

JOB SATISFACTION AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY (WSU)

Siyabonga Koninga¹, Prof. Nirmala Dorasamy²

¹PhD Student, Department of Public Management and Economics, Faculty of Management Science, Durban University of Technology,

²Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Management and Economics, Faculty of Management Science, Durban University of Technology,

skoninga@wsu.ac.za¹
nirmala@dut.ac.za²

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among employees at Walter Sisulu University (WSU), a critical issue for higher education institutions facing challenges in retaining skilled personnel. Using quantitative, cross-sectional research design, data was collected from 123 respondents across academic, administrative, and managerial staff. The study employed descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses to examine the dynamics between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The findings revealed moderate levels of job satisfaction among employees, with a mean score of 3.26, indicating a balance between contentment and dissatisfaction. Despite this, turnover intentions were notably high, with respondents acknowledging the financial and operational burdens of turnover, including its negative impact on morale and organizational performance. Correlation analysis showed a weak and nonsignificant relationship ($r = 0.075$, $p = 0.412$) between job satisfaction and turnover intentions, and regression analysis confirmed that job satisfaction was not a significant predictor ($p = 0.270$). These results suggest that other factors may play a more decisive role in influencing turnover intentions. The findings align with research emphasizing the complexity of turnover dynamics, where systemic and organizational factors often overshadow satisfaction. This study highlights the need for WSU to adopt a holistic approach to employee retention, incorporating strategies that address career growth, organizational leadership, and systemic challenges. Future research should focus on longitudinal designs and explore mediating variables to further understand the drivers of turnover intentions in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Development, Economic, Higher Education, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intentions.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa play a pivotal role in driving socioeconomic development and innovation by equipping society with the necessary skills and fostering knowledge creation (Baleni et al., 2022; Shukaili et al., 2025). These institutions are critical in addressing the country's skill shortages, which are often cited as a barrier to economic growth and job creation. However, employee turnover within HEIs has emerged as a major challenge, undermining the sector's ability to retain skilled personnel, which is essential for fulfilling its mandate. As Mlambo (2017) note, South Africa's higher education sector faces a significant brain drain, with skilled professionals increasingly lured by lucrative offers from the commercial sector and international institutions.

This talent loss poses a serious threat to HEIs' ability to provide quality education and to contribute effectively to socioeconomic progress. The departure of highly trained personnel disrupts institutional operations and compromises academic excellence (Havenga & Sengane, 2018). Moreover, as Mkulu (2018) highlights, retaining human capital is critical for ensuring

HEIs can meet their obligations to students, stakeholders, and society at large. Without concerted efforts to curb employee turnover, South Africa's already severe talent shortages cited by Reyes et al. (2019) as a major impediment to national development are likely to worsen.

The challenge is compounded by intense competition for talent, both locally and globally. HEIs in South Africa, particularly those in underfunded or rural settings, struggle to offer competitive remuneration and working conditions compared to private sector employers and well-resourced institutions abroad. As Martin and Roodt (2008) point out, higher education institutions are particularly vulnerable to poaching, with academic and support staff often opting for organizations that provide better salaries, benefits, and career growth opportunities.

Walter Sisulu University (WSU) exemplifies the challenges faced by South African HEIs in retaining skilled employees. Established in 2005 through the merger of Border Technikon, Eastern Cape Technikon, and the University of Transkei, WSU operates across four campuses in the Eastern Cape: Mthatha, Butterworth, Komani, and Buffalo City (WSU Strategic Plan 2020–2030). This geographical spread, coupled with the socioeconomic constraints of the region, underscores the university's critical role in expanding access to higher education in rural and underserved communities. Despite its strategic importance, WSU faces significant employee turnover challenges. Between 2012 and 2022, the university experienced 603 resignations, with the Mthatha campus alone accounting for over half of these departures. Factors contributing to these losses include competitive external job offers, limited career advancement opportunities, and perceptions of inadequate organizational support. Such turnover hampers the university's ability to fulfill its core missions of teaching, research, and community engagement.

Employee turnover is a complex phenomenon that affects all organizations, but it has particularly adverse consequences for HEIs. As observed, turnover disrupts institutional stability and compromises organizational performance. This is particularly true for rural and underfunded institutions like WSU, where resource constraints limit the ability to attract and retain top talent. High turnover rates also lead to increased recruitment costs, loss of institutional knowledge, and reduced morale among remaining staff, further exacerbating organizational challenges (Taye & Getnet, 2020; Mwansa & Hapompwe, 2023).

HEIs must, therefore, adopt proactive strategies to mitigate turnover and create an environment conducive to staff retention. WSU, for instance, has implemented initiatives such as the Vice-Excellence Chancellor's Awards and Long Service Awards to recognize and reward employee contributions (Mofolo, 2018). While these efforts are commendable, their impact on reducing turnover remains limited, suggesting the need for more comprehensive and targeted interventions.

1.1. Job Satisfaction and Turnover: Understanding the Link

The relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover has been a critical focus in organizational research. Job satisfaction, which encompasses an employee's feelings about their work environment, compensation, opportunities for growth, and overall workplace culture, is often viewed as a key determinant of retention. Studies have shown that higher levels of job satisfaction are generally associated with lower turnover intentions, as satisfied employees are less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere (Lukas et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2023). Conversely, dissatisfaction can lead to disengagement, reduced commitment, and ultimately, resignation.

However, this relationship is not always straightforward. Research suggests that job satisfaction may not act as a standalone predictor of turnover intentions. Factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, economic conditions, and external job market

opportunities often mediate the impact of job satisfaction on turnover (Radittriono&Hendarsjah, 2024; Koshak et al., 2024). For instance, an employee may report high job satisfaction but still leave if they perceive limited opportunities for career advancement or receive a more attractive offer elsewhere.

At WSU, job satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping employee retention. While the university has introduced initiatives to recognize and reward employee contributions, such as the Vice-Excellence Chancellor's Awards and Long Service Awards, broader systemic challenges persist. Limited resources, perceptions of inequitable pay, and an inability to offer robust career development opportunities contribute to dissatisfaction among staff, increasing the likelihood of turnover. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted retention strategies that address both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

This study examines the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions at WSU, situating the university's challenges within the broader context of South Africa's higher education landscape. By exploring the factors driving employee turnover and identifying strategies to enhance job satisfaction, this research aims to provide actionable insights for WSU and similar institutions. Understanding the dynamics of turnover is particularly critical for institutions like WSU, which serve as key drivers of education and development in marginalized communities.

2. Literature Review

Understanding the factors influencing job satisfaction and turnover intentions is critical for addressing employee retention, particularly in complex organizational contexts like higher education institutions (HEIs). This review examines the theoretical foundations of job satisfaction and turnover intentions and delves into the nuanced relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions, offering a synthesis of diverse perspectives in existing research.

2.1.Theoretical Background

Researchers have long sought to understand the drivers of job satisfaction and turnover intentions, employing diverse theoretical frameworks to examine the psychological and organizational dynamics underlying these phenomena. For this study, two theories, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Human Capital Theory, serve as foundational lenses. Each offers unique insights into the relationship between satisfaction, retention, and organizational outcomes, framing the analysis of these variables in the higher education context.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between motivators, which lead to job satisfaction, and hygiene factors, which prevent dissatisfaction (Giroux, 1960). Motivators include elements like recognition, achievement, and opportunities for growth, which foster intrinsic satisfaction(Sobaih&Hasanein, 2020). Hygiene factors, such as salary, job security, and working conditions, mitigate dissatisfaction but do not inherently drive satisfaction. The theory's application to higher education is particularly relevant as it emphasizes the interplay of intrinsic motivators (e.g., academic freedom, meaningful work) and extrinsic hygiene factors (e.g., equitable pay, career stability). This study draws on Herzberg's framework to assess how these factors influence job satisfaction at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and how dissatisfaction may contribute to turnover intentions.

Human Capital Theory: developed by Becker (1964), The human capital theory of employee turnover emphasises the value of employee skills, knowledge, and experience to an organisation (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019). It posits that employees or individuals are valuable assets, similar to physical capital, with investments in education, training, and health likened to investments in tangible assets. As such, organisations must invest in their employees' development and provide fair compensation to retain skilled and experienced staff. This perspective can be traced back to economists like Adam Smith, who further developed it by Theodore Schultz and Gary, who emphasised the significance of knowledge, skills, and health in improving workforce productivity. The core argument of human capital theory is that all organisations should work toward enhancing their staff and operations. Investments in human capital not only enhance individual employees' capabilities but also lead to an increase in the organisation's overall output and income (Ngcwangu, 2015). Organisations are responsible for nurturing their workforce, offering support for well-being and career advancement (Bergheim, 2005). In HEIs, human capital is indispensable for achieving core missions like teaching, research, and community engagement. Turnover depletes this capital, eroding institutional knowledge, increasing recruitment costs, and disrupting organizational performance. By leveraging Human Capital Theory, this study explores the economic and strategic importance of retaining skilled employees, particularly in resource-constrained institutions like WSU. The theory highlights the long-term organizational risks posed by turnover and underscores the importance of developing effective retention strategies.

Together, these theories provide a robust foundation for analyzing the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions, framing both the individual and organizational implications of retention challenges.

2.2. Job Satisfaction in Higher Education

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which an individual feels fulfilled, content, and positively inclined toward their job. Research on job satisfaction in HEIs highlights its importance in fostering employee retention. Scholars argue that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence satisfaction among academic staff. Intrinsic factors include academic freedom, opportunities for research, and a sense of purpose, while extrinsic factors encompass competitive salaries, job security, and supportive leadership. However, systemic issues in South African HEIs, such as limited career advancement opportunities and inequitable resource distribution, have led to widespread dissatisfaction among employees.

Studies outside South Africa reveal similar trends. For example, identifies poor remuneration as a leading cause of dissatisfaction in Tanzanian HEIs. It notes that institutions with robust career development programs and leadership initiatives report significantly higher satisfaction levels. These findings underscore the need for a balanced approach that addresses both intrinsic motivators and systemic challenges.

2.3. Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions refer to an individual's conscious decision to leave their organization, often regarded as a precursor to actual turnover (Mobley, 1977). In higher education, these intentions are influenced by a combination of job-related factors, organizational culture, and external opportunities. Mokoditsoa (2011) argues that poor leadership and limited career advancement are significant drivers of turnover in South African universities. Additionally, systemic underfunding exacerbates challenges like job insecurity, particularly in historically disadvantaged institutions such as Walter Sisulu University (WSU).

The WSU context illustrates these challenges vividly. Between 2012 and 2022, over 603 employees resigned, with 306 departures recorded at the Mthatha campus alone (WSU Annual Report 2022). Such turnover not only disrupts operations but also erodes institutional knowledge and increases workloads for the remaining staff. Botha and Vilyte (2021) highlight that the poaching of talent by wealthier universities offering better compensation and career opportunities further destabilizes underfunded institutions like WSU. These systemic issues demand tailored retention strategies that address the root causes of turnover.

2.3.1. Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions

The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions has been the focus of much attention in literature. Scholars have sought to understand how satisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic job aspects influences employees' decisions to leave (Alam & Asim, 2019). However, despite the volume of research, findings remain mixed, with studies reporting positive, negative, and nonsignificant relationships between the two variables.

Some studies find no significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. For example, Al-Ali, Ameen, Isaac report that in the oil and gas industry, job satisfaction does not significantly affect turnover intentions. Similarly, finds that job satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention among faculty members at a U.S (Al-Ali et al., 2019). institution. In also conclude that work satisfaction does not significantly influence turnover intentions, based on data from 162 employees. In echo this finding in their study of employees at PT Control Systems Arena Para Nusa, suggesting that other organizational dynamics may play a more decisive role in shaping turnover.

Other research indicates that while job satisfaction is important, its relationship with turnover intentions is mediated by external or organizational factors. In argue that organizational culture and leadership styles significantly influence the impact of job satisfaction on turnover intentions. Similarly, highlight the role of economic conditions and labor market dynamics, which may overshadow the influence of job satisfaction. In emphasize that personal and professional development opportunities, along with work-life balance, are more significant predictors of turnover intentions. In supports this perspective, suggesting that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators such as career advancement, recognition, and rewards often outweigh job satisfaction in influencing retention (Berber et al., 2022). It further note that individual differences, such as personality traits and personal values, can moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Conversely, several studies identify a strong negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. In find that higher job satisfaction significantly reduces the likelihood of employees intending to leave. In report similar results, emphasizing that dissatisfied employees are more likely to consider leaving their organizations (Rahman, 2020). It reinforce these findings, demonstrating that job satisfaction is inversely related to turnover intentions and highlighting its importance in employee retention strategies. It extend this argument, noting that while job satisfaction is critical, it often interacts with other factors like organizational commitment to shaping turnover behaviors.

Interestingly, some scholars present a nuanced perspective, suggesting that job satisfaction's impact varies across industries and contexts. In argue that while job satisfaction influences turnover intentions, its effect may be less pronounced in certain job roles. In find that other factors, such as career advancement and work-life balance, often take precedence over satisfaction in shaping employees' decisions to stay or leave (Al-Maaitah & Al-Maaitah, 2021). It

note that economic conditions or personal circumstances can lead employees to stay despite low satisfaction, further complicating the relationship. Given the above discussion, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Employees' job satisfaction has a significant negative effect on their turnover intentions.

3. Methods

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among employees at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). Quantitative research was chosen for its ability to produce objective, measurable data that can be systematically analyzed to identify patterns and relationships. The design was cross-sectional, capturing data at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of employee perceptions regarding job satisfaction and their intentions to leave the institution (Mohajan, 2020). This approach allowed for the efficient collection and analysis of data from a diverse group of participants, providing insights into the key factors influencing turnover within the university.

3.1. Sampling

The study targeted employees from all four campuses of WSU, including Mthatha, Butterworth, Buffalo City, and Komani, to ensure comprehensive coverage of the institution. The sampling frame included four key categories of employees: academic staff, administrative and support staff, and two levels of management (directors or deputy directors and executive management). The target population was 350 employees, distributed as follows:

Table 1.

Category	Target population
Academic Employees	200
Administration: Support Staff or Non-academic	120
Management (directors or deputy directors	20
Management (Executive Management/ Senate)	10
Total	350

Sources: Adapted from WSU Annual Report (2018/2025).

From this target population, a total of 320 questionnaires were distributed proportionally across the categories to ensure representation. Of these, 123 were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 38.4%. The sample included employees from diverse demographic and professional backgrounds, enabling the analysis of responses across different subgroups.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure employee perceptions of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and related factors. The questionnaire comprise two main scales;

- Employee Turnover Intentions Scale: This scale included 10 items designed to measure employees' intentions to leave the organization, based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

✚ **Job Satisfaction Scale:** This scale included 3 items measuring satisfaction levels related to intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the job, also based on a 5-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was divided into sections covering demographic information, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and additional factors influencing employee retention. The Likert-scale format was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing nuanced attitudes and perceptions.

The instrument was pre-tested with a subset of employees to ensure clarity and reliability. Adjustments were made to enhance comprehension and usability. Anonymity was maintained throughout the data collection process to encourage candid responses, thereby improving the reliability and validity of the findings.

3.3.Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which allowed for both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

✚ **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics and responses to questionnaire items. This analysis provided an overview of general trends in job satisfaction and turnover intentions within the sample.

✚ **Inferential Statistics:** To examine relationships between variables, correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of associations between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the predictive power of job satisfaction and other factors on turnover intentions.

These analyses provided comprehensive insights into the dynamics of job satisfaction and turnover intentions at WSU, helping to identify actionable strategies to mitigate turnover and enhance employee satisfaction.

4. Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among employees at Walter Sisulu University (WSU)(Dwesini, 2019). By examining employees' perceptions of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and related factors, the study aimed to identify key drivers influencing retention.

4.1.Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the findings related to the descriptive statistics of job satisfaction and turnover intentions. It provides an overview of the respondents' perceptions and highlights general trends, serving as a foundation for the subsequent inferential analyses.

Table 2.Descriptive Statistics for Job Satisfaction Items

Descriptive Statistics	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Job Satisfaction	123	1.00	5.00	3.2629	0.8560
Individualscale items					
I feel that I could leave this job.	123	1.00	5.00	3.0569	0.9607
I am actively looking for other jobs.	123	1.00	5.00	3.4959	0.9949
If I was completely free to choose, I would leave this job.	123	1.00	5.00	3.2358	1.0795

Source: Prepared by the author (2025)

The overall mean job satisfaction score is 3.26 (SD = 0.86), as reported in Table 2 above, indicating moderate satisfaction among respondents. Among the individual items, the highest mean score is 3.50 (SD = 0.99) for the statement “I am actively looking for other jobs,” which suggests that many employees are considering leaving their current positions. The item “If I was completely free to choose, I would leave this job” has a mean of 3.24 (SD = 1.08), reflecting a moderate level of agreement, indicating that employees may feel constrained by circumstances rather than motivated to stay. The lowest mean score is 3.06 (SD = 0.96) for the statement “I feel that I could leave this job,” suggesting slightly less agreement with this sentiment compared to the other items.

These findings collectively highlight moderate dissatisfaction among respondents, with a notable number expressing intentions to explore alternative employment opportunities. Addressing these concerns is crucial for improving job satisfaction and retention at Walter Sisulu University.

Table 3.Descriptive Statistics for Employee Turnover Items

Descriptive Statistics	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employee turnover intentions	123	2.13	5.00	4.125	0.4380
Individualscale items					
Employee turnover is costly for WSU	123	2.00	5.00	4.2114	0.8421
Employee turnover hampers the morale of other employees	123	2.00	5.00	4.0650	0.7866
Employee turnover disrupt the operations of WSU	123	2.00	5.00	4.1220	0.7953
Employee turnover has a negative impact on services rendered to its customers.	123	1.00	5.00	4.0163	0.7241
Job satisfaction has a significant impact on employee attitudes.	123	2.00	5.00	4.1301	0.7461
Job insecurity leads to employee turnover.	123	2.00	5.00	4.1626	0.7615
Inadequate performance appraisal systems lead to employee turnover.	123	2.00	5.00	4.1057	0.7222
Employee turnover causes a decline in WSU's image.	123	2.00	5.00	4.1870	0.6053

Source: Prepared by the author (2025)

Employee turnover, which refers to the rate at which employees leave an organization, was measured using an eight-item scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to turnover using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicated “Strongly Agree.As shown in Table 3 above, the overall mean score for employee turnover intentions is 4.13 (SD = 0.44), indicating a high level of agreement among respondents that turnover is a critical issue at Walter Sisulu University (WSU).

Among the individual items, the highest mean score is 4.21 (SD = 0.84) for the statement “Employee turnover is costly for WSU,” reflecting a strong consensus about the financial burden associated with turnover. Similarly, the item “Employee turnover causes a decline in WSU’s image” records a high mean of 4.19 (SD = 0.61), emphasizing concerns over the reputational

impact of turnover. Other notable findings include the mean score of 4.16 (SD = 0.76) for “Job insecurity leads to employee turnover,” indicating that uncertainty about job stability is a significant driver of turnover intentions. Additionally, the mean score of 4.12 (SD = 0.80) for “Employee turnover disrupts the operations of WSU” highlights the operational challenges caused by staff departures.

The lowest mean score, 4.02 (SD = 0.72), is for the item “Employee turnover has a negative impact on services rendered to its customers.” While slightly lower than the other items, this score still indicates a high level of agreement, suggesting that turnover adversely affects the quality of services provided by WSU. Overall, these findings underscore the widespread recognition among employees of the negative impacts of turnover on WSU’s financial health, operations, and reputation.

4.2. Reliability tests

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of a measure. A reliable scale yields similar results under consistent conditions, ensuring that the measurement is stable and reflects the intended construct. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha was employed to evaluate the internal consistency of the multi-item scales used to measure constructs such as employee turnover intentions and job satisfaction (Taber, 2017). A Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.7 or higher is widely accepted as indicating adequate internal consistency.

Table 4. Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficients

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Employee turnover intentions	8	0.723
Job Satisfaction	3	0.8

Source: Prepared by the author (2025)

The Cronbach’s alpha for employee turnover intentions is 0.723, indicating acceptable internal consistency for this eight-item scale. This suggests that the items reliably measure the construct of turnover intentions, capturing respondents’ perceptions consistently. For the job satisfaction scale, the Cronbach’s alpha is 0.800, reflecting a high level of internal consistency for this three-item measure. This demonstrates that the items effectively and consistently assess the construct of job satisfaction among respondents. These results confirm the reliability of the scales used in the study, providing confidence in the consistency of the data and the validity of subsequent analyses. The acceptable Cronbach’s alpha values for both constructs underscore the robustness of the measurement tools employed.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the study variables, specifically turnover intentions and job satisfaction. Correlation is a statistical technique that measures the strength and direction of the linear association between two continuous variables. The correlation coefficient, which ranges from -1 to +1, indicates the nature of this relationship. A positive correlation signifies a direct relationship, where an increase in one variable is associated with an increase in the other, while a negative correlation signifies an inverse relationship, where an increase in one variable corresponds to a decrease in the other. In this study, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to assess the bivariate relationships between the variables. The results of the correlation analysis are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Constructs		Turnover Intentions	Job Satisfaction
Turnover Intentions	Coefficient	1	0.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.412
	N	123	123
Job Satisfaction	Coefficient	0.075	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.412	
	N	123	123

Source: Prepared by the author (2025)

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicate a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.075$) between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. However, the relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.412$), suggesting that job satisfaction does not have a meaningful linear association with turnover intentions in this sample. This finding contrasts with much of the existing literature, where job satisfaction is often found to be negatively correlated with turnover intentions. The lack of significance here may point to other mediating or moderating factors which could influence the relationship. Future research may benefit from exploring these additional dimensions to better understand the turnover dynamics at Walter Sisulu University.

4.4. Regression Analysis

This section examines whether job satisfaction predicts turnover intentions using linear regression analysis. Regression analysis explores the extent to which one variable (independent) influences another (dependent). In this study, turnover intentions is the dependent variable, as it is the outcome being predicted, and job satisfaction is the independent variable, as it represents the predictor.

4.4.1. Regression Model

The regression equation used to test the relationship is expressed as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon$$

Where:

- ✚ Y represents the dependent variable (turnover intentions),
- ✚ β_0 is the intercept (constant),
- ✚ β_1 is the coefficient for the independent variable (job satisfaction),
- ✚ X represents the independent variable (job satisfaction),
- ✚ ϵ is the error term.

The regression results, including unstandardised coefficients (B), standard error, standardized coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values (Sig.), are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6.Regression Coefficients

Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.307	0.507		6.522	0.000
Job Satisfaction	0.053	0.048	0.103	1.107	0.270
Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-stat	Sig. F
1	.204 ^a	0.042	0.43597	1.287	0.0203

Source: Prepared by the author (2025)

The results from Table 6 show that the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.053$) for job satisfaction is positive, suggesting a weak direct relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. However, the relationship is not statistically significant ($p=0.2702$), indicating that job satisfaction does not significantly predict turnover intentions in this sample. The model summary in Table 6 provides additional insights:

- ✚ The coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.420$) indicates that approximately 4% of the variance in turnover intentions can be explained by job satisfaction and other factors included in the analysis.
- ✚ The F-statistic (1.287, $p=0.0203$) indicates that the overall model is statistically significant, even though job satisfaction alone does not emerge as a significant predictor.
- ✚ These findings highlight the complexity of turnover intentions at WSU. While job satisfaction may contribute to turnover dynamics, other factors likely play a more significant role. Further investigation into variables such as career development opportunities, leadership support, and organizational culture is recommended.

5. Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among employees at Walter Sisulu University (WSU)(Westover, 2024). The findings reveal nuanced insights into the dynamics of these variables, highlighting moderate levels of job satisfaction among employees and significant recognition of the negative impacts of turnover on the institution.

5.1.Descriptive Statistics for Job Satisfaction

The mean job satisfaction score of 3.26 ($SD = 0.86$) indicates a moderate level of satisfaction among employees at WSU. Employees neither expressed overwhelming satisfaction nor significant dissatisfaction, reflecting a balance of positive and negative perceptions of their work environment.

Among the individual items, the statement “I feel that I could leave this job” received the lowest mean score of 3.06 ($SD = 0.96$). This suggests that while some employees feel inclined to leave their jobs, the motivation to do so is not particularly strong. This finding aligns with the concept of "passive job seeking," where employees may remain in their roles but are open to better opportunities. On the other hand, the statement “I am actively looking for other jobs” had

the highest mean score of 3.50 (SD = 0.99), indicating that a significant proportion of employees are actively exploring alternative employment options.

This mixed behaviour is consistent with findings who suggest that job searching is not always driven by dissatisfaction but can be part of proactive career management(Hirschi & Koen, 2021). Similarly, highlights that employees may seek new opportunities to align their career goals with their interests, even when they are moderately satisfied in their current roles.

5.2.Descriptive Statistics for Turnover Intentions

The descriptive statistics for turnover intentions underscore the significant concern of employee turnover at WSU. The overall mean score for turnover items was 4.13, reflecting strong agreement among employees regarding the negative impacts of turnover.

The statement “Employee turnover is costly for WSU” received the highest mean score (4.21, SD = 0.84), indicating widespread recognition of the financial burdens associated with turnover. Studies corroborate these perceptions, emphasising that turnover incurs significant costs related to recruitment, training, and lost productivity. Similarly, the mean score of 4.07 for “Employee turnover hampers the morale of other employees” highlights the operational and psychological challenges caused by turnover, including stress and increased workloads for remaining staff. These findings suggest that employees at WSU are acutely aware of the multifaceted consequences of turnover, reinforcing the importance of addressing systemic and organisational factors to stabilize the workforce.

5.3.The Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions

The study’s core aim was to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The results reveal a weak and nonsignificant correlation ($r = 0.075$, $p = 0.412$) between the two variables. This finding is further supported by the linear regression analysis, where job satisfaction failed to emerge as a significant predictor ($p=0.270$ $p=0.270$).

These findings align with research by Al-Ali, Ameen, Isaac who found no significant effect of job satisfaction on turnover intentions in the oil and gas industry. Similarly, reported that job satisfaction did not mediate the relationship between engagement and turnover intent among faculty members(Kaur & Kaur, 2023). Studies found no significant influence of job satisfaction on turnover intentions, highlighting that other organisational factors may play a more critical role.

The nonsignificant relationship observed in this study suggests that external factors such as organizational culture, leadership, and career opportunities may mediate the influence of job satisfaction on turnover intentions. This is consistent with research who found that job satisfaction alone may not be a robust predictor of turnover when organizational dynamics are considered(MacIntosh & Doherty, 2009). Similarly, emphasized the role of economic conditions and job market opportunities in overshadowing satisfaction as a determinant of turnover intentions.

Conversely, the findings challenge a substantial body of research that identifies job satisfaction as a significant predictor of turnover intentions. For instance, reported strong negative correlations, suggesting that dissatisfaction directly influences turnover(Chen et al., 2019). The contrasting results at WSU highlight the unique institutional challenges that may diminish the impact of satisfaction on retention.

5.3.1. Broader Implications

The weak relationship at WSU suggests that improving job satisfaction alone is insufficient to reduce turnover intentions. Other factors, such as career development opportunities, job security, and external market dynamics, likely play more significant roles (Lambert et al., 2001). Research underscores the importance of addressing these broader variables, including intrinsic motivators like recognition and rewards, to influence retention effectively.

5.4. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time, limiting the ability to infer causality between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Second, the sample size of 123 respondents, while adequate for analysis, may not fully represent the diverse perspectives of WSU employees across all campuses and roles. Third, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may have provided socially desirable answers. Lastly, the study focuses on a single institution, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other higher education institutions. Future research could address these limitations through longitudinal designs and larger, multi-institutional samples.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should build on this study by addressing its limitations and exploring additional factors influencing turnover intentions in higher education. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the causal relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions over time. Expanding the sample size and including multiple institutions across diverse geographic and economic contexts would enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide deeper insights into the underlying reasons for employee dissatisfaction and turnover intentions.

Further studies should also explore the role of mediating and moderating variables, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and external economic conditions, to understand their influence on the satisfaction-turnover relationship. Investigating other critical factors like career development, job security, and work-life balance could offer a more comprehensive understanding of employee retention dynamics.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions among employees at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). The findings revealed moderate levels of job satisfaction, with employees expressing a balance of contentment and dissatisfaction. Despite this, turnover intentions were high, with respondents recognizing the financial, operational, and morale-related challenges turnover poses for the institution. Interestingly, job satisfaction was found to have a weak and nonsignificant relationship with turnover intentions, suggesting that other factors beyond satisfaction are critical in influencing employee retention.

The results align with studies indicating that organizational and systemic factors, such as career development opportunities, leadership quality, and job security, may overshadow the role of satisfaction in determining turnover. However, the findings also challenge traditional research emphasizing job satisfaction as a primary driver of turnover, underscoring the complexity of these dynamics in higher education contexts.

For WSU, addressing employee turnover requires a holistic approach, including strategies to enhance career growth, improve leadership practices, and stabilize the workforce. Future efforts should also account for external economic conditions and organizational culture in retention strategies. Overall, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of turnover intentions and the need for tailored interventions to reduce employee turnover and foster a more committed workforce at WSU.

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Conflict of Interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Author's contribution

All proposed the topic of this research and designed the study, collected the data. All the authors contributed to preparation of the final draft of the manuscript was reviewed and revised critically for intellectual content, as well as drafting and revising the final manuscript. All authors approved the final version of this manuscript.

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