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THE ROLE OF JOB CONTENTS ON ACADEMIC STAFF TURNOVER INTENTIONS AMONG UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA: A DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CONTEXT

Andrew T.Muguna, Dr. Isaac N Micheni, Dr. James M.Kirika and Dr.
Catherine K.Kaimenyi



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Andrew T.Muguna¹,

Department of Business Administration, Chuka University

tmuguna@chuka.ac.ke

Dr. Isaac N Micheni²,

Department of Business Administration, Chuka University

isaacnkari@gmail.com

Dr. James M.Kirika³

Department of Business Administration, *Kenyatta University*

kilika.james@ku.ac.ke

Dr. Catherine K.Kaimenyi⁴,

Department of Business Administration, Chuka University

ckaimenyi@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess the role of job contents on academic staff turnover intentions in Kenyan Universities

Materials and Methods: The study was guided by a positivism research philosophy and a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used. The study population was 17210 academic staff in chartered universities in Kenya from whom a sample of 364 academic staff was drawn. A multistage sampling technique was used. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings were presented using tables, charts, and graphs.

Results: The study found that the relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions was negative and statistically significant (*regression coefficient* – 0.472). The study concluded that the academic staff agreed that they were happy with work tasks, job contents, duties, responsibilities, achievement, success, recognition, job independence, autonomy, and status in the university and society. Employee satisfaction with job content leads to low turnover intentions.

A unique contribution to theory, practice, and policy: The study findings validate Herzberg's Two-Factor theory. Results indicate that the theory is applicable in the study of staff turnover intentions. In addition, the findings may in the future serve as a platform for additional studies in the same subject for other academics, students and researchers. Human Resource managers would benefit from the recommendations set out in this study to retain employees by understanding the role of job content in employee turnover.

Keywords: *Job Contents, Academic Staff, Turnover Intentions*

INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover is a tenacious problem of organisations in a globalised economy (Chee Long, Foon, Osman, & Yin Fah 2010). Kumar (2014) attests that employees are critical assets for an organisation in the competitive business environment. The organisation should evaluate the intent of employees to quit or stay and why the phenomenon occurs. When employees feel dissatisfied at their workplaces, the feelings are reflected in each employee's behaviour. The behavioural outcome will result in less commitment to their works, which will lead them to quit the organisation physically or mentally (Munir & Rahman, 2015). Employees' turnover intention refers to the likelihood of an employee to leave the current job and the organisation, regardless of its location, size, or nature of business. Every organisation is always keen on employees' turnover intention. According to Kumar (2014), employee turnover is a critical human resource issue in all sectors of the economy, affecting productivity, product and service quality, and profitability (Berete, 2018).

Employee turnover is one of the most critical difficulties businesses face because of its impact on the financial success (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). This is because the loss of persons has both tangible and intangible consequences for the efficiency of an organization (Tanova & Holtom, 2008). The costs of recruiting, hiring, training, and developing new employees are apparent drawbacks. Still, there are also intangible costs such as a loss of employee morale, social capital, and organizational memory to consider (Morrell, Load-Clarke, & Wilkinson, 2004). The intangible loss of a company's abilities, experience, and know-how is more important than the tangible costs of replacing individuals since it can lead to lower productivity and performance, which can lead to lower profits. As a result, employers must understand the severe effects of employee turnover and establish measures to reduce the turnover of their employees on board (Frank, et al., 2004). According to Ongori, employees are more likely to stay in a predictable work environment and vice versa (2007). Organizations with a high level of turnover intentions are unstable. Employees are more likely to quit insecure organizations searching for more stable ones where they may plan their professional advancement. A high percentage of staff turnover could be as a result of poor job content. Previous studies have found that employee demographic characteristics such as gender, age, position, and level; the nature of an employee's current job; and adequate working arrangements, which include aspects such as current supervision quality, opportunities for promotion, available training, and communication quality, all influence employee intentions to quit/remain with an organization (Gaiduk, and Gaiduk, 2009).

The structure is essential for achieving stated goals (Mohammad and Suharno, 2017). The managers are requested to write the job description or job contents and establish the performance standard because identification and classification enable managers to concentrate on essential activities, avoiding unnecessary duplications, overlapping and wastage of effort. In addition, a good design structure creates job descriptions, job specialization, and performance standards that will motivate the employees and lead to their performance. Therefore, these aspects of jobs are found in job analysis because job analysis determines the job's task and the skills, abilities, and responsibilities required for the job holder. Wendell French stated that job analysis is the systematic investigation of job content, the physical circumstance in which the job is carried out,

and the qualification needed to carry out job responsibilities. Job design starts with the analysis of task requirements, using job analysis techniques.

Division of labour principle served as the foundation for job design (Adam Smith, 1776). Taylorism, the scientific management pioneered by Taylor (1911), was founded on the premise that delegating responsibility to achieve a task to managers was the most efficient method to accomplish a task. The next phase was Fordism, which began in 1914 with Henry Ford's introduction of the moving assembly line. Work simplification became entrenched in companies after that, and it still exists to a large extent today. The concept of job enrichment, promoted by Herzberg (1968) and known as job loading provided the first way out of this bind. Job design describes the jobs content to fit work requirements with the jobholder's personal needs, increasing employee engagement and job satisfaction (Armstrong, 2017). People create jobs for people, according to Wall et al. (1998). Choices are made concerning which tasks to combine to form a job, the amount to which the job holder should follow specified procedure in executing those duties, how closely the job incumbent will be supervised, and a variety of other work characteristics, whether intentionally or by default. Armstrong (2017) asserted that a job is an organizational unit consisting of defined tasks, activities, or responsibilities. Workers' job activities, or what they do on the job, are referred to as job content. They are the factors that are managed internally and for which an individual bears responsibility. They include job tasks, roles, responsibilities, progress, achievement, acknowledgement, independence, autonomy, and work quality. Work requirements are the reason the job exists, therefore starting point when deciding on job content. Following the determination of the work, it is vital to consider how the job might be set up to maximize intrinsic motivation for individuals who perform it to boost performance and productivity. The Job contents are determined by the work system and organizational structure in which it is located.

Job range, job depth, and job relationship are the three essential elements of job content shared by all jobs. The amount of activities a job holder performs to complete a task is the operating range. The amount of discretion a job holder has over job activities and outcomes is referred to as job depth. The interpersonal contact between jobholders and their bosses and co-workers is a job relationship. Hackman and Oldham created the most important model for job content (1974). The degree to which work demands individuals to execute tasks that test their skills and ability was recognized as one of the five core natures of job content. The degree to which the task necessitates the accomplishment of a specific piece of work. The Task significance refers to the degree to which the job's outcomes significantly impact others. Autonomy refers to how a job allows for flexibility in scheduling work and selecting how it is completed. Feedback is the amount of information that employees receive on the effectiveness of their efforts, focusing on feedback that is directly related to the task itself rather than coming from a third party. According to Hackman and Oldham (1974), if the task design matches the essential character of the job content, the employee will consider the job desirable, feel responsible for it, and know if it has been completed satisfactorily. The phenomenon would result in high-quality work performance and job happiness due to intrinsic motivation. Jobs should never be considered in isolation. All job holders are members of official or informal groups, and the interrelationships among these groups should be considered while examining job content.

Job contents are very beneficial in HRM for job grading and classification, career paths, career developments, handling grievances relating to the duties and responsibilities at the workplace, work measurement and working improvements. The job contents further define the limits to authority, training and development, development of performance standards, the establishment of good working relationships and conducive environments at the workplace, and healthy communication between employees and employers on the one hand, and employees and customers on the other (Farahbod, Salimi, & Dorostkar, 2013). Ishaq (2015) further argued that effective job content would be useful for job evaluation, job redesign, performance management, and organizational change. According to Ishaq (2015), for organizations to avoid repetitive work and overlapping duties, employees' job content should be designed and structured to help achieve organizational goals and objectives. According to Farahbod et al. (2013), employee job content is about what a particular job entails, such as the duties, responsibilities, qualification, working hours, job identification, and relation to other jobs. Job contents result from the Job description (J.D.) based on objective information acquired from job analysis, an understanding of the competencies and skills needed to complete assigned tasks, and the need for an organization to improve productivity and performance at the workplace (Mollel et al., 2017). Dessler (2017) posits that the most important product of job analysis is the job description used in designing job contents, which defines what the worker does, how they do it, and the job's working conditions. Dessler (2017) further states that well-thought-out job content is beneficial to everyone involved within an organization. However, Dessler (2017) identifies the following sections or components in most job contents: job identification, responsibilities and duties, relationships, authority, autonomy and independence

Kamasak and Bulutlar (2008) studied the relationship between job contents and employee performance of blue-collar workers in India. Their study aimed to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of the job description and employee performance. The survey was conducted by sampling 637 blue-collar workers, and data were obtained from the sample. The findings of the study revealed a clear relationship between job content and employee performance at the workplace. Using the regression analysis, employees' job descriptions were observed to predict all of the dimensions of employee performance. Still, most significantly, the employee performance of supervisors concerning their supervisors was highly explained by the employees' job contents. While the female employees were more satisfied with their job descriptions and their roles at the workplace, the work itself, and their reward mechanisms, the inexperienced workers, on the other hand, differed significantly from the others in nearly all the dimensions of employee performance, except the work itself. Moreover, females were also observed to have more positive perceptions about their job descriptions at the workplace than their male counterparts.

Farahbod, Salimi, and Dorostkar (2013) examined the impact of the job description on organisational performance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment at the workplace in Iran. They used the descriptive research design to undertake the study. Two hundred sixty-three employees of Gilan Maskan bank were sampled for the study. The study's findings revealed that employees' job descriptions at Gilan Maskan bank significantly affected their job performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Yeboah (2019) conducted a study on the Effect of Employee Job Description on Their Work Performance: The Case of the National Health Insurance Authority. A structured, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 168 workers at various departments and units at the authority. From the study's findings, the respondents agreed to two primary forms of employee job descriptions practiced and exhibited mainly in the organization: job identification and job performance appraisals. However, from the correlational analysis, all four forms of employee job descriptions were significant predictors of work performance. On the other hand, the regression results revealed that only the job performance appraisals and the decision-making authority had a significant positive with workers' work performance at the NHIA. Management of the Authority is advised to improve upon the employees' job description regarding role identification and responsibilities and motivate the employees with attractive rewards and employee support systems. Mollel, Mulongo, and Razia (2017) examined the influence of job description on organizational performance and employee productivity in the Muheza district of Tanzania. Their study sought to appraise the role and impact of employee job descriptions on organizational performance and employee productivity in the telecommunications industry of Tanzania to improve the effectiveness and applicability of job descriptions in the telecommunications sector of Tanzania. A sample of 339 employees participated in the study through questionnaires and interviews. Their research revealed that employees' job description was critical in determining the sector's performance. The study concluded that; the interplay and harmony of the various aspects of job description ensure effective organizational performance, job satisfaction, and employee productivity. Therefore, there is the need to ensure that proper job description strategies are employed in all organizations

Theory of Herzberg's two-Factor

The theory of two-factor as well recognized as dual-factor theory and Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory) was created by psychologist Frederick Herzberg in 1959, who hypothesized that satisfaction and dissatisfaction of job work separately. The theory indicates that some factors in the workplace result in job satisfaction, while different factors are set to result in dissatisfaction with the job. The momentum for job enrichment mainly came from Frederick Herzberg's (1966, 1968) reply to the 'white-collar woes' and the 'blue-collar blues' (Gooding, 1970), which happened in the 1960s plus 1970s. The period was characterized by workers responding to their job in different 'unproductive ways,' for instance, through sabotage, absenteeism, strikes, and turnover; a reply which was seen to be partially an outcome of a universal increase in aspirations and abilities of people via improved access to education. The basic theory's tenet is that change of hygiene factors could conquer discontent but can't enhance satisfaction and motivation. Job satisfaction can just be motivated by shifting jobs' intrinsic aspects. It has been reported that functioning in a state of motivation-seeking is extra industrious compared to operating in a state of hygiene-seeking, and so anticipated making work extra enriching via doing an increment of the motivators present at works (Herzberg, 1959).

The principles that have been proposed include individual accountability, removing some controls on workers, giving workers entire work units, providing direct feedback to workers, increasing freedom, discretion and authority, further assigning specialized responsibilities to workers so that they can become professionals; and initiating more difficult responsibilities

(Herzberg, 1968). The method described above was a significant advancement in the field of job design research. Rather than simply noting the adverse effects of simplified occupations, a psychology theory and actual job redesign ideas were produced. In addition, the theory of Herzberg presumes that every person looks for self-actualization and motivation. If they are denied at the seeking hygiene stage, they will be ‘mentally unhealthy’. According to Hulin and Blood, (1968), this supposition refutes the importance of the individual differences in responses to redesigns of jobs. The following principles must be practiced as suggested by Herzberg (1968) reduce some controls on employees; increase autonomy; increase discretion and freedom; give direct feedback to workers rather than feedback simply to supervisors and introduce more complicated responsibilities. Jobs that are poorly designed are probable to be frustrating, tedious and discouraging to workers. In line with this theory, just a challenging job has the chance for recognition, accomplishment, growth and advancement that will inspire workers.

Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover

This model of voluntary turnover was developed by Lee and Mitchell (1994). It was founded on the principles of Image Theory (Beach, 1990). The model highlights the psychological processes involved in quitting a job and leaving an organisation. An employee’s decision to quit an organisation can take a variety of forms. People use psychological and behavioural tactics when it comes to quitting and leaving an organisation. According to Lee *et al.*, (1996), who tested the Lee and Mitchell model, employees choose one of four distinct decision paths when deciding to leave their jobs. Reality “shock” is a factor in determining which path to take. They categorised shocks as expected or unexpected, positive or negative, personal or organisational, and personal, job, and organizationally connected. Marriage, motherhood, and becoming debt-free are examples of individual shocks. Position and organisational-related shocks include corporate reorganisation, new management, and changes in work assignments.

Maertz and Campion (2004) advanced the theory and provided four quitters based on the circumstances surrounding their decision to leave their job and the organisation. The first group quits on the spur of the moment, usually due to a bad experience. Management finds it impossible to predict or even avoid the behaviour repercussions of this type of quitter due to their unpredictability. The second type of quitter is persuaded away from their current job by tempting alternatives but negatively influences their current employer. The third type of quitter intends to leave after the birth of a child, the retirement of a partner, or even if they want to pursue their formal education. The last sort of quitter is the conditional quitter. When an unexpected occurrence or shock occurs, this person decides to come to a halt. This type of incident or shock can include the possibility of a better job offer, a transfer, being passed over for a promotion, working conditions, and how a supervisor treats them. Almost invariably, they are detrimental to the company (Maertz & Campion, 2004). Even though the unfolding model of voluntary turnover includes more turnover categories than traditional turnover models, systematic classification failure calls into question claims that it provides a complete picture of turnover. Employee turnover intentions are triggered in one of four ways by job dissatisfaction. This model examined the current study’s relationship between HRM practices such as satisfaction with job content and turnover intentions.

METHODOLOGY

The study was guided on positivism research philosophy, and a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used. The study population was 17210 academic staff in chartered universities in Kenya from whom a sample of 364 academic staff was drawn. A multistage sampling technique was used. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings were presented using tables, charts, and graphs.

RESULTS

The study assessed the relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions among universities in Kenya. The data was collected from 364 academic staff of chartered universities in Kenya. The questionnaire was administered directly through the research assistants hired in the respective universities recruited due to their close association with academic staff. They contacted the sampled academic staff to provide an informed consent form before administering questionnaires by Drop-off and Pick-Up later (DOPUL) method. A total of 353 questionnaires were successfully filled and found suitable for further analysis resulting in a response rate of 97 %. The response rate was comparable to those of other studies done on academic staff by Nge'the et al. (2015), which had a response rate of 100%. A similar study on HRM practices on tutor's turnover intentions in primary school teacher training colleges by Kyalo, Kilika, and Kimencu (2018) had a response rate of 76.9%. The high response rate resulted from the cadre of academic staff in the university education sub-sector and the follow-up done by the research assistants who were staff residents in respective universities. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients range from 0.918 for job contents and 0.967 for academic staff turnover intentions, indicating that the instrument is reliable.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics on Academic Staff Satisfaction with Job Contents

The study's objective sought to examine the effect of employee job content on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. According to the literature review, job content was conceptualised in terms of work tasks, obligations and responsibilities, achievement and success, acknowledgement, independence and autonomy, and job status. Further, the researchers looked into whether academic staff members were satisfied with their work tasks, duties, responsibilities, success, recognition, independence, autonomy, level, and status in society. The respondents were requested to indicate how they agreed with selected statements about the job contents. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Job Contents

Statements	Statistic		
	N	Mean	S.D
I feel happy with my current work tasks	353	3.64	1.15
I feel happy with my current job contents	353	3.62	1.13
I feel comfortable with my duties and responsibilities.	353	3.73	1.05
I am proud of my achievement and success	353	3.88	1.02
I am happy with the recognition I get	353	3.29	1.19
I feel happy with my job independence and autonomy.	258	3.65	1.14
I am happy with the level and status of my job	258	3.62	1.16
Aggregate Score	258	3.63	0.95

Note. N: Frequency; SD: Standard deviation

Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The result presented in Table 3 indicated the level of happiness with that job contents with aggregate ($mean = 3.62$ and $SD = 0.95$). The average scores of items ranged between 3.62 and 3.88 (Range = 0.26). The perception that academic staff was proud of achievement and success was rated highest (mean score=3.88 and $SD=1.02$), followed by being comfortable with the duties and responsibilities (mean score=3.73 and $SD=1.05$). The rated lowest was being happy with the current job contents (mean score=3.62 and 1.13) and the level and status of my job (mean score=3.62 and 1.16). The aggregate standard deviation is relatively low compared to those of other items in the questionnaire, which can be attributed to the reliability of the selected indicators. As indicated in table 7, the seven indicators of contents had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.918. As a result, the average scores of each item were close to each other, lowering the aggregate standard deviation. Implying that, on average, the academic staff agreed that they were happy with work tasks, job contents, duties, responsibilities, achievement, success, recognition, job independence, autonomy, and status in the university and society. Employee satisfaction with job content could lead to low turnover intentions.

Correlation Analysis for the relationship between Employee Job contents and Turnover Intentions

.A study correlation was done to see the relationship between job content and academic staff turnover intentions. Pearson's Product Moment correlation technique was used to determine the relationship between components of job contents and academic staff turnover intentions. Its purpose was to assess the strength and direction of job contents. The result is presented in table 2.

Correlations between Employee Job contents and Turnover Intentions

		Turnover Intentions	Job Content
Turnover Intentions	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	352	
Job Content	Pearson Correlation	-.385**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	353

Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The correlation results presented in Table 2 indicated the relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions was statistically significant ($r = -0.385, p - value = .000 < 0.01$). This suggests that improved job contents reduce academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya

Regression of satisfaction with job contents and Turnover Intentions

The study's objective sought to investigate the relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya. The following null hypothesis was formulated to determine the relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions.

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between satisfaction with job content and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya

To test Hypothesis *H₀₁*: a simple regression analysis was carried out against academic staff turnover intentions and job contents. The results are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Simple Regression: Job Contents predicting academic staff turnover intentions

Statistics	Job Contents
R	0.385
R ²	0.148
F	60.888
Sig(p) value	0.000
Constant	4.266
Sig(p)	0.000
Regression coefficient	-0.472
S.E error	0.061
T	-7.803
Sig(p) value	0.000

Source: Primary Data, (2021)

The simple regression results presented in Table 3 show those job contents produced $R^2 = 0.148$. This implies that the job contents score explains the variation of employee turnover intentions scores at 14.8%. The remaining variation is explained by other variables not included in this study, like personal factors, demographical factors, country employment level, and labour mobility. Further, the results show that the effect of the job contents is statistically significant

($F=60.888$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$). This implies that the suggested models are suitable for prediction purposes.

Results presented in Table 3 indicated a statistically significant negative linear relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions (regression coefficient = -0.472 , $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) at a 5% level. This means that one unit increase in job contents (improvement) leads to a significant decrease in academic staff turnover intentions by a factor of 0.472. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya is not supported in the current study, and therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that job content has a negative and significant influence on academic staff turnover intentions in universities in Kenya.

$$Y = 4.266 - 0.472X_{1a} \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where;

Y = The dependent variable (the academic staff turnover intentions)

X_{1a} = Job contents

4.266 = Y – Intercept (constant). Estimate of the expected value of academic staff turnover intention when job contents are Zero (Constant).

-0.472 = an estimate of the expected increase in academic staff turnover intentions in response to a unit increase (improvements) in job contents (X_{1a})

From the findings on this hypothesis, it is important to observe the nature of job content in universities. The relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions was negative and statistically significant regression coefficient -0.472 , while the other constructs had a lower and statistically significant regression coefficient. One approach that may explain this situation from the viewpoint of a learning organisation is much understood, though not directly expressed, in Hirschman's work (1970) that job contents are critical for academic staff in the universities Kenya.

The conclusion arrived at in this hypothesis can be explained on several grounds. First, in terms of concern for this study, this study's findings bring out the importance of job content in reducing academic staff turnover intentions. The researcher observed that the findings indicate the relevance of job content in reducing turnover. This is supported by the descriptive statistics, which showed that on average academic staff agreed that they were happy, proud, and comfortable with job contents in the universities with an aggregate ($mean = 3.62, SD = 0.91$).

Second, the current research findings can be explained using Fredrik Herzberg's (1957) Herzberg Two Factor Theory, which postulates various aspects that cause job dissatisfaction and satisfaction, emphasising recognising the individual's needs and the strengths they identify to meet these needs. Herzberg's theory divides job satisfaction variables into two categories: hygiene and motivational factors. Organisational policies, compensation, supervision and co-worker relationships, job security, and working environment are all variables that might lead to job dissatisfaction. On the other hand, they do not raise the level of job satisfaction. Factors such as recognition, achievement, promotion, growth, work, and responsibility can lead to job satisfaction, but they do not reduce job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al. 1959). However, they are critical to meet the hygiene requirements to prevent job dissatisfaction. To increase and

elevate job satisfaction, it is more important to focus on the motivational components. Satisfiers or motivators contain the factor or aspects built on the nature of the job itself.

On the other hand, hygiene factors are linked to the work environment, such as supervision and business policy. In order to avoid unpleasant and negative feelings at work, hygiene factors are necessary. However, motivational variables are the most important factors that encourage employees at work (Herzberg, 1966). In a nutshell, hygiene considerations refer to characteristics of work that keep employees happy and satisfied. On the other hand, motivational variables determine parts of work that provide employees with a sense of contentment and satisfaction. Finally, the findings of this study echoed those of Abdul, (2017), who discovered positive and significant relationships between numerous job attributes and job satisfaction. Karacan (2011) found that job satisfaction arises when employees' job qualities and demands are harmonious. Employees are known to be inspired by their work environment and working facilities.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found out that the relationship between job contents and academic staff turnover intentions was negative and statistically significant regression coefficient—0.472,

The study concluded that the academic staff agreed that they were happy with work tasks, job contents, duties, responsibilities, achievement, success, recognition, job independence, autonomy, and status in the university and society. Employee satisfaction with job content could lead to low turnover intentions.

The study recommends that Government, university councils, and management improve upon job contents, including job tasks, job roles, job duties and responsibilities, recognition, independence and autonomy, and status to avoid the situation of role ambiguity and turnover intentions.

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