



# The Influence of Satisfaction on Job Outcomes among Foreign and local Academic Staff at a Selected International University

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## Abstract

South Africa is experiencing high turnover rates among academics in higher education institutions. Establishing the antecedents that retain and attract academics in the field of Tourism and other related disciplines is crucial in attracting and retaining these academics. The study sought to investigate the impact of job satisfaction and selected demographic variables on turnover intentions among academic staff members. In the study, a cross-sectional quantitative research design was adopted. Data was collected from a population of 102 local and international academics. SPSS 23 used for data analysis. Pearson's correlation was conducted to establish the cause-and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study. Results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. In this respect, it was evident that although the academics were satisfied with their jobs they still had intentions to leave their jobs. On the other hand it was noted that there was a statistically significant negative relationship between job level and turnover intentions. In this vein, junior staff members were noted to have high levels of turnover intentions. The main implications established in the study were that higher education institutions should use several human resource interventions such as employee engagement and work-life balance to ensure that they retain academics.

**Keywords** - Turnover intentions, job satisfaction, demographic variables, higher education institutions

## Introduction

Globally, higher education institutions are experiencing high levels of turnover by staff members. (Ng'ethe, Iravo & Namusonge, 2012; Zahra, Irum, Mir & Chishti, 2013). Research on the level of satisfaction of educators has received attention in the prior literature (Makopo, Geldenhuys & Sime, 2018) who investigated satisfaction of secondary teachers from a tourism perspective. It is suggested that in order to eliminate the challenge of having turnover levels, turnover intentions should be moderated by higher education institutions (Ng'ethe, Iravo & Namusonge, 2012). In this vein, the moderation process begins by establishing turnover antecedents among academic staff members. In various universities in developed countries it has been noted that a significant proportion of academic staff members have contemplated changing their career (Ng'ethe et al., 2012). Nonetheless, the issue of turnover and turnover intentions in developing countries has not been extensively investigated (Ng'ethe et al., 2012).

In South Africa, high levels of turnover amongst academic staff members has resulted higher education institutions experiencing high levels costs in recruit and selection of new academic staff members (Martin & Roodt, 2008). Furthermore, as part of the ongoing transformation process within the higher education sector in South Africa, higher education institutions have experienced restructuring processes to address



the transformation in the sector (Martin & Roodt, 2008). Nonetheless, higher education institutions throughout South Africa, encounter staff shortages, due to brain drain and staff turnover problems (Jain, 2013). Research on staff retention in African Universities revealed that South African higher education institutions had a substantial number (between 5% and 18%) of academics leaving the higher education institutions (Tettey, 2006).

Job satisfaction is perceived as an indicator of how employees feel about their jobs and how committed they are to their work (Olusegun, 2013). Satisfaction and commitment are ensured by various factors which vary according to the context, and individual preferences (Olusegun, 2013). Establishing the effect of job satisfaction on turnover intentions by academic staff members in higher education institutions is key in managing the high levels of academic staff members' turnover. Extensive research has been conducted in examining the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions in various fields, such as, nursing, information technology (IT) and accounting (Hart, 2010; Medina, 2012; Zahra et al., 2013; Russ & Mcneilly, 1995). Research among academic staff members indicates that they are not satisfied with their jobs (Bentley, Hamish, Dobson, Geodegebuure, & Meek, 2013), hence it is essential to ascertain if job satisfaction is a direct predictor of the high levels of turnover among the academic staff members (Shore & Martin 1989; Watanabe, 2010).

## Purpose of the study

Increasingly, in South Africa many higher education institutions seek to retain skilled academic staff members due to the high levels of turnovers by academic staff members in those institutions (Takawira, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2014; Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). The higher education institutions lose highly qualified knowledge workers to the private sector and international higher education institutions which are deemed to be better well-paying (Takawira, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2014; Watanabe, 2010). In this respect, attracting, motivating and retaining academic staff members through ensuring high levels of job satisfaction has become essential in higher education institutions in South Africa (Cohen & Golan, 2007). Employee job satisfaction reflects how well an employee's expectations of a job are aligned with the reality of their work (Lund, 2003). To help academic institutions avoid turnover, turnover intentions should be controlled or minimised and previous research in Pakistan has indicated that among others, job satisfaction levels may be helpful when determining turnover intentions (Zahra et al, 2013). However, within the South African context limited research has been undertaken to comprehend the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions within higher education institutions. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the impact of job satisfaction and demographic variables on turnover intentions among academic staff members in South African higher education institutions.

## Literature Review

The theoretical frameworks guiding the study will be discussed in the present section. Furthermore, literature on turnover intentions and job satisfaction will be discussed.

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical frameworks underpinning the study include Triandi's theory of interpersonal behaviour and the Expectancy Theory. Triandi's theory of interpersonal behaviour suggests that various social determinants are involved in predicting behavioural intentions (Hussain & Asif, 2012). These social determinants include normative and social determinants of behavioural intentions (Hussain & Asif, 2012). The normative element refers to the individual's personal norms which include, the norms and rules that govern an individual's behaviour, that are beyond or outside of the social norms present in society (Hussain & Asif, 2012). For example, if an employee desires their organisation to respect and accept their choice of dressing, and if that choice is not respected, the employee may develop intentions to leave the organisation. On the other hand, social factors relate to perceived correctness of a particular behaviour for members of specific reference groups (Hussain & Asif, 2012).



The Expectancy theory proposed by Victor Vroom in 1964 suggests that people join organisations with preconceived expectations, and if those expectations are not met that will result in dissatisfaction (Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum, Staude, Amos, Klopper & Oosthuizen, 2012). The expectancy theory purports that the motivation of the selection of a specific behaviour by individuals is influenced by the desirability of the expected outcome. Hence, people join organisations with preconceived expectations and if those preconceived expectations are not met that will result in dissatisfaction which will result in the people leaving the organisation (Hellriegel et al., 2012).

## **Turnover intentions**

Several scholars (Medina, 2012; Zahra et al. 2013) suggest that decision to leave an organisation by an employee is not spontaneous but is a result of a careful thought process. In this vein, actual turnover by employees is a function of turnover intentions. Pending actual turnover by employees, turnover intentions are noted to take a significant time developing before they manifest as actual turnover (Cohen & Golan, 2007). Hussain and Asif (2012) argue that indirect costs resulting from turnover include decrease in morale among the remaining staff members and increased work overload. Turnover intentions can be defined as a conscious and deliberate willingness to leave an organisation (Curtis, 2014).

An employee who wants to quit his/her job psychologically distances himself/herself from that organisation, and their job satisfaction plays a key role in determining their intention to leave the organisation (Zahra et al, 2013). The impact is that that organisations' growth is stifled financially as they have to obtain new staff. In this respect, turnover intentions can be established by periodically establishing behaviour intentions through conducting surveys that measure job satisfaction, work related problems and intentions to leave (Zahra et al, 2013). However, it can be noted that not all employees who intend to leave an organisation end up leaving the organisation or changing their job. Hence, high levels of turnover intentions by employees does not always result in actual turnover (Perez, 2008).

Actual turnover occurs when members of an organisation leave that organisation and in the process get replaced by new personnel. It can be noted that actual turnover is difficult to predict as it involves gaining access to individuals who have left an organisation and engaging with those individuals to establish the reasons why they left their organisations (Zahra et al, 2013). It can be argued that actual turnover by tourism academics can be mitigated by making necessary work-related changes or adjustments' that will ensure organisational desirability by employees. It is therefore paramount to understand the antecedents of turnover intentions to avoid actual turnover by employees (Perez, 2008). In the highly competitive knowledge based economy, turnover intentions and retention are determined by the whole employment package, which employees receive which includes, remuneration, rewards and fringe benefits (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). In order to improve the functioning of organisations an understanding of the antecedents of turnover intentions is important (Ucho, Makvga & Onyishi 2012).

## **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an indicator of how employees feel about their job (Olusegun, 2013). It is a predictor of work behaviour such as organisational turnover and turnover intent (Olusegun, 2013). Job satisfaction influences the decision to leave an organisation, if workers are dissatisfied with their jobs they are more susceptible to leaving the organisation (Khan, Nawaz, Khan, Khan, Khan & Kundi, 2013). Job satisfaction is a reflection of how well an employee's expectations of their job is well-aligned with the reality of their job (Lund, 2003). A high level of job satisfaction by employees greatly benefits organisations as it reduces grievances, absenteeism, turnover and turnover intentions by employees (Olusegun, 2013). Job satisfaction is influenced by various factors which include a sense of belonging, job autonomy, promotion opportunities, role identity, supervision and work processes (Lim, 2008). On the other hand, some scholars suggest that job satisfaction is influenced by the remuneration an employee obtains (Olusegun, 2013).

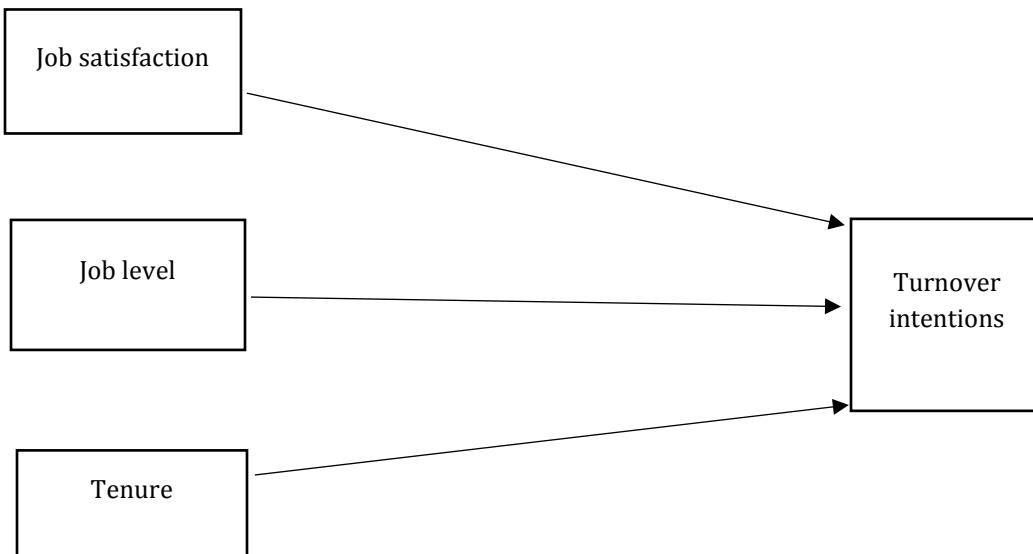
However, from literature it can be noted that remuneration is not the main determinant of job satisfaction, some employees gain more satisfaction from the level of enjoyment and decision-making autonomy they gain from their work (Olusegun, 2013). In this respect, there is a dynamic association between remuneration and job satisfaction (Zahra et al, 2013). From a study by Samuel and Chipunza (2013) on

the attraction and retention of senior academics at higher education institutions in South Africa it was noted that the salary that the senior academic staff members received was not the only key determinant of staff turnover. In this study, challenging work, inter-personal relationships, access to resources and security were noted as being key determinants for job attraction and retention (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013).

On the other hand, in a Ugandan study, it was found that while Ugandan academics are relatively satisfied with co-worker behaviour, supervision and intrinsic facets of teaching, their potential sources of dissatisfaction were remuneration, governance, promotion and physical facilities (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005). Previous research has outlined that the relationship between job satisfaction and actual employee turnover is moderated by intentions, this implies that an employee's intentions to leave a job are an immediate antecedent towards them actually leaving the job (Medina, 2012).

Nonetheless, it can be noted that job satisfaction is inversely associated with the intention to leave an organisation since satisfied employees are less likely to seek a new job, with a new employer (Egan, Yang & Bartlett, 2004). From the aforementioned assertions from literature, the proposed conceptual framework and hypothesis for the study were developed.

### Conceptual Model



Source: Author

### Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among academic staff members.

Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between job level and turnover intentions among academic staff members

Hypothesis 3: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between tenure and turnover intentions among academic staff members.

### Methodology

A cross-sectional quantitative research design was adopted in the present study. A quantitative research approach is an enquiry into a specific phenomenon which is aided by the use of statistical tools to analyse



the data (Creswell, 1994). The research participants in the study included academic staff members from a selected university in South Africa. Throughout the course of the study, ethical considerations were paramount. All the information regarding the administration of the research instrument was explained to the participants' before-hand. The participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and they were told they were free to leave the study if they felt they should. The data was collected using a survey in the form of an online self-report questionnaire administered among the academic staff. The measuring instruments used in the study to measure job satisfaction was the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, whereas the scale used to measure turnover intentions was developed from literature. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire is reported to have a high level of reliability and construct validity (Saane et al., 2003). The statistical analysis of data was conducted using SPSS 23 software package.

## **Validity and Reliability**

In total the instrument had 41 items and the alpha coefficient for the 41 items was 0 .85. A Cronbach Alpha score above 0.7 suggests that the instrument is reliable (Pallant, 2013).

## **Results and findings**

In order to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover, Pearson correlation was conducted. From the overall population of 102 research participants a total of 74 completed usable questionnaires were obtained. The results of the study are presented below:

**Table 1: The overall score of dimensions measuring job satisfaction and turnover intentions**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job Satisfaction	74	58.00	129.00	99.2432	16.11331
Turnover Intentions	74	3.00	6.00	5.1622	99350

The Job satisfaction values ranged from 58-129. The mean score was 99 which indicates that respondents were generally satisfied with their job. The measure for turnover intentions ranged from 3-6. The overall score of dimensions measuring turnover intentions was 5.2. This derived mean suggests that there are high turnover intentions among the respondents.

**Table 2: Job satisfaction and turnover intentions**

TI		TI	JS
	Pearson Correlation	1	.447**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	74	74

Pearson correlation was used to measure the relationship between turnover intentions and job satisfaction. The results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between turnover intention and job satisfaction ( $r=0.45$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ).



**Table 3: Tenure and turnover intentions**

		Tenure	TI
Tenure	Pearson Correlation	1	.246*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035
	N	74	74

From the Pearson correlation test results in Table 3, it can be noted that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between academic staff members tenure and turnover intentions.

**Table 4: Job level and turnover intentions**

		Job level	TI
Job level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.034
	N	74	74
TI	Pearson Correlation	-.119	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	
	N	74	74

Table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between job level and turnover intentions among the academic staff members.

**Table 5: Tenure and turnover intentions**

		Tenure	Turnover Intentions
Tenure	Pearson Correlation	1	.246*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035
	N	74	74

From Table 5 it can be noted that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between tenure and turnover intentions.

### Hypothesis testing and discussion

From the findings of the study, it can be noted that academic staff members exhibit high levels of turnover intentions. This is in line with the assertions by Takawira, Coetzee and Schreuder (2014) who purport that higher education institutions in South Africa experience high levels of turnover intentions among staff. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions H1 ( $r=0.45$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This means that even though the respondents are satisfied with their jobs they still want to leave the higher education institutions. The findings of the study are not in line with the findings by Zahra et al. (2013) who found that high levels of job satisfaction lower the levels of employee turnover intentions (Zahra et al, 2013). In the study, it was found there was a statistically significant negative relationship between turnover intentions and job level. In this vein, the second hypothesis (H2) was not accepted.

From the findings, it may be deduced that academics who had higher positions such as senior lecturers did not have high turnover intentions compared to junior lecturers. These findings are not in line with the findings by Samuel and Chipunza (2013) who found that higher education institutions were experiencing



high turnover rates from highly qualified and ranked academic staff member. The research findings also confirm that there is a significant positive relationship between tenure and turnover intentions. The third hypothesis (H3) is accepted from the findings in the study. This finding is not supported by the life cycle stability hypothesis (Martin & Roodt, 2008), which suggests that individuals who are older and have considerable experience within an organisation will be reluctant to change jobs as they have increased responsibilities and seek a greater level of stability. Whereas younger employees (below 30 years) and newer staff members, are likely to leave their organisations within their first few years of employment (Martin & Roodt, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Overall in the study, academic staff were found to exhibit high turnover intentions. It was evident that job satisfaction was found not to be an inhibitor of employee turnover intentions. It was found that high levels of job satisfaction did not mean that academic staff members would lower their turnover intentions. From the findings, it was noted that the higher the job level an employee possessed the lower were their intentions to leave the higher education institution. Whereas it is evident that academic staff members who possess lower job levels possess high intentions to leave higher education institutions. Academic staff members who had been at a higher education institution for a long time were noted to have higher intentions to leave the higher education institutions. It should be acknowledged that possibly other factors that were not investigated in the study are also likely able to contribute to turnover intentions of academic staff members.

## **Managerial implications/recommendations**

It is important for human resources practitioners within higher education institutions to comprehend the impact of demographic variables and job satisfaction on the turnover intentions of academic staff members. Demographic variables such as tenure and job level influence the turnover intentions of academic staff members. Evidently, from the study it can be deduced that academic staff members value their job levels. Higher level employees possess lower turnover intentions which implies that when academic staff member hold high job positions they are less willing to leave their institution. Human resources practitioners should introduce workplace interventions that should make academics feel valued irrespective of their job level. Furthermore, higher education institutions need to introduce work-life balance interventions to ensure that academic staff members experience autonomy and be allowed to be innovative in their jobs which can reduce their intention to leave. Employee engagement interventions can be introduced to promote the levels of engagement staff and motivation academic staff members will have on their jobs.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research can be in the form of a longitudinal study which will investigate the turnover intentions of academics over an extended period of time to ascertain any changes in their turnover intentions. Future researchers should not restrict the study to specific variables but should also seek to explore the possibility of other variables so as to account for the total variance in turnover intentions. This can be achieved through using mixed methods to gather data, thus questionnaires as well as interviews would allow researchers' to gather more information and unveil deeper issues embedded in the subject.

## **Limitations**

Since it was an online survey, it is not clear if the individuals who completed the questionnaires were truly the intended respondents. Due to time and financial limitations it was not possible to have a larger sample, thus respondents from other universities. There were inadequate resources to approach various universities seeking permission to conduct the study and gather information from. In addition to that, the sample size was too small due low response rate which can be attributed to lack of face to face interaction with the respondents. Another limitation of the study was the failure to explore other antecedents of



turnover intentions. The study was exclusive of any moderating variables which might be related to turnover intentions. Evidence of such a possibility is apparent as the variables which were found to be related to turnover intentions did not explain the total variance of turnover intentions. The study did not determine other variables such as stress and organisational commitment that have been used to explain turnover intentions in the literature (Podsakoff, LePine & LePine, 2007).

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## Job Satisfaction Survey

	YES	NO
1. I look forward to going to work on Monday morning's.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel positive and 'up' most of the time I am working.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I have energy at the end of each work day to attend to the people I care about.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I have energy at the end of each work-day to engage in personal interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I have the time and energy in my life to read books that interest me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Most interactions at work are positive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I have good friends at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I feel valued and affirmed at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I feel recognized and appreciated at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Work is a real plus in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I am engaged in meaningful work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel free to be who I am at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



13.I feel free to do things the way I like at work.

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14.My values fit with the organizational values.

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15.I am aligned with the organizational mission and vision.

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16.I trust our leadership team.

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17.I respect the work of my peers.

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18.I have opportunities to learn what I want to learn.

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19.I feel involved in decisions that affect our organizational community.

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20.Creativity and innovation are supported at work

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21.I feel informed about what is going on at work.

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22.I know what is expected of me in the workplace.

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23.I have the materials and equipment that I need in order to do my work correctly.

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24.I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day at work.

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25. My manager cares about me as a person.

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26. I know someone at work who encourages my development.

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27.My opinions count.

28. My co-workers are committed to doing quality work.

29. My manager reviews my progress regularly.

30. I am fairly compensated for my efforts.

Give yourself two points for each statement you answered positively. Use the following scale to evaluate your job.

**50-60 points:**

Great Job

**40-49 points:**

Good Job

**30-39 points:**

OK Job

**20-29 points:**

Bad Job

**1-19 points:**

Depressing Job

