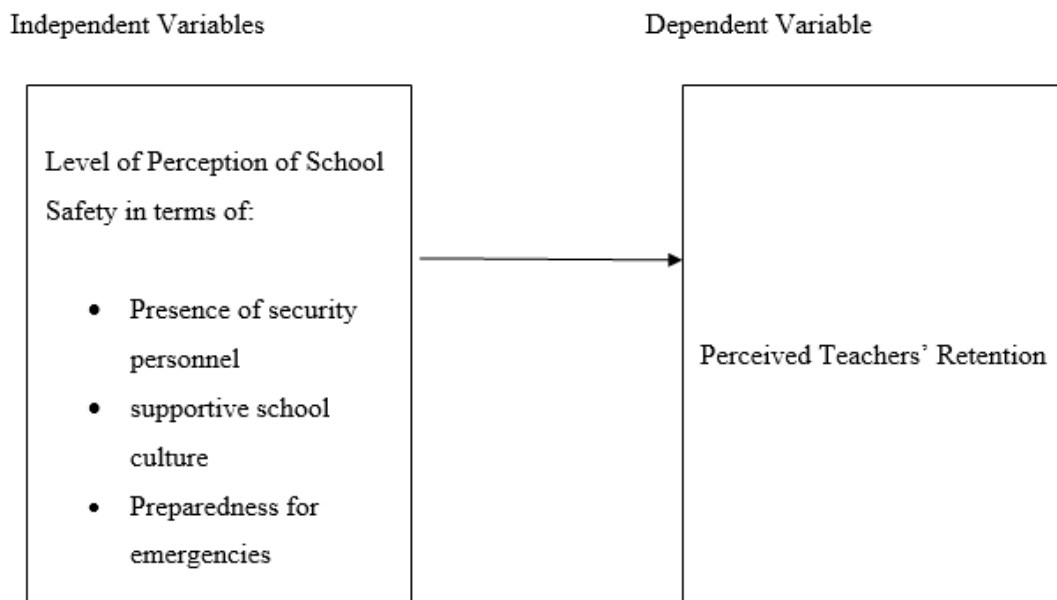
This study was anchored on Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano et al., 2019). This theory emphasizes that individuals' commitment and willingness to remain in an organization depend on the quality of exchanges they experience, including trust, fairness, and safety within the environment. Applying this to the study, when teachers perceive their schools as safe physically, emotionally, and socially they are more likely to feel valued and supported, which strengthens their commitment to stay. Conversely, unsafe school environments, whether due to violence, lack of security measures, or poor administrative support, create negative exchanges that may push teachers to leave. Thus, teachers' perceptions of safety directly influence retention, as a secure and supportive school environment fosters stability, satisfaction, and long-term professional dedication.

The presence of security personnel within the school environment plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' perception of safety, which in turn influences their decision to remain in the profession. When educators feel secure knowing that trained personnel are present to prevent or respond to potential threats, they are more likely to experience reduced anxiety and greater focus on their teaching responsibilities. This sense of safety fosters a stable working environment, encouraging teachers to extend their length of service, as they do not feel compelled to transfer to other institutions with better protective measures.

A supportive school culture also significantly contributes to teachers' retention by reinforcing their sense of belonging and professional value. Schools that cultivate collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect create a positive climate where teachers feel emotionally

and socially secure. When teachers perceive that their well-being is prioritized and that they are part of a caring community, they tend to develop loyalty and long-term commitment to the institution. Consequently, a strong school culture directly correlates with longer service length, as teachers are less likely to seek employment elsewhere.

Preparedness for emergencies further enhances teachers' perception of safety and confidence in the school system. When institutions implement clear policies, conduct regular drills, and provide training for crisis management, teachers feel assured that their lives and those of their students are safeguarded. This preparedness reduces feelings of vulnerability and stress, enabling teachers to focus on their instructional duties rather than safety concerns. As a result, teachers in schools that prioritize emergency readiness are more inclined to remain in their posts for extended periods.



**Figure 1. Schematic Presentation Showing the Relationship Between the Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study.**

**Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school safety and their intention to stay or leave their current teaching positions. Specifically, it investigates the following questions:.

1. What is the level of perception of school Safety in terms of presence of security personnel, supportive school culture, and preparedness for emergencies?
2. What is the level of teachers' retention?

3. Is there a significant relationship between school safety perceptions and teacher retention?

### ***Delimitation of the Study***

This study focuses on examining the relationship between school safety perceptions and teacher retention among public school teachers in Kadingilan District 2 during the School Year 2025–2026. The scope is limited to the perceptions of presence of security personnel, supportive school culture and Preparedness for emergencies as reported by teachers currently employed in the district. The study includes only regular and contractual teachers with at least one year of teaching experience, excluding non-teaching personnel and newly hired teachers with less than one year of service. The research does not cover private schools or schools outside Kadingilan District 2. It also does not consider other possible factors affecting teacher retention such as salary, workload, administrative support, or personal reasons, as the study is delimited solely to perceptions of school safety.

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Level of Perception of School Safety**

The presence of security personnel in schools plays a significant yet complex role in shaping perceptions of safety among students and teachers. Studies by Johnson and Stevens (2019), Son (2022), and Cheng (2021) consistently show that visible security staff can deter violence and provide psychological assurance, leading to increased feelings of protection. However, Kupchik and Ward (2020) caution that an overreliance on officers may create a sense of criminalization, making some students feel monitored rather than supported. Fisher, Viano, and Curran (2021) and Walker (2021) further emphasize that the nature of interactions between security personnel and students is crucial—supportive and approachable officers foster trust, whereas overly strict or militarized approaches can heighten anxiety. Owens (2022), Lopez and Martin (2020), and Hernandez (2023) highlight that security personnel are most effective when integrated into a broader safety framework that includes counseling, communication, and inclusive planning, ensuring that safety measures align with positive school relationships and culture.

A supportive school culture is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of perceived school safety. Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2019), along with Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2019), argue that environments built on respect, inclusivity, and strong teacher-student relationships significantly enhance students' sense of

security. Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2021) and Bear, Gaskins, Blank, and Chen (2019) further stress that fairness, empathy, and consistent discipline practices contribute to reduced bullying and increased confidence in school safety. Complementing these findings, Gregg (2019), Brown (2020), Torres (2021), and Miller and Chen (2022) emphasize that supportive leadership, open communication, and community-building initiatives such as mentorship and peer support systems foster belongingness and emotional security. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that safety is not solely dependent on physical measures but is deeply rooted in the quality of relationships and the overall school climate.

Preparedness for emergencies is another critical factor influencing perceptions of school safety, as it builds confidence in a school's ability to respond effectively to crises. Johnson (2018), Petrilli and Darling-Hammond (2021), and Anderson and Finch (2019) highlight that structured preparedness programs, including regular drills and staff training, reduce anxiety and promote a culture of readiness. Carter (2020), Williams and Gomez (2021), and Kori (2020) further note that updated emergency plans and active participation in drills enhance both psychological resilience and trust in school systems. Supporting this, Mendoza (2021), Jones and Patel (2022), and Rivera (2023) emphasize that preparedness must be continuous, experiential, and supported by strong leadership, resources, and coordination with external agencies. Perry et al. (2022) reinforce the importance of integrating preparedness into school systems to strengthen both physical and emotional safety. Overall, these studies suggest that effective emergency preparedness is essential not only for crisis response but also for sustaining a strong perception of safety within school communities.

### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention, particularly when measured by actual length of service, is widely regarded as a key indicator of school stability and educational quality. Ingersoll (2017) emphasized that teachers who remain longer in the profession contribute deeper institutional knowledge and instructional expertise, minimizing disruptions caused by turnover. Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2019) linked extended service to improved student achievement and highlighted the importance of professional development and mentoring in sustaining teacher commitment. Johnson and Birkeland (2018) and Walker (2021) further explained that supportive school environments, recognition, and job satisfaction significantly influence teachers' decisions to stay, while Johnson (2020) pointed to collegial relationships and collaborative cultures as critical in strengthening resilience. Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2018) added that early-career teachers are more prone to attrition due to stress and

adjustment challenges, emphasizing the importance of induction programs and peer support. Meanwhile, Borman and Dowling (2019) identified administrative support and transparent leadership as the most consistent predictors of retention, reinforcing the idea that organizational conditions strongly shape teachers' length of service.

At the same time, multiple studies highlight that teacher retention is also influenced by economic, professional, and personal well-being factors. Smith and Ulrich (2020) and Martinez (2022) found that competitive compensation, career advancement opportunities, and work-life balance are crucial in extending teachers' service years, while inadequate financial incentives often lead to early attrition. Torres (2021) and Adams and Chen (2023) emphasized the role of leadership and continuous professional development in fostering long-term commitment, noting that supportive principals and access to capacity-building programs enhance both competence and motivation. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) further identified burnout—characterized by emotional exhaustion and reduced accomplishment—as a major factor driving teachers out of the profession, particularly in high-stress environments. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that teacher retention is not solely a matter of individual dedication but a product of systemic support, encompassing leadership quality, workplace culture, compensation, and professional growth opportunities.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research design to explore the relationships between school safety perceptions and teacher retention. By quantifying responses through means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients, it revealed patterns and strengths of association. These insights not only clarify the key drivers behind retention decisions but also lay the groundwork for targeted interventions or further hypothesis testing in educational settings. It was conducted in Kadingilan II District, Kadingilan, Bukidnon, Northern Mindanao, Philippines with 121 public school teachers as respondents in school year 2025-2026. The instrument of the study was adapted from Zhang and Yu (2020), focusing on presence of security personnel, supportive school culture, and preparedness for emergencies, alongside teachers' retention levels and their interrelationships.

This study used the following statistical tool in analyzing the data. To determine continuing professional development in terms of instructors' efficacy in leadership, relationship with other co teachers and instructors' resilience, mean and standard deviations were used. To ascertain the level of satisfaction of instructors in their professional development, mean and

standard deviation were utilized. To know the existence of significant relationship between the level of continuing professional development of instructors in terms of instructors' efficacy in leadership, relationship with other co instructors and instructors' resilience and the level of satisfaction of instructors in their continuing professional development, Pearson product moment correlations was employed.

### **Findings**

Presented below are the findings derived from this study.

The level of perception of school Safety in terms of presence of security personnel, supportive school culture, and preparedness for emergencies were all high.

The level of teachers' retention was also high.

There is a significant relationship between school safety perceptions and teacher retention. Moreover, Supportive School Culture and Preparedness for Emergencies had significant relationship with teachers' retention. Presence of security personnel had no significant relationship with the teachers' retention.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Drawing from the study's findings, the following conclusions can be made:

The study concludes that teachers and students perceive school safety very positively across all measured dimensions. The presence of security personnel, a supportive school culture, and preparedness for emergencies all received high levels of perception, indicating that the school is considered a secure and well-managed environment. Among these, supportive school culture and preparedness for emergencies were particularly influential in promoting confidence and trust. While security personnel were valued, their presence alone did not significantly affect teacher retention. The high overall perception of safety suggests that both physical measures and relational or procedural aspects of safety contribute to a sense of protection.

The study also concludes that teachers' retention in the school is at a high level, indicating strong satisfaction, commitment, and motivation to continue in their current positions. Teachers report being supported by school administration, satisfied with working conditions, and appreciative of professional development opportunities. Recognition of their contributions also positively influences their decision to remain employed in the school. High

retention suggests a stable teaching workforce, which is beneficial for student learning continuity and overall school performance.

Additionally, study concludes that there is a significant relationship between overall school safety perceptions and teacher retention, highlighting that the school's safety environment plays a key role in influencing teachers' decisions to remain employed. Among the dimensions of school safety, supportive school culture and preparedness for emergencies were found to have a significant positive relationship with teacher retention, indicating that relational and procedural aspects of safety strongly affect teachers' commitment. Teachers value a positive, inclusive, and supportive school environment, as well as clear emergency preparedness, which increases their confidence and sense of stability.

Derived from the study's conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

For the teachers. May continue strategies that promote teacher satisfaction and retention. Administrative support may remain consistent to ensure teachers feel valued and motivated. Working conditions should be regularly assessed and improved where necessary to maintain a positive teaching environment. Professional development programs may be expanded and tailored to meet teachers' needs and career goals. Recognition of teachers' contributions should be formalized through awards, feedback, and public acknowledgment.

For the School Administrators. May continue to maintain and enhance all aspects of safety to strengthen both teacher retention and student confidence. Security personnel may remain visible and approachable while undergoing periodic training to improve emergency responsiveness. Efforts to foster a supportive school culture may be sustained, emphasizing respect, inclusivity, and open communication. Regular review and practice of emergency preparedness plans should continue, ensuring all staff and students are familiar with procedures. Additional orientations or training programs could be implemented to further increase awareness of safety protocols. School authorities may also regularly seek feedback from teachers and students to identify areas for improvement.

Since the result of the study is significant, teacher, whole administrator and non-teaching staff may continue to support the safety of the whole premises in order that they will not transfer to their respective homes.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore additional factors that may influence teacher retention beyond school safety perceptions, such as salary, workload, and career advancement opportunities. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine how changes in school safety measures and culture over time affect teacher commitment. Comparative studies across different school types, regions, or levels (e.g., elementary vs. high school) may provide a deeper understanding of contextual influences on retention. Researchers may also investigate the combined effect of both physical and psychosocial safety factors on teacher well-being and performance.

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