

Sustaining Catholic Educators: An Analysis of Teacher Retention and Spirituality in Bohol Association of Catholic Schools, Bohol, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teacher retention and spirituality among 221 randomly selected teachers within the Bohol Association of Catholic Schools (BACS, Bohol, Philippines). Utilizing a descriptive-quantitative design, data were collected via survey questionnaires and analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The demographic profile revealed a majority of young, female, permanently employed baccalaureate holders with an average of five years of service. Results indicate a high level of spirituality among respondents, characterized by a personal connection to God and a commitment to the school's religious mission. Furthermore, a significant correlation was established between spirituality and teacher retention. Key findings highlight that integrating faith-based values into the curriculum and providing spiritual support systems are primary drivers for retention. Additional factors contributing to faculty stability include a supportive school culture, professional development, and manageable workloads. The study concludes that teachers are more likely to remain when their spiritual values align with the institution's mission. Recommendations include reinforcing faith-based integration and spiritual support to enhance long-term teacher commitment.

1. Introduction

In recent years, teacher retention has emerged as a critical challenge in the educational landscape, significantly impacting the quality of education and the overall stability of school systems. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), approximately 20% of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years, and nearly 50% leave within five years. High turnover rates disrupt instructional continuity, negatively affecting student learning and achievement. Catholic schools in the Philippines often experience frequent teacher turnover due to lower compensation than in public schools. However, there are still teachers who remain teaching in Catholic schools. Their positive experiences, coupled with the challenges they face and their strategies for overcoming them, contribute to their decision to stay. Promising benefits beyond personal growth and a sense of contentment are common reasons for their longevity in the institutions. The working environment became a strength of Catholic schools, fostering harmonious relationships among staff and students.

The vital role of faith in shaping the teachers' commitment to vibrant living is embedded in the heart of every educator (Wuriningsih et al., 2024). The relationship of faith in Catholic schools makes these institutions special and effective. Strong teacher-student relationships enhance academic achievement aligned with the Catholic mission (Maney et al., 2017). A robust sense of faith can significantly enhance teachers' commitment and satisfaction in their roles. Ultimately, integrating faith into the educational experience can improve teacher retention. Spirituality is a powerful force that shapes educators' commitment to their profession (Maney, King & Kiely, 2017).

In this context, it is imperative to explore the underlying causes of teacher attrition and to implement comprehensive solutions that promote retention. By fostering a supportive and enriching environment for educators, we can cultivate a dedicated workforce committed to students' success and the advancement of the educational mission. It is the objective of this study to determine teacher retention and the spirituality of teachers in Bohol Association of Catholic Schools (BACS), Tagbilaran.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the demographic profile of the teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1 sex;
 - 1.2 age;
 - 1.3 educational attainment;
 - 1.4 teaching position;
 - 1.5 years of teaching;
 - 1.6 employment status; and
 - 1.7 Teaching Load Description?
2. What is the level of teacher retention of the respondents in terms of the following factors:
 - 2.1 commitment to faith and school mission;
 - 2.2 school culture and community
 - 2.3 professional development and support;
 - 2.4 work environment and conditions
 - 2.5 compensation and benefits; and
 - 2.6 Personal Circumstances?
3. What is the level of spirituality of the respondents in terms of the following dimensions:
 - 3.1 belief in God;
 - 3.2 search for meaning;
 - 3.3 mindfulness; and
 - 3.4 feeling of security?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of teacher retention and their spirituality?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Retention

The retention of teachers in Catholic schools has emerged as a critical area of research, particularly in light of the increasing challenges academic institutions face in maintaining a stable, committed workforce. Teacher retention refers to the strategies and practices employed by educational institutions to encourage teachers to remain in their positions for an extended period (Reitman & Karge, 2019). The ability to develop successful schools is directly related to attracting and retaining quality teachers (Stotko et al., 2007). The issue of teacher retention becomes even more critical when considering the challenges of teacher shortages (OECD, 2014). Catholic schools also face the dual challenges of teacher shortages and retention. Cimino, Haney, and Jacobs (2000) observe that superintendents and principals in Catholic schools cite the difficulty of finding and retaining high quality teachers as their most difficult challenge.

According to Sawaneh and Kamara (2019), retention strategies focus on creating a supportive and fulfilling work environment that addresses teachers' professional, financial, and personal needs. These strategies include competitive salary packages, opportunities for career advancement, effective management, a positive school atmosphere, and initiatives that promote a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, teacher satisfaction plays a pivotal role in teacher retention and professional development. Job satisfaction among teachers is influenced by factors such as administrative support, professional autonomy, opportunities for growth, and recognition of their contributions (Hatlevik & Hatlevik, 2024). When teachers feel valued, supported, and fulfilled in their roles, they are more likely to exhibit enthusiasm, commitment, and effectiveness in the classroom, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

Maintaining a stable, skilled teaching staff is essential to improving student performance and ensuring consistency in educational programs (Sadler, 2017). Both teacher recruitment and retention are influenced by factors such as teacher supply and demand. Effective recruitment and retention methods are vital for addressing teacher shortages, enhancing the quality of education, and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students. Family, administrative support, joy of teaching, financial support, and volume of work are considered the key stimuli for joining an institution (Kersaint et al., 2007). Family support is one of the main factors for any indigenous pre-service teacher (Trimmer et al., 2018). Zavelevsky and Lishchinsky (2020) found that the main retention factors are individual knowledge, skills, interpersonal relationships, organizational, and community policies.

A study of elementary teachers' needs suggested that financial benefits, a school environment that earns respect and support from students and others at work, and long holidays are among the factors attracting faculty members to remain in the same workplace (Cockburn, 2000). Administrative tasks, workplace conditions, school support, mentoring, and personal beliefs were considered as factors for retention in the study (Goodwin et al., 2019). Teaching requires adequate knowledge and skills, which require a proper mechanism of supply and demand. A study by the principals elaborated on the process of maintaining the supply and demand among schools (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2014). Zhou and Volkwein (2004) believe that tenured faculty are influenced by compensation, while non-tenured faculty are influenced by job security satisfaction. Johnsrud and Rosser (2002) noted that factors that can affect retention include financial benefits, academic reputation of the institution, a good working environment, long holidays/time off, work-family balance, and teaching load. Retention rates are influenced by various factors, including race, age, credentials, experience levels, and specific school environments (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Furthermore, teaching experience is a crucial metric recognized and incentivized in the education system, often serving as a primary criterion for determining salary schedules, promotions, and advancement to higher professional levels (Hanno et al., 2021). ECE policy standards have increasingly included years of teaching experience as a key indicator of program quality (Motiejunaite-Schulmeister et al., 2019).

2.2 Spirituality

Spirituality is the awareness of self and experience of oneness with all, in the universe and beyond, through this self-knowledge (Bhandari, 2021). Klerk-Luttig (2008) spirituality either consists of or leads to experiences of connectedness with our deepest selves, other human and non-human souls, the natural world, the cosmos beyond, and the larger purposes and powers that transcend an ego's limited concerns. Evans-Amalu et al. (2021) offer a secular understanding of spirituality as a facet of a person's life that extends beyond what we can see, touch, or hear.

Spirituality serves as a powerful force, shaping educators' commitment to their profession. Teachers who nurture their spiritual well-being tend to exhibit unwavering dedication to their roles (Gill, 2017). Strongly suggest that ongoing faith formation for teachers should consider the development of all three dimensions of Catholic faith-belief, intimacy with God, and action as a way to strengthen teacher commitment (Maney, King & Kiely, T. J., 2017). Furthermore, spirituality intertwines with teachers' commitment, shaping their impact on students, fostering resilience, and nurturing a sense of purpose (Cho & Kwan, 2012). Spirituality in the Workplace, developed by Dr. Louis W. Fry (2003), emphasizes integrating spiritual values and practices into organizational settings to enhance employee well-being, engagement, and overall organizational effectiveness.

2.3 Teaching and Spirituality

In the sacred realm of catholic education, teachers bear a profound responsibility. Their commitment to catholic identity, culturally responsive pedagogy, and nurturing relationships shapes not only academic outcomes but also spiritual growth (Maney, King & Kiely, 2017). Teacher spirituality is a relatively new and emerging research field. However, various studies show that teachers' spirituality and/or religiosity have a considerable influence on their professional identity (White, 2009). Spirituality is a powerful force that shapes educators' commitment to their profession.

Research by Pirner (2013) on teacher spirituality/religiosity and professional identity revealed that many religious teachers view their profession as a calling, leading them to have a greater confidence in their ability to effect change and a higher motivation to help students. Similarly, Mayes' (2001) research puts this in similar terms when he speaks of teaching in a way that does not force us to commit moral violence against ourselves and our students by bracketing off the religious dimension of life as if it were intellectually irrelevant. Mirshahi and Barani (2016) found that spiritual intelligence was related to lower levels of teacher burnout. Cook (2017) examined the relationship between spirituality and occupational stress among middle school teachers; findings suggest that spirituality, time management, and work-related stress are interrelated.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive quantitative research design was employed in this study, in which data were collected using a survey questionnaire to determine the teacher retention and spirituality of Catholic school teachers in their decision to remain in the Bohol Association of Catholic Schools.

3.2 Participants

The researchers used a simple random sampling method to determine the 221 teacher respondents who were coming from the different member schools of Bohol Association of Catholic Schools (BACS) in the province of Bohol, Philippines, namely: Sacred Heart School, Baclayon; Immaculata High School of Baclayon; Most Holy Trinity School of Loay; Holy Rosary Academy, Lila; Infant Jesus Learning Center of Valencia; St. Nicholas Academy, Dimiao; Saint John the Baptist Academy, Garcia Hernandez; Ancillae Christi School, Loboc; Immaculate Mother School of Bilar; Saint Anthony Abbot Academy, Batuan; Carmel Academy, Balilihan; Presentation of Mary School, Clarin; Holy Family of Nazareth School, Tubigon; Holy Cross Academy, Tubigon; Infant King Academy, Cortes; Sacred Heart Academy, Loon; Saint Augustine Academy, Panglao; Saint Augustine Institute, Sagbayan; Holy Infant Academy, Baang, Catigbian; Immaculate Mary Academy, Catigbian; and St. Vincent Institute, Maribojoc. Using simple random sampling, a total of 221 teachers of BACS were the respondents of the study.

3.3 Instruments

The researchers use a researcher-developed survey questionnaire to determine teacher retention, while a standardized instrument is employed to measure respondents' spirituality. The questionnaire's items on teacher retention were taken from literature readings such as: Teacher Retention in Religious Schools, University of California; Ezzeldine, M. (2004). CACE Educator Retention Survey (2019). Panorama Teacher Retention Survey. Educator Quality of Work Life Survey, American Federation of Teachers, and CUPA-HR Employee Retention Survey. The survey questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale to measure teachers' retention across the following categories: commitment to faith and school mission; school culture and community; professional development and support; work environment and conditions; compensation and benefits; and personal circumstances.

The Spirituality Questionnaire was adapted from "The Spirituality Questionnaire: Core Dimensions of Spirituality" by Jochen Hardt, Sonja Schultz, Carola Xander, Gerhild Becker, and Malgorzata Dragan (2012). The questionnaire is also a Likert five-point scale that assesses respondents' Spirituality across the following categories: belief in God, search for meaning, mindfulness, and feeling of security.

The instruments were pilot-tested for their validity and content among forty (40) teachers of Bohol Association of Catholic Schools – Talibon, Bohol, Philippines. Cronbach's alpha is approximately 0.82 for the teachers' retention survey questionnaire and 0.87 for the teachers' spirituality questionnaire. These scores were high, indicating strong internal consistency among the scale items.

3.4 Procedure

The researcher sent formal letters to the Superintendent of BACS Tagbilaran for approval to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher prepared a letter addressed to the Principals of BACS member schools. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. Moreover, the researcher assured respondents of the confidentiality of their data to encourage them to provide truthful and objective responses to each item.

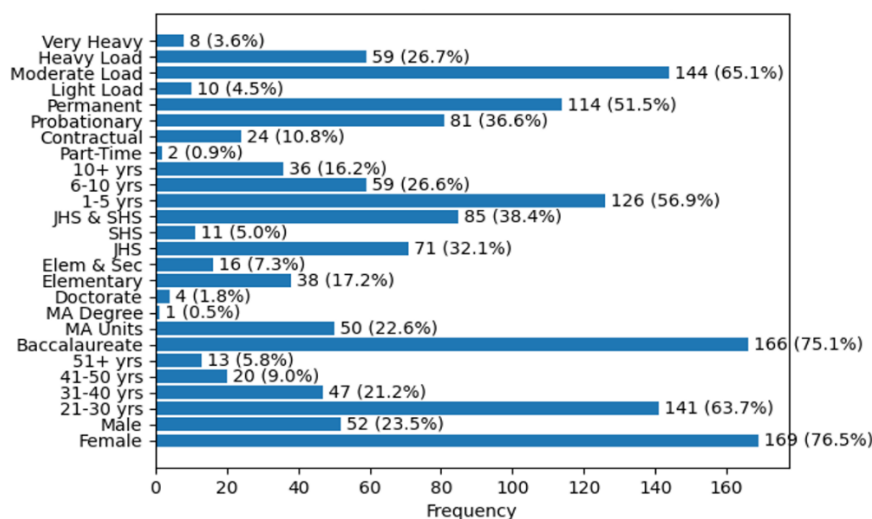
A simple percentage was used to determine the profile of respondents by sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, years of teaching, employment status, and teaching load description. A weighted mean was used to determine teacher retention and the level of teachers' spirituality within the Bohol Association of Catholic Schools (BACS) in Tagbilaran. To determine the relationships between responses to teacher retention, teachers' spirituality, and their profile variables, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used (Kankpang et al., 2024).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Diagram 1 provides a demographic overview of the teacher respondents across several categories. Data on sex suggest that the significant majority of the respondents were female teachers (169, 76.5%), while only 52 (23.5%) were male teachers.

Figure 1: Demographic Profile of the Teacher Respondents



Regarding age distribution, the largest demographic group among the teachers is young adults aged 21 to 30, accounting for 141 respondents (63.7% of the total population). The smallest segment is teachers aged 51 years and older (13 respondents, or 5.8%). These findings suggest that the teaching force is predominantly comprised of young professional teachers. In terms of educational attainment, most of the teacher respondents hold a foundational baccalaureate degree, accounting for 166 individuals (75.1%). A smaller segment of 50 teachers (22.6%) pursued advanced studies and earned master's degree units.

The distribution of teaching assignments among the respondents shows a clear pattern of combined roles. The largest group, comprising 85 teachers (38.4%), instructs students in both Junior and Senior High School levels. The smallest segments include those teaching solely in Senior High School (11 teachers, 5.0%) and those teaching Elementary students (38 teachers, 17.2%). Overall, the results suggest that most teachers hold combined positions that span multiple high school levels. Regarding years of teaching experience, the data shows that the majority of the respondents are relatively new to the profession. The largest group, comprising 126 teachers (56.9%), has between 1 and 5 years of experience. This is followed by 59 teachers (26.6%) who have been teaching for 6 to 10 years.

Regarding employment status, slightly more than half of the respondents (114 teachers, 51.6%) hold permanent positions. The next-largest group consists of 81 teachers (36.7%) currently on probation. These figures indicate that while permanent employment is common, many educators are still working toward securing full-time status. Regarding teaching load, the majority of respondents perceive their workload as manageable. Specifically, 144 teachers (65.2%) reported a moderate teaching load. In contrast, only a small minority of eight teachers (3.6%) viewed their load as very heavy.

The survey presents a clear demographic portrait of the typical teacher. The findings indicate that the teaching force is predominantly comprised of young, female professionals, many of whom hold baccalaureate degrees and teach at both the Junior and Senior High School levels. A majority of the teachers are relatively new to the profession, possessing between one and five years of experience. Just over half of the respondents have secured permanent employment, and most report a moderate, manageable teaching load.

Table 1: Level of Teacher Retention in Catholic Schools

Statements	W M	DI
1. The school integrates faith-based values into the curriculum.	4.71	VH
2. My teaching contributes to the school's religious mission.	4.56	VH
3. The school's religious environment impacts teaching motivation.	4.54	VH
4. Allows discussion of religious topics with students.	4.53	VH
5. Alignment with the school's religious mission and my faith.	4.52	VH
A. Commitment to Faith and School Mission	4.57	V H
6. I feel a sense of belonging in my school community.	4.54	VH
7. There is collegiality and teamwork at my school.	4.41	VH
8. There is a teaching collaboration with other teachers.	4.37	VH
9. The communication between teachers and administration is there.	4.35	VH
10. The school handles conflicts among staff members well.	4.31	VH
B. School Culture and Community	4.39	V H
11. I am provided with opportunities for professional growth.	4.46	VH
12. There is an accessible professional development resource.	4.46	VH
13. The school encourages pursuing further education.	4.31	VH
14. There are effective mentoring and induction programs at my school.	4.29	H
15. Constructive feedback between the administration and the faculty.	4.27	H
C. Professional Development and Support	4.35	V H
16. I feel safe in my work environment.	4.37	VH
17. My workload is manageable.	4.28	VH
18. The school responds to my professional concerns.	4.23	VH
19. Overall, working conditions in my school are high.	4.08	H
20. The school has sufficient teaching materials and resources.	4.06	H
D. Work Environment and Conditions	4.20	V H
21. I recommend my school as a good place to work to other educators.	4.26	VH

22. I am satisfied with the professional incentives provided by the school.	4.06	H
23. I am satisfied with the benefits offered by the school.	4.05	H
24. My compensation is comparable to that of similar schools in the region.	3.92	H
25. I feel that my salary reflects my qualifications and work performance	3.90	H
E. Compensation and Benefits	4.20	H
26. The school I work with is in proximity to my home.	3.98	H
27. I stay in my school to gain classroom experience.	3.74	H
28. The school offers a scholarship to my children.	3.51	H
29. I opted to teach as an alternative income.	3.45	H
30. My work serves as my preparation to take the licensure exam.	3.36	H
F. Personal Circumstances	3.60	H

Legend:

Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High (VH)
3.41 – 4.20	High (H)
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate (M)
1.81 – 2.60	Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low (VL)

4.2 Teacher Retentions

Table 1 presents the Level of teacher retention among the Teacher Respondents. The table showed that Commitment to Faith and School Mission is the most significant factor influencing teacher retention in Catholic Schools, with an overall weighted mean of 4.57, indicating Very High. On the other hand, the item “integrating faith-based values into the curriculum” got the highest weighted mean of 4.71. The result implies that teacher retention in the Catholic School is largely due to the integration of the faith-based values in the curriculum. The importance of value formation through education is increasingly being discussed internationally (Baig & Funer, 2022; Pirozhenko et al., 2021), as the school context plays a key role in the development of personal value orientations.

On the other hand, the factor Personal Circumstances has the lowest overall weighted mean score of 3.60, described as agree. The item "the school I work with is in proximity to my home" has the highest weighted mean score of 3.98, indicating that a short commute contributes positively to job satisfaction. A school's physical location significantly impacts teacher retention, primarily because the daily commute affects job satisfaction and work-life balance, as noted by Vavasseur, B. (2024). The lowest-rated item was “my work serves as my practical training ground while preparing for my LET”. The result suggests that for the majority of respondents, their current role is not primarily viewed as a temporary stepping stone for licensing exams (LET).

In summary, the data suggest that integrating faith-based values into the curriculum is a significant factor in teacher retention. Schools that prioritize and actively support this integration may experience higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment among their educators, ultimately leading to improved retention rates. Addressing this aspect could be vital for schools aiming to maintain a dedicated and engaged teaching staff. The school as a faith community is integral to a school's Catholic identity (Fontdevila et al., 2024). Evidence in Ireland suggests that teachers self-select for this by choosing to teach in a Catholic school as a way to participate in the Church's evangelizing mission (Kieran & Mullally, 2021). This alignment with faith-based values not only attracts teachers to Catholic institutions but also plays a crucial role in their decision to remain in these environments.

Table 2: Teacher Respondents' Spirituality

Statements	Weighted Mean	DI
1. I feel that God is my friend.	4.95	VH
2. I feel my faith helps me to cope with problems	4.92	VH
3. I have a deep trust in God.	4.91	VH
4. I feel the love of God.	4.90	VH
5. I trust in my faith for my decision.	4.89	VH
Belief in God	4.92	VH
6. I try to expand my soul.	4.85	VH
7. I look for insight and coherence.	4.69	VH
8. I try to open my mind.	4.63	VH
9. My life means searching and asking.	4.61	VH
10. I search for the spirit.	4.60	VH
Search for meaning	4.67	VH
11. I try to deal consciously with others.	4.74	VH
12. I deal consciously with the environment.	4.72	VH
13. I try to be empathetic with others.	4.60	VH
14. I try to be patient and tolerant.	4.58	VH
15. I try to be of service to others.	4.54	VH
Mindfulness	4.63	VH
16. I feel there is a lot of love in the world.	4.39	VH
17. I see a friendly world around me.	4.34	VH
18. I feel one with the world.	4.30	VH
19. I feel peace deep inside me.	4.29	VH
20. My life is peace and joy.	4.28	VH
Feeling of Security	4.32	VH
Overall Weighted Mean	4.85	VH

Legend:

Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High (VH)
3.41 – 4.20	High (H)
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate (M)
1.81 – 2.60	Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low (VL)

4.3 Teachers Spirituality

Table 2 shows very high spirituality among the teacher respondents, particularly in the "Belief in God" dimension, with a weighted mean score of 4.92. This profound connection is best captured by the weighted mean of 4.95, described as very high for the item "I feel that God is my friend". The results indicate an intimate, personal relationship with the divine among the teacher-respondents. While overall spirituality scores are excellent, the weighted mean score for "I trust in my faith for decisions" is 4.89. This suggests that while teachers feel a powerful personal connection, they might experience some complexity in using faith as their sole guide for practical decision-making. Nonetheless, the high scores align with established research findings, such as those by Głaz, S. (2024), which consistently demonstrate a clear association between religious participation and a greater reported sense of meaning in life.

The result also shows that, among the dimensions, “Mindfulness” has the lowest score of 4.63, which is still described as very high. The item number 1, “I try to deal consciously with the environment,” had the highest e-weighted mean score of 4.74 (“very high”). while item 15, “I try to be patient and tolerant,” had the lowest mean score of 4.54. The data indicates a strong inclination towards conscious engagement with the environment, highlighting a proactive approach to personal and social responsibility. Mindfulness protects against the emotionally stressful effects of relationship conflict (Zheng Y. et al., 2025), is positively associated with the ability to express oneself in various social situations (Cha S. et al., 2024), and predicts relationship satisfaction.

4.4 Teacher Retention and Spirituality

Table 3 presents the relationship between teacher retention and spirituality. The results show a significant positive correlation. The average faculty retention score is 4.20, with a correlation of 0.53, indicating a moderate positive relationship with spirituality. Similarly, spirituality has an average score of 4.61, with the same correlation value of 0.53, suggesting that higher levels of spirituality are associated with better retention rates. The p-values for both retention (0.05) and spirituality (0.01) indicate that the relationships are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, meaning they are unlikely to have occurred by chance. This suggests that teachers with higher spirituality scores are more likely to be retained.

When teachers perceive their profession as a spiritual calling or an act of devotion (a ministry or form of worship), they tend to exhibit greater patience, resilience, and empathy. These spiritually motivated attributes positively influence their ability to manage a classroom effectively, which, in turn, implicitly supports long-term teacher retention within the institution (Binu Raj et al., 2023; Karimah Izatu Nisa & Agung Utama, 2025; Syahir et al., 2025). Therefore, the data strongly suggest that teacher retention is positively linked to spirituality.

Table 3: Relationship Between Teacher Retention and Their Spirituality

Source of Relationship	Mean	Comp. r Value	Critical P Value	Comp r Value	Interpretation
Retention	4.20	0.53**	0.05	0.01	Significant relationship
Spirituality	4.61				

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5. Conclusions & recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that teacher retention is significantly influenced by the integration of faith-based values into the curriculum and teachers' strong connection to the school's religious mission. Teachers who feel supported in their faith journey and who believe the school aligns with their spiritual values are more likely to remain in their positions. Additionally, several factors play crucial roles, including a supportive school culture, professional development opportunities, and a safe, manageable work environment. Teachers' intense spirituality, particularly their belief in God and a sense of belonging within the school community, contributes to their overall satisfaction and decision to stay. Based on the study's conclusions, it is recommended that the Bohol Association of Catholic Schools Administrators and Management continue prioritizing the integration of faith-based values into their curricula, ensuring that teachers feel spiritually supported in their commitment to the faith and school mission. Educational institutions may consider implementing programs to support teachers' spiritual growth, enhancing both their well-being and long-term retention in the profession.

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