Satisfaction with Personal, Professional and Pedagogical Experience and the Japa Syndrome among Nigerian Nursery and Primary School Teachers: A Comparative Study

Abidogun Babajide Gbolagade & Rabiu Aishat Mojisola*

Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Psychology Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Teacher job satisfaction influences decisions to leave the profession, yet little is known about how satisfied Nigerian nursery and primary school teachers are at home and abroad in the context of the japa syndrome. This cross-sectional, convergent mixed-methods study compared satisfaction with personal, professional and pedagogical experience among Nigerian nursery and primary school teachers in Nigeria (n = 409) and abroad (n = 20). Questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Welch's t-tests, Mann–Whitney U tests, Kruskal–Wallis tests and effect sizes with 95% confidence intervals. Semi-structured interviews with eight teachers (four in Nigeria and four in the United Kingdom and Canada) were analysed thematically. Teachers in Nigeria reported overall dissatisfaction (M = 2.67), whereas teachers abroad reported satisfaction (M = 3.67). The difference was large (Hedges' g = 0.80, 95% CI [0.35, 1.25]) and widest for professional experience. Within Nigeria, satisfaction was lowest among nursery teachers (g = 0.73 relative to primary teachers) and women (g = 0.38), and it did not differ by school type. Interviews linked dissatisfaction to low remuneration, limited recognition and poor working conditions, and passion for working with children sustained some teachers. Teachers abroad described better welfare and conditions alongside family separation and a slow period of settling in. The study recommends improvements in remuneration, recognition, and working conditions, particularly for nursery teachers.

Keywords: japa, teacher satisfaction, teacher migration, early years education

INTRODUCTION

The japa syndrome, the large-scale relocation of Nigerians abroad in search of better living conditions, now includes substantial numbers of teachers (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023). Explanations of teacher migration have focused on remuneration, insecurity and economic instability, but Aghahowa (2023) argues that, beyond monetary concerns, the desire for a better quality of life is the main motivation for Nigerian teachers who migrate. Quality of life and satisfaction with working life are closely related, and a teacher who is dissatisfied with both may be more open to leaving than one who is not.

Evidence from other settings supports this expectation. A meta-analysis by Madigan and Kim (2021) linked higher burnout and lower job satisfaction to stronger intentions to quit teaching, and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) examined how teacher burnout relates to the perceived school context, job satisfaction and motivation for teaching. In Nigeria, Ejimonye (2025) found that secondary school teachers in Nsukka perceived, to a great extent, that colleagues' migration had increased their workload and affected their teaching negatively, and she concluded that teachers who remain experience heavier workloads and declining morale.

Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory distinguishes between hygiene factors, such as pay, working conditions, security and policies, which prevent dissatisfaction when adequate but do not by themselves produce satisfaction, and motivators, such as achievement, recognition, the

work itself, responsibility and advancement, which produce satisfaction. For teachers, pay and conditions of service can be seen as hygiene factors, whereas the work of teaching children, recognition and opportunities to grow are motivators. This distinction is useful because Nigerian teachers are often described as dissatisfied with pay and conditions while remaining committed to the work itself. Job satisfaction in Nigerian public-sector professions has also been studied in relation to working conditions, for example among nurses in government tertiary hospitals (Akinwale & George, 2020).

The questionnaires used in this study measured satisfaction with three items, each asking teachers how satisfied they were with their personal, professional and pedagogical experience in the country where they currently teach. The measure is therefore broader than a conventional job satisfaction scale, and it is referred to in this paper as satisfaction with experience.

Two gaps limit what is known. First, little is known about how satisfied nursery and primary school teachers in Nigeria are with their personal, professional and pedagogical experience, and early years teachers, whose work is emotionally and physically demanding, are seldom distinguished from other teachers. Second, the satisfaction of Nigerian teachers who have already migrated is rarely examined, so it is unclear whether the satisfaction that teachers hope to gain by leaving is reported once they have left.

This study contributes in two ways. To the authors' knowledge, it provides one of the first comparisons of satisfaction among Nigerian nursery and primary school teachers at home and abroad, using the same measure in both groups. It shows that, within Nigeria, satisfaction differs markedly by class level, with nursery teachers least satisfied, a distinction that studies of teachers in general conceal. The study was guided by two research questions.

1. How satisfied are Nigerian nursery and primary school teachers in Nigeria and abroad with their personal, professional and pedagogical experience?

2. How does satisfaction vary among teachers in Nigeria by gender, age, teaching experience, class level, school location and school type?

METHODOLOGY RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a mixed-methods design. A descriptive-comparative survey established how satisfied teachers were, and semi-structured interviews with a subsample of teachers explored how they described and explained their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The two strands were collected in the same period, analysed separately and brought together at the stage of interpretation. The qualitative strand was phenomenological, in that it focused on teachers' lived experience of teaching in Nigeria or abroad.

Participants, sampling and recruitment Teachers in Nigeria

The sampling plan stratified Nigeria by geopolitical zone, selected states within zones, divided schools in each selected state into private and public schools and aimed for equal numbers of private and public school teachers. The target sample size of 384 was calculated with Cochran's formula (95% confidence, 5% margin of error and an estimated proportion of 0.5). The achieved sample was non-probabilistic and comprised 409 nursery and primary school teachers. Teachers were contacted through teacher associations, messaging groups and referrals from interviewed teachers, while the questionnaire was distributed online through school heads. The data collection period lasted forty-five (45) days, and out of the 600 teachers who were contacted, 409 Nigerian nursery and primary teachers teaching in Nigeria responded.

The achieved sample did not match the planned zonal coverage. Teachers were drawn from 10 states and the Federal Capital Territory: Lagos (181), Oyo (41), the Federal Capital Territory (35), Kwara (27), Kano (27), Cross River (27), Osun (18), Borno (18), Ogun (17), Kaduna (9) and Nasarawa (9). Classified by the zone of the state, 62.8% of the teachers were in the South West, 17.4% in the North Central, 8.8% in the North West, 6.6% in the South South and 4.4% in the North East, and no teacher from the South East was included. The

sample therefore over-represents the South West and urban, private and female teachers relative to the planned balanced national sample.

Teachers abroad

Teachers abroad were selected purposively and by convenience. The sampling plan targeted the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany, because these countries have employed Nigerian teachers, but only teachers in the United Kingdom and Canada provided responses during data collection. Selection aimed to include variation in years of experience, gender, location and type of school, and the sample comprised 20 teachers (17 in the United Kingdom and 3 in Canada) who had migrated during the japa period. These teachers were also contacted through international teacher associations, messaging groups and referrals from lecturers and teachers in Nigeria. Their characteristics are shown in Table 2.

The two groups differ in size, in how they were selected and in composition. The comparisons in this paper are therefore comparisons between two samples of Nigerian nursery and primary school teachers in different locations.

Characteristics of the respondents

Table 1: Teachers in Nigeria (n=409)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	287	70.2
	Male	122	29.8
Age (years)	20–29	99	24.2
	30–39	224	54.8
	40–49	53	13
	50 and above	33	8.1
Highest qualification	B.Ed.	181	44.3
	NCE	61	14.9
	M.Ed.	60	14.7
	PGDE	36	8.8
	SSCE	36	8.8
	B.Sc.	9	2.2
	B.Sc.Ed.	9	2.2
	OND	9	2.2
	PhD	8	2
Years of teaching	0–5	90	22
	6–10	176	43
	11–15	53	13
	16 and above	90	22
Class level taught	Nursery	113	27.6
	Nursery and primary	62	15.2
	Primary	234	57.2
School type	Private	235	57.5
	Public	174	42.5
School location	Urban	288	70.4
	Rural	121	29.6
Geopolitical zone (from state)	South West	257	62.8

	North Central	71	17.4
	North West	36	8.8
	South South	27	6.6
	North East	18	4.4
	South East	0	0
Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	16	80
	Male	4	20
Age (years)	20–29	4	20
	30–39	11	55
	40–49	5	25
Highest qualification	B.Sc.	8	40
	M.Ed.	8	40
	PGDE	4	20
Years of teaching in Nigeria	0–5	16	80
	6–10	4	20
Years of teaching abroad	Less than 1year	8	40
	1–3 year(s)	7	35
	3-6 years	5	25
Country	United Kingdom	17	85
	Canada	3	15
Class level taught	Primary equivalence	11	55

Table 2: Teachers abroad (n=20)

Variable	**Category**	**n**	**%**
Gender	Female	16	80
	Male	4	20
Age (years)	20–29	4	20
	30–39	11	55
	40–49	5	25
Highest qualification	B.Sc.	8	40
	M.Ed.	8	40
	PGDE	4	20
Years of teaching in Nigeria	0–5	16	80
	6–10	4	20
Years of teaching abroad	Less than 1year	8	40
	1–3 year(s)	7	35
	3-6 years	5	25
Country	United Kingdom	17	85
	Canada	3	15
Class level taught	Primary equivalence	11	55
	Nursery equivalence	9	45.0

Interview participants

Eight teachers were interviewed, four in Nigeria and four abroad. Interviewees were identified and invited

from the completed questionnaire, ensuring at least four geographical locations in Nigeria were included in the selection. However, all the teachers abroad who signified interest in the interview were selected. Codes (N1 to N4 for teachers in Nigeria and D1 to D4 for teachers abroad) are used in place of names, and employers and towns are omitted so that participants cannot be identified.

Table 3: Interview participants

Code	Location	Group	Role
N1	Lagos	Nigeria	Early years teacher in a private school
N2	Borno	Nigeria	Teacher; also a mentor in a programme run by an external organisation
N3	Abuja	Nigeria	Teacher; studied business education
N4	Port Harcourt	Nigeria	Teacher in a private school
D1	United Kingdom	Abroad	Teaching assistant (student visa)
D2	United Kingdom	Abroad	Learning mentor in a special school (dependent visa)
D3	Canada	Abroad	Early learning educator in a public school
D4	United Kingdom	Abroad	Teaching assistant with Qualified Teacher Status

Instruments

Two researcher-adapted questionnaires were used: the Japa-Syndrome on Nigerian Teachers in Nigeria Questionnaire and the Japa-Syndrome on Nigerian Teachers in the Diaspora Questionnaire. All attitudinal items were rated on a 5-point scale (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). This paper uses the satisfaction items.

Face and content validity were established by the necessary experts, and their corrections were implemented before administration. Reliability was assessed by field testing, with 20 Nigerian teachers in Nigeria for the Nigeria questionnaire and 10 Nigerian teachers abroad for the diaspora questionnaire, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.76 and 0.75, respectively. In the present data, Cronbach's alpha for the satisfaction items was 0.91 for teachers in Nigeria and 0.70 for teachers abroad. Construct validity beyond expert judgement was not examined. The data collection period lasted 35 days.

Satisfaction was measured with three items: "I am satisfied with my personal experience in this country", "I am satisfied with my professional experience in this country" and "I am satisfied with my pedagogical practice experience in this country". A composite score was computed as the mean of the three items. The same rule was used for the items and the composite: a mean below 3.00, the neutral midpoint of the scale, was classified as dissatisfaction, and a mean of 3.00 or above as satisfaction. This threshold is a convention for describing the data and is not a clinically or psychometrically validated cut-off point. For teachers abroad, the items refer to the host country.

Semi-structured, one-to-one interview schedules were used, one for teachers in Nigeria and one for teachers abroad. They covered questions that asked how migration had affected participants' personal experience, morale and motivation, what the main challenges of teaching were, what had kept them in the profession and, for teachers abroad, how their working conditions compared with those in Nigeria and what had led them to migrate. Interviews were conducted by video call and recorded. The average duration of the interview was 45 minutes and the data collection period lasted 10 days. Recordings were transcribed with automated transcription software, and transcripts were checked against the audio.

Data analysis Quantitative analysis

Questionnaire data were summarised using means, standard deviations and the percentage of respondents who agreed (Agree or Strongly Agree) or disagreed (Disagree or Strongly Disagree). The two groups were compared on each satisfaction item and on the composite score using Welch's t-test, which does not assume

equal variances or equal group sizes, and the Mann–Whitney U test, which does not assume normality and is more appropriate for ordinal data and a small group. Effect sizes are reported as Hedges' g with 95% confidence intervals, using the conventional benchmarks of 0.2, 0.5 and 0.8 for small, medium and large effects, and as Cliff's delta for the composite. Because the diaspora sample is small, confidence intervals are wide, and the effect sizes and intervals are given more weight than p-values.

Within Nigeria, composite satisfaction was compared between two groups using Welch's t-test with Hedges' g, and across three or more groups using the Kruskal–Wallis test with epsilon-squared as the effect size. These comparisons are exploratory, and with six comparisons a Bonferroni-adjusted threshold of .008 is noted alongside the unadjusted p-values.

Qualitative analysis

The interviews were analysed thematically following the six phases described by Braun and Clarke (2021). In the first phase, each transcript was read in full and checked for passages that bear on satisfaction, motivation, morale, personal experience, and working conditions. In the second phase, these passages were coded inductively and semantically, with a code describing what the participant said. Codes were applied within each transcript and then compared across transcripts. In the third phase, codes were grouped into candidate themes according to the aspect of satisfaction to which they referred. In the fourth phase, the candidate themes were checked against the coded passages and against the full transcripts, and themes that rested on a single passage or overlapped with other themes were merged or dropped. Contrasting cases were retained, for example N2's view that pay was the only challenge. In the fifth phase, themes were defined and named, and in the sixth they were written up, with each participant's contribution reported separately so that individual voices remain distinguishable. Peer debriefing was used to code the transcripts, and was done manually. Quotations are verbatim. Fillers (such as "um" and "uh") and immediate repetitions were removed without marking and square brackets indicate words added for clarity.

Integration of qualitative and quantitative data

The two data were integrated at the interpretation stage. For each research question, the questionnaire results and the interview themes were placed side by side in a joint display. Each pairing was classified as convergent when the direction and relative size of the findings agreed, complementary when the interviews explained or added detail to a questionnaire result, and divergent when the two strands pointed in different directions.

Ethical considerations

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, took part voluntarily and were told that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Names and identifying details were removed to protect confidentiality, and data were stored securely.

RESULTS

Research question 1: Satisfaction among teachers in Nigeria and abroad

Table 4: Satisfaction with experience: teachers in Nigeria and teachers abroad

Satisfaction	Nigeria M	SD	% Agree	% Dis.	Abroad M	SD	% Agree	% Dis.
personal experience	2.53	1.41	25	55	3.6	0.5	60	0
professional experience	2.55	1.37	23	55	3.8	0.41	80	0
pedagogical practice experience	2.91	1.36	38	47	3.6	0.5	60	0
Composite	2.67	1.28			3.67	0.37		

Table 4 shows that teachers in Nigeria were dissatisfied with their personal experience (M = 2.53, SD = 1.41) and their professional experience (M = 2.55, SD = 1.37), and also dissatisfied with their pedagogical practice experience, although the mean (M = 2.91, SD = 1.36) fell only just below the 3.00 threshold. The composite mean of 2.67 indicates dissatisfaction overall. Teachers abroad were satisfied (means of 3.00 or above) on all three items, with the highest mean for professional experience (M = 3.80, SD = 0.41) and a composite mean of 3.67.

Table 5: Comparison of satisfaction between teachers abroad (n = 20) and teachers in Nigeria (n = 409)

Measure	Nigeria M (SD)	Abroad M (SD)	Difference [95% CI]	Welch t (df)	p	Hedges' g [95% CI]	MWU p
Personal experience	2.53-1.41	3.6-0.5	1.07 [0.80, 1.34]	8.08-36.3	< .001	0.77 [0.32, 1.22]	< .001
Professional experience	2.55-1.37	3.8-0.41	1.25 [1.02, 1.48]	10.96-44.6	< .001	0.93 [0.48, 1.38]	< .001
Pedagogical practice experience	2.91-1.36	3.6-0.5	0.69 [0.42, 0.95]	5.23-34.9	< .001	0.51 [0.06, 0.96]	0.019
Composite satisfaction	2.67-1.28	3.67-0.37	1.00 [0.79, 1.21]	9.55-45.9	< .001	0.80 [0.35, 1.25]	< .001

As Table 5 shows, teachers abroad scored higher than teachers in Nigeria on all three items and on the composite. The difference in the composite was 1.00 point (95% CI [0.79, 1.21]) and the effect size was large (g = 0.80, 95% CI [0.35, 1.25]; Cliff's delta = 0.48). The effect was largest for professional experience (g = 0.93) and personal experience (g = 0.77), and medium for pedagogical practice (g = 0.51). The 95% confidence intervals for the effect sizes are wide, particularly for pedagogical practice (0.06 to 0.96), because of the small sample abroad, but they exclude zero, and the Mann–Whitney tests gave the same direction for all comparisons ($p \leq .019$).

Pay differed considerably between the groups. The mean monthly salary reported by teachers in Nigeria was ₦92,210, while teachers abroad reported a mean naira equivalent of ₦2,440,000, about 26 times higher. Both figures are self-reported, and the figure abroad is not adjusted for the cost of living.

Interview themes

Four themes relating to satisfaction in Nigeria and abroad were identified.

Theme 1: Dissatisfaction rooted in pay, recognition and conditions in Nigeria

All four participants in Nigeria identified pay as a source of dissatisfaction, and several linked it to a lack of recognition and to poor conditions. N2 described pay as the only challenge he faced.

> "The pay is… so small… I observe that no matter the efforts you put in, most private schools, they don't regard that effort. They don't appreciate your efforts."

When asked about the key challenges of teaching, she said:

> "Low pay… Teachers are not appreciated… They don't value the words of teachers."(N1)

> "The challenges that… I am facing as a teacher in Nigeria is only in terms of remuneration. That is the only thing." (N2)

> "I think the minimum wages of teachers in Nigeria, yeah, both private and public, is nothing to reckon with." (N3)

"If you're being paid, let's say one million as a teacher, it's just as if you are being paid like 300,000 naira. So… the value for money has really… is at its lower ebb." He added: "teachers in Nigeria do work under severe pressure and under… poor work conditions their salary is not… commensurate with the workload and their skills as well as their qualification and the government is not appreciating it." (N4)

N1 also linked her working environment to her well-being:

> "the environment I was teaching was really affecting my mental health." (N1)

Theme 2: Passion and the work itself as a source of satisfaction

Despite their dissatisfaction with pay, participants in Nigeria described the work of teaching, and particularly working with children, as a source of satisfaction and as the reason they remain.

> "The teaching is a passion. It's not something you just pick from the streets… if you say you did because of money, you get out of it. So, my motivation is… I love being around children." (N1)

> "…provided you enter a class if you are a professional teacher, you have already forgot everything… when you are… with the children, you don't have any mind, you are playing with them, you forget everything until when you leave them, then you start thinking about yourself." (N2)

> "These are the people that they want to go and make impact in people's life… And this is their passion, what they love doing." (N3)

> "What has kept me going is the passion. I have burning passion for education, I have burning passion for empowering others to education." (N4)

N1's account also showed the limits of this source of satisfaction. She said that what she did not like was "the [lack of] motivation from the school owners", and in response to what motivates her to stay she said: "There's no motivation at all."

Theme 3: Better welfare and conditions abroad

The teachers abroad described working conditions that they considered better than those in Nigeria. D3 gave the most detailed comparison.

> "Staff welfare is really good… the welfare is very good. In terms of… when teachers need to take a break, they just have substitute in, and there is no fuss about it… back home you don't take breaks, you work from morning to afternoon every day." (D3)

> "I'm lucky like where I work there's no hierarchy. Everybody is basically treated the same. Yeah. So it's been alright." (D2)

> "The personal amenities there… the transport system is good." (D1)

> "I started working a month after migrating in education. So I didn't really lose touch with whatever I was doing in Nigeria for long." (D4)

Theme 4: Personal costs and a slow period of settling abroad

Satisfaction abroad was not unconditional. Participants described separation from family, the loss of informal support and a period of adjustment.

> "It was challenging because basically I missed home and my family, and then shortly after I became pregnant so I missed having a support system but I think right now I've adjusted to an extent." (D2)

"In terms of emotional life, it took me a while to settle back in and try to see the environment, make friends and get to know people. In terms of well-being, getting used to the weather, getting used to the system wasn't really easy. But in the long run, it got better and I got used to it." (D4)

"It's actually not easy for people with children here. Someone needs to be available for the children, or you pay… for child care… back home, you can usually drop your children with someone… even without any cost." (D1)

"It's not home, it's… another place, and having to learn new culture and the way things are done here." (D3)

Research question 2: Variation in satisfaction among teachers in Nigeria

Table 6: Composite satisfaction among teachers in Nigeria by demographic group (N = 409)

Variable	Category	n	%	M	SD
Gender	Female	287	70.2	2.52	1.29
	Male	122	29.8	3	1.19
Age range	20–29	99	24.2	2.42	0.92
	30–39	224	54.8	2.61	1.39
	40–49	53	13	3.38	1.16
	50 and above	33	8.1	2.65	1.23
Years of teaching experience	0–5	90	22	2.3	1.04
	6–10	176	43	2.83	1.21
	11–15	53	13	2.51	1.28
	16 and above	90	22	2.8	1.52
Class level taught	Nursery	113	27.6	2.14	1.2
	Nursery and primary	62	15.2	2.15	0.87
	Primary	234	57.2	3.06	1.26
School location	Urban	288	70.4	2.73	1.28
	Rural	121	29.6	2.5	1.25
School type	Private	235	57.5	2.66	1.19
	Public	174	42.5	2.67	1.38

Table 7: Tests of differences in composite satisfaction among teachers in Nigeria

Comparison	Means	Test statistic	p	Effect size [95% CI]
Gender (male vs female)	3.00 vs 2.52	$t(246.3) = 3.60$	< .001	0.38 [0.16, 0.59]
Location (urban vs rural)	2.73 vs 2.50	$t(230.8) = 1.73$	0.084	0.19 [−0.03, 0.40]
School type (public vs private)	2.67 vs 2.66	$t(339.5) = 0.12$	0.901	0.01 [−0.18, 0.21]
Class level (primary vs nursery)	3.06 vs 2.14	$t(231.9) = 6.53$	< .001	0.73 [0.50, 0.96]
Class level (three groups)		$H(2) = 52.31$	< .001	$\varepsilon^2 = 0.13$
Age (four groups)		$H(3) = 19.79$	< .001	$\varepsilon^2 = 0.05$
Years of teaching (four groups)		$H(3) = 9.92$	0.019	$\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$

Tables 6 and 7 show that satisfaction varied by group. The largest difference was by class level: teachers of primary classes were satisfied (M = 3.06), whereas teachers of nursery classes (M = 2.14) and of both nursery and primary classes (M = 2.15) were dissatisfied, a medium-to-large difference (primary versus nursery, g = 0.73, 95% CI [0.50, 0.96]; Kruskal–Wallis $\varepsilon^2 = 0.13$). Male teachers (M = 3.00) were more satisfied than female teachers (M = 2.52), a small-to-medium difference (g = 0.38, 95% CI [0.16, 0.59]). Satisfaction also varied by age, with teachers aged 40 to 49 the most satisfied (M = 3.38) and those aged 20 to 29 the least satisfied (M = 2.42), although the effect was small ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.05$). Teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience were the least satisfied (M = 2.30), and the effect of experience was very small ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$, p = .019). Urban teachers (M = 2.73) were slightly more satisfied than rural teachers (M = 2.50), but the difference was small, and its interval included zero (g = 0.19, 95% CI [−0.03, 0.40]). Private and public school teachers did not differ (M = 2.66 and M = 2.67; g = 0.01). The differences by gender, class level and age remained below the adjusted threshold of .008, whereas those by experience and location did not.

Integration of the questionnaire and interview findings

Table 8: Joint display of the questionnaire and interview findings

Topic	Questionnaire	Interviews	Integration
Satisfaction gap and its sources (RQ1)	Composite 2.67 in Nigeria (dissatisfied) and 3.67 abroad (satisfied); g = 0.80.	Themes 1 and 3: low pay, limited recognition and poor conditions in Nigeria (N1 to N4); welfare and amenities abroad (D1 to D4).	Convergent. The interviews explain the sources of the gap.
The Profession (RQ1)	Pedagogical practice is the highest item in Nigeria (M = 2.91) and the gap is smallest (g = 0.51).	Theme 2: passion for working with children (N1 to N4).	Complementary. The interviews help to explain the narrower gap, although no Nigeria item reaches the 3.00 satisfaction threshold.
Costs of settling abroad (RQ1)	Teachers abroad were satisfied on all three items (M = 3.60 to 3.80).	Theme 4: separation, childcare and a slow period of settling (D1 to D4).	Partly divergent. The interviews describe personal costs that the satisfaction items do not capture.

DISCUSSION

Teachers in Nigeria were dissatisfied overall (composite M = 2.67), whereas teachers abroad were satisfied (composite M = 3.67), a large difference that was widest for professional experience and narrowest for pedagogical practice. Considering Herzberg et al.'s (1959) framework, the pattern is consistent with a difference in hygiene factors. The mean monthly pay reported by teachers abroad was about 26 times that reported by teachers in Nigeria, and the interviews described pay, welfare and conditions as the main points of contrast (N1, N2, N4; D3). The narrower gap on pedagogical practice suggests that satisfaction with the work itself may depend less on the country in which teachers work, which is consistent with the passion for working with children that all four participants in Nigeria described.

These differences should not be read as effects of migration. The two groups are different people and not the same people measured before and after migration. They were selected in different ways, the sample abroad is small, and teachers who remain abroad may differ from those who returned to Nigeria or left teaching. Part of the difference may therefore reflect who migrates and who stays and not what migration does.

Within Nigeria, dissatisfaction was widespread but not uniform. The most striking difference was by class level: teachers of nursery classes were markedly less satisfied than teachers of primary classes. The data cannot explain this difference, but N1, who teaches in an early years section, described low pay, a lack of motivation from school owners, and a classroom in which she was alone with more than 24 children, which suggests that conditions in nursery sections deserve attention. Women and younger teachers also reported

lower satisfaction, with smaller effects, and these groups may merit closer study. Private and public school teachers reported the same level of satisfaction, which suggests that dissatisfaction is not confined to one sector. These comparisons are exploratory and were not adjusted for other characteristics, and the sample is concentrated in the South West, so they should be treated as indications and not as established effects.

Participants described the work itself as rewarding, in the sense of Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivators, and some presented it as a vocation that is not undertaken for money. This source of satisfaction may help to retain teachers, but it appears fragile where it is not supported by recognition from school owners and managers.

Teachers abroad were satisfied with all three aspects of their experience. The interviews nevertheless identified real costs: missing family, the loss of informal childcare support and a period of settling in that took some time. Satisfaction with professional experience was the highest of the three items abroad (M = 3.80), which is notable given that several of these teachers work in support roles and not as classroom teachers, a position that may carry professional vulnerability (Yip, 2023). Pay, welfare and the quality of working conditions may outweigh the limits on role, but the data do not allow this to be tested.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be noted. First, the design is cross-sectional and the two groups are unmatched, so the results describe associations and do not support causal claims. Second, the groups differ greatly in size (409 and 20), and the sample abroad is small, which makes estimates imprecise, as the wide confidence intervals show, and limits generalisation to the diaspora. Third, both samples were non-probabilistic. The sample in Nigeria is concentrated in the South West (62.8%) and in Lagos (44.3%), includes no teacher from the South East and over-represents urban, private and female teachers, and the sample abroad comes from two countries. Fourth, satisfaction was measured with three single items whose validity beyond expert judgement was not tested, and the satisfaction threshold of 3.00 is a convention. Fifth, the data are self-reported. Sixth, the interviews involved eight teachers, and some themes rest on one or two accounts. Seventh, the comparisons within Nigeria are exploratory and were not adjusted for other characteristics. Future research should use validated measures of job satisfaction and professional well-being, probability or better-balanced samples, longer follow-up, and samples that include teachers who have returned to Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian nursery and primary school teachers in Nigeria were dissatisfied with their personal, professional and pedagogical experience, whereas those abroad were satisfied, and the difference was largest for professional experience. Within Nigeria, nursery teachers were the least satisfied. Interviewees attributed dissatisfaction to low pay, limited recognition and poor conditions, while describing passion for working with children as a source of satisfaction that keeps many in the profession. Teachers abroad described better welfare and conditions together with personal costs and a period of settling in. Because the design is cross-sectional and the two groups are unmatched, the findings indicate associations and do not show that migration changed teachers' satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that;.

1. Government and employers should review the remuneration of nursery and primary school teachers regularly in line with the cost of living, since pay was the most consistent source of dissatisfaction.

2. School owners and managers, particularly in private schools, should adopt practices that recognise teachers' effort and support their motivation.

3. Nursery sections should receive particular attention in staffing, adult–child ratios and conditions, given the lower satisfaction of nursery teachers and N1's account of teaching more than 24 children alone.

4. Schools should introduce basic welfare provisions, such as scheduled breaks with substitute cover, of the kind described by D3.

5. Host schools abroad should help newly arrived teachers with family-related assistance for settling in the new country, such as information on childcare, and with building local networks.

6. Future research should use validated measures of job satisfaction and professional well-being, follow teachers over time, and include teachers who have returned to Nigeria.

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