

# Factors influencing the job satisfaction of academics in higher education

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## Abstract

Since there has not been much research focus on job satisfaction in Higher Education in South Africa, this article describes the job satisfaction of these academics in times of transformation. A survey design involved 94 respondents from similar departments at a residential and a distance education institution. A questionnaire focused on teaching, research, community service, administration, compensation, promotions, university management, co-workers' behaviour and physical conditions. Demographics that could influence the job satisfaction of the academics were also considered. These included university context, being employed on a full-time or part-time basis, rank, ethnic group, union membership and gender. Factors causing satisfaction and dissatisfaction were identified. These were sometimes influenced by the above-mentioned demographics. Three-quarters of the sample indicated that, all things considered, they were satisfied with their work. Significant correlations between job satisfaction and physical conditions and support, in particular, were determined.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Oshagbemi (1996, 389) believes that job satisfaction is an important subject because of its relevance to the physical and mental wellbeing of employees. Hence, an understanding of the factors relating to job satisfaction is important. It may affect absenteeism, turnover and job performance. 'Highly satisfied faculty will generally be innovative and motivated to establish and maintain an environment conducive to learning' (Truell, Price and Joyner 1998, 120). In this regard, job satisfaction is seen as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state, resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences' (Locke in Oshagbemi 1999, 388).

Although academics have often researched the job satisfaction of others, electronic data bases reveal that their own job satisfaction has less often been investigated, especially in South Africa (as will be indicated). Academics are a unique group worth studying. Their primary tasks are defined as teaching, research and community service although they also have administrative and management tasks. Academics have to keep abreast of new developments in other fields that

influence the way they work, such as computer and computer-related developments. Added to this is the issue of control (their own versus that of government) over their teaching, research and community service functions. Thus, research findings on the job satisfaction of those employed in other professions may not be useful for understanding the factors that influence the satisfaction of academics in Higher Education (HE).

When 'job satisfaction' and 'Higher Education' are used as key words, the ISAP-Index to South African periodicals has recorded 8 matches only for publications between 1987 and 2004. Apart from this, there is an absence of literature on how demographics influence job satisfaction in times of transformation, for example, when HE institutions merge with one another. These demographics include teaching context, full-time or part-time employment, rank, ethnic group, union membership and gender. Thus, the aim of this study is to provide greater understanding of factors influencing the job satisfaction of academics.

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION OF ACADEMICS**

Herzberg and his co-workers (1957) argued that the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction, but *no* satisfaction. Likewise, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but *no* job dissatisfaction. According to his theory, 'motivators' (e.g. achievement and responsibility), lead to job satisfaction when present, but do not produce dissatisfaction when absent. These satisfiers are intrinsic factors. Job context features, called 'hygiene' factors, (e.g. company policies, supervision and salary) are called extrinsic factors. They cause dissatisfaction when inadequate but do not cause satisfaction, even when they are present.

Bowen and Radhakrishna (1991, 18) used Herzberg's theory to determine the role of motivator and hygiene factors in the job satisfaction of academics from Agricultural Education. Regarding the motivator factors, they found that the academics were most satisfied by the work itself and least satisfied with their opportunities for advancement. With regard to hygiene factors, academics were most satisfied with interpersonal relationships inherent in being a faculty member and least satisfied with the level and method used to determine their salary. The researchers found that the job satisfaction of the faculty was independent of the respondents' age, being tenured or not, type of institution and years of teaching experience (Bowen and Radhakrishna 1991, 19).

In his research with HE lecturers in the UK, Oshagbemi (1996, 389–400) found that the respondents in his sample rated the satisfaction which they derived from teaching, research and interaction with colleagues highly: between 65 per cent and 80 per cent were satisfied with those aspects of their jobs. The variability in the responses was also low. The satisfaction of respondents with their head of unit's

behaviour, as well as their physical working conditions was lower. Regarding the satisfaction derived from the heads of the units' supervision, the variability was wide: while some respondents were very satisfied, others were extremely dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction was also found for administrative and managerial tasks, present pay and promotions. Lecturers were satisfied, in rank order from more to less, with teaching, research, administration. There was also considerable variation among academics in their levels of confidence to do research.

Regarding the relationship between job satisfaction, salaries and membership of unions, Lillydahl and Singell (1993, 237) found that American male full professors had salaries that were 6.5 per cent higher than those of female full professors, and white full professors had salaries that were 8.3 per cent higher than non-white full professors. White associate professors had significantly lower salaries than non-whites. They also found that unionised faculty members were significantly more satisfied with wages, benefits, and to some extent job security, but less satisfied than non-unionised members with almost all other elements of their jobs. These included the reputation of the institution, the quality of the students and their colleagues, leadership in departments, administrative offices, cooperation among faculty, support services (e.g. equipment, teaching/research assistants) and the control they had over work assignments (e.g. workload, time spent with students) (Lillydahl and Singell 1993, 241).

Hemmasi, Graf and Lust (1992, 439–441) found that satisfaction with pay (rather than pay level itself) was significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction. In contrast, length of time at the university correlated negatively with satisfaction. Males were marginally more satisfied than females. Satisfaction with advancement also correlated positively with overall satisfaction. The gender difference in satisfaction was confirmed by Tang and Talpade (1999, 345): they found that males tended to have higher satisfaction with pay than females, while females tended to have higher satisfaction with co-workers than males. Job satisfaction also significantly and positively correlated with overall life satisfaction.

Staff from different faculties or institutions may differ significantly in what they consider important for job satisfaction. Kledaras and Joslyn (1992–1993, 4–5), working with social work academics, determined that the general level of job satisfaction was high at four institutions (all private institutions), moderate at three institutions and low at three institutions. Intrinsic satisfaction relating to the creative and challenging nature of the work, was more important than working conditions (e.g. promotion, advancement, workload and salary). However, the level of job satisfaction may be influenced by policies governing the job. Organisational context of the work setting had little impact on job satisfaction. The demographics of the respondents (position, educational level, rank, length of service) revealed no significant relationships with satisfaction.

Regarding the influence of ethnicity as a demographic variable, Collision (1999, 26–28) found the following to be an important influence on the satisfaction

of black university professors in the USA: a supportive department and colleagues, since many black professors complain of the social isolation they feel in their departments or of being drained from being on too many committees. Often their research was considered neither serious nor rigorous academic research.

In a study that used female faculty members in family and consumer sciences in different institutions in the USA, it was found that 75 per cent of the sample reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs (Robertson and Bean 1998, 167). Socialisation, climate, autonomy and financial rewards significantly influenced their job satisfaction. Social and administrative climate had the greatest effect on job satisfaction. In another study with women academics, it was found that, regarding interpersonal variables, the need for guidance or control was a significant influence on job satisfaction (Steward, Patterson, Morales, Bartell, Dinas and Powers 1995, 50). Faculty members who indicated they did not need more guidance or control, experienced more job satisfaction. This could be interpreted in two ways: it could indicate that the person already had a mentor and thus did not need further guidance, or it could suggest a preference for working independently. Findings also supported previous research in that it identified 'a climate within the academic work environment that can be personally and professionally toxic to many women who have attained faculty status' (Steward et al 1995, 51). In another study with female academics in the Indian Colleges of Dharwad and Hbli cities of Karnatak State, it was revealed that family responsibility and attitudes towards teaching were the most influential factors in job involvement and satisfaction (Mukthamath, Gaonkar and Khadi 1991, 40).

Over the past few years numerous institutions have increased their dependence on part-time faculty members. In South Africa, this trend is likely to increase. One reason is the financial benefits to an institution. This may influence satisfaction. For example, Valadez and Anthony (2000, 105) determined that part-time faculty members are often concerned with their level of autonomy, lack of freedom to decide course content, salary, benefits, job security and the students themselves. However, Truell et al. (1998, 120) found that in general, both full-time and part-time occupational-technical academics were satisfied with their jobs, although the part-time workers were more satisfied. In this study, lower levels of satisfaction were expressed with growth opportunities and salary.

In the UK, Oshagbemi (1997, 357) found that job dissatisfaction in HE was caused by the following *teaching related* items, sharp increases in class size, badly thought out procedures for course evaluation, public stance of university which claims to value teaching and administrative activity, little recognition of teaching skills, demands of individual students, student expansion without commensurate increases in resources, marking answer scripts, amount of marking, falling quality of intake, increasing staff/students ratios, government interference with teaching, too many students, student attitude to learning, emphasis on research at the expense of teaching and amount of mechanical teaching and marking.

*Research related* items that were found to cause job dissatisfaction in HE

included: inadequate time for research, pressure to publish, erosion of time for research and personal development in specialist area, increasing difficulty with and time spent on obtaining research grants, lack of funds for research, difficulty attracting able Ph.D. students, necessity of applying for grant support, the undue importance attached to 'research', little time spent writing, research assessment exercises and lack of research facilities (Oshagbemi 1997, 358). Contrary to Herzberg's theory, there were examples of elements of the job itself responsible for both job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction.

Other aspects of academics' jobs that caused dissatisfaction were: poor communication with university authorities, failure to provide agreed job description, authoritarian management structure, lack of consultation and top-down communication, government policy towards universities, working hours, lack of co-ordination in management, not getting promoted unless one applies for it, lack of proper departmental strategy on teaching and research, poor retirement benefits, excessive bureaucracy, lack of leadership from the centre of the university, inconsistency in planning, location of university, changes in university funding mechanisms, not being able to retire with full benefits at 60, lack of time to think, difficulty with managing the separate responsibilities of administration, teaching and research, and indifferent and inefficient management (Oshagbemi 1997, 358).

## **SOUTH AFRICAN STUDIES**

In contrast to many studies done abroad where it was determined that, on the whole, academics experience job satisfaction, Webster and Mosoetsa (2002, 59) identified a deep pessimism among many South African academics. This was a confirmation of a previous study by Venter (1998, ii) with academics at the University of the Orange Free State. The results of this study indicated that the general quality of work life and hence job satisfaction of academics could not be described as positive and numerous problem areas were pointed out. These included organisational climate, workgroup processes, supervisory leadership, and dissatisfaction with the outputs received. A more positive factor was the quality of task satisfaction: it seemed that academics felt that their work was significantly challenging and personally satisfying and that they made a contribution with their work (Venter 1998, 105). However, his most important recommendation was that concerted attention should be given to the leadership and management styles and skills of people in management positions, namely deans and departmental heads (Venter 1998, ii).

In another study, van Tonder (1993) proved the high premium employees put on job satisfaction and the role of the manager of an organisation in creating this. It was found that a manager could modify his/her management behaviour or style to ensure that staff enjoyed maximum satisfaction and thrived emotionally and professionally. In this study, a manager modified his management style. Pretests

and posttests indicated that after doing this for two years the job satisfaction as well as the motivation and professional attitudes of the teaching staff improved significantly. In a different study, Holtshousen (1992) concluded that it was the responsibility of management to address problems that may have a negative effect on job satisfaction. He recommended that consideration should be given to a system of participatory management.

Regarding participatory management, Cumming (1984) focused on the Quality Circle form of management, (a Japanese concept), in his research. The results showed that the positive effects on job satisfaction were minimal, but there were indications that it positively affected some of the factors that influence satisfaction, such as task responsibility and supervision. Results also indicated that factors that inhibited satisfaction were reduced, particularly with regard to autonomy, self-actualisation and esteem. However, the results of this research were inconclusive due to shortcomings in the design such as a relatively short evaluative period.

The important role management can play in the job satisfaction of academics who were underqualified, was also determined in a South African study at a technical college. The researcher recommended that the principal ensure the professional development of lecturing staff on a continuous basis as this would improve the quality of education and lead to job satisfaction (Williamson 1990).

The aforementioned lack of research into the job satisfaction of South African academics and the possible influence of transformation issues and demographic variables (including teaching context), led to a research endeavour with the following research objectives: to determine the job satisfaction of academics at two different institutions. Demographics that could influence the job satisfaction of academics were considered. Thus, null hypotheses stated that: (a) university context; (b) being a full-time or part-time employee; (c) rank; (d) ethnic group; (e) union membership and (f) gender would not significantly influence job satisfaction. The investigation took place within the following research design.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research implemented a survey design, using a questionnaire. In the construction of the questionnaire, those compiled by Oshagbemi (1999), Fernandez and Mateo (1993) and Olsen, Maple and Stage (1995) regarding job satisfaction in HE institutions were considered.

The first section of the questionnaire was constructed round some demographic variables. The second section dealt with nine basic job elements of academics. These were: teaching; research; community service; administration and own management; compensation and job security; promotions; management and leadership; co-workers' behaviour and finally, physical conditions and support facilities. In addition, some general questions were added that did not fit in well with the previous sections. Respondents had to indicate their responses on a five-point scale from 'Very dissatisfied' to 'Very satisfied'. (In presenting the results,

the positive responses were grouped together and the same was done with the negative ones). In the third section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to respond to six additional, general questions.

The draft questionnaire was pilot tested and discussed with a number of academics to ensure that all relevant factors were included in each of the sections. Thus content validity was ensured. Face validity (which arises if all items appeared to test what they were supposed to test) was also addressed by means of the judgement of an expert, before the questionnaire was edited and finalised. The alpha reliabilities were as follows: teaching = .57; research = .82; community service = .67; administration and own management = .8; compensation and job security = .87; promotions = .74; management and leadership = .88; co-workers' behaviour = .78; physical conditions and support facilities = .84 and general job satisfaction = .88.

The respondents were a non-probability sample, chosen as a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling in the following way. The managers of two similar departments in the humanities at two different universities (residential and distance education) were contacted and permission gained to distribute the questionnaires. Respondents were requested to return the questionnaires within one week. In some cases, follow-up questionnaires were distributed. Of the approximately 200 that were distributed, 94 were returned, 50 from the residential and 44 from the distance education institution. Frequencies, percentages, mean scores, t-tests and analysis of variance were calculated to test for significance of differences between groups on at least the five-percent level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Demographic data**

The rank representation of the respondents was: 2 (2.1%) junior lecturers, 36 (38.3%) lecturers, 29 (30.9%) senior lecturers, 14 (14.9%) associate professors and 13 (13.8%) professors. As regards gender, 29 (30.9%) were male and 65 (69.1%) were female. Their ethnic background included 78 (83%) white respondents, 2 (2.1%) coloured, 2 (2.1%) Indian and 12 (12.8%) African; 86 (91.5%) were full-time and 8 (8.5%) part-time employees while 53 (56.4%) were members of unions and 40 (42.6%) were not.

### **Academics' views on their main functions in higher education**

Teaching, research and community service are seen as the main functions of academics in HE. The academics' views on aspects of these three main functions appear in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Academics' views on teaching

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Government interference with teaching	34 (36.2)	38 (40.4)	15 (15.9)
Emphasis on research rather than teaching	43 (45.7)	10 (10.6)	37 (39.4)
The courses that you teach	3 (3.2)	1 (1.1)	87 (92.6)
Your teaching load	26 (27.6)	7 (7.4)	58 (61.7)
The authority you have to choose course content as you see fit	8 (8.5)	5 (5.3)	78 (82.9)
The authority you have to choose teaching methods as you see fit	6 (6.4)	5 (5.3)	80 (85.1)
Your own skills in teaching methods	3 (3.2)	7 (7.4)	82 (87.3)
Your knowledge of the content of what you teach	1 (1.1)	3 (3.2)	87 (92.5)
The support available for writing teaching material	26 (27.7)	19 (20.2)	45 (47.9)
The general quality of the students' work	54 (57.4)	15 (16)	22 (23.4)
The amount of contact you have with students	33 (35.1)	18 (19.1)	41 (43.6)
Students' enquiries when they have problems	22 (23.4)	26 (27.7)	43 (45.8)

Most significant in Table 1 is that approximately 93 per cent of the academics were satisfied with the courses that they teach and their knowledge of the content of what they teach. Thereafter most were satisfied with their own skills in teaching methods, the authority they had to choose teaching methods and their autonomy to choose content (87.3%, 85.1% and 82.9% respectively). Factors that dissatisfied them, included the general quality of the students' work (dissatisfaction indicated by 57.4% and satisfaction by 23.4%), government interference in teaching and the degree of contact with the students (36.1% and 35.1%). The issue of government interference in HE in South Africa is also addressed in an article by Jansen (2004, 16). Oshagbemi's (1997, 357) investigation in the UK, also reveals dissatisfaction with government interference in teaching and with the quality of the students' work. However, with regard to all other aspects, the results of the two groups differ.

In this sample, academics at the residential university felt significantly more positive about teaching than academics at the distance education institution ( $t = 3.6758$  compared to  $3.35564$ ;  $t = 3.906$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This may be related to the fact that a distance education context has numerous challenges for teaching. The other groups did not differ significantly in their satisfaction with teaching.



Table 2: Academics' views on research

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Research/publications at this institution	32 (34)	16 (17)	43 (45)
Encouragement you receive for your research activities	25 (26.5)	19 (20.2)	47 (50)
Financial support to help you carry out your research	38 (40.4)	25 (26.6)	27 (28.7)
Availability of research assistants	53 (56.4)	20 (21.3)	18 (19.2)
Availability of equipment for research (e.g. tape recorder)	32 (34)	29 (30.9)	28 (29.8)
Support of colleagues for your research	22 (23.4)	26 (27.7)	39 (41.5)
Direction of your own research	17 (18.1)	15 (16)	57 (60.7)
Quality of your research publications	28 (29.8)	23 (24.4)	39 (41.5)
Amount of research you carry out	54 (57.4)	12 (12.8)	25 (26.6)
Amount of research you have published	53 (56.4)	14 (14.9)	22 (23.4)
Availability of research leave	20 (21.2)	19 (20.2)	50 (53.2)
Own skills as a researcher	35 (37.2)	17 (18.1)	39 (41.5)
Time available to carry out your research duties	67 (71.2)	9 (9.6)	14 (14.9)

Table 2 shows that nearly two-thirds of the respondents were satisfied with the direction of their own research (60.7%) and approximately half of the group were satisfied with the availability of research leave and the encouragement they received for research activities (53.2% and 50% respectively). However, less than half of the respondents were satisfied with their own skills as researchers and the quality of their publications (41.5%). In addition, nearly three-quarters were dissatisfied with the time they had available for research (71.2%) and just more than half were dissatisfied with the amount of research they carried out/had published and with the availability of research assistants (57.4%, 56.4% and 56.4%). In comparison with Oshagbemi's (1997, 358) research in the UK, similarities include the fact that academics find it difficult to find enough time for research. Table 2 also indicated that only 28.7 per cent were satisfied with the financial aid available to do research. In the UK sample, lack of research funds also caused dissatisfaction.

According to Table 3, academics did not hold particularly strong positive or negative views on community service. Approximately half of the respondents were satisfied with the importance of their work to the community but dissatisfied with the influence this had on their promotion (55.3% and 50% respectively).

Academics from different ranks differed significantly in their satisfaction with research and community service. Professors were significantly more satisfied than lecturers or senior lecturers with research aspects ( $F = 3.5054$  compared to 2.8505 and 2.7257 respectively;  $F = 3.983$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Professors were also significantly more

Table 3: Academics' views on community service

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
The amount of community service you do	28 (29.7)	23 (24.5)	37 (39.4)
The importance of the community of the service you do	12 (12.7)	22 (23.4)	52 (55.3)
The recognition of community service within the institution	32 (34)	29 (30.9)	26 (27.7)
The funding available for community service	40 (42.5)	39 (41.5)	8 (8.5)
The support available for community service	40 (42.6)	34 (36.2)	13 (13.9)
The importance attached to community service for promotion	47 (50)	32 (34)	9 (9.5)

satisfied than senior lectures with community service ( $t = 3.1154$  compared to 2.5179;  $p = 3.983$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This may be related to professors' greater expertise in these areas. Males were significantly more satisfied than females with community service ( $t = 3.0107$  compared to 2.6250;  $p = 2.759$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). It is difficult to interpret this without further information. On the one hand, it may mean that they are more satisfied than females with the factors relating to the service that they do. On the other hand, it could signify that they do not do much community service and are therefore quite happy with whatever funding, support and recognition, (or lack thereof), there is. No other significant differences were found.

### Academics' views on other aspects of their work

Apart from their main duties, academics' job satisfaction is also influenced by the factors indicated in tables 4 to 9. Academics' views on their own administration appear in Table 4.

Table 4: Academics' views on administration and own management

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Own system of administration	16 (17.1)	14 (14.9)	61 (64.9)
Amount of paper work	49 (52.1)	21 (22.3)	22 (23.4)
Time spent on administration	53 (56.3)	21 (22.3)	18 (19.1)
Competence of administration personnel	28 (29.8)	20 (21.3)	43 (45.7)
Spirit of cooperation among faculty regarding administration matters	24 (25.6)	30 (31.9)	38 (40.4)
The numbers of meetings that you have to attend	39 (41.5)	28 (29.8)	27 (28.7)
The quality/level of interaction at meetings	48 (51.1)	13 (13.8)	33 (35.1)
The extent of your committee involvement	26 (27.6)	33 (37.3)	35 (37.3)

Table 4 reveals that about two-thirds of the respondents were satisfied with their own system of administration (64.9%). However, about half were dissatisfied with the time they had to spend on administration, the amount of paperwork they had to do and the level of interaction at meetings (56.3%, 52.1% and 51.1% respectively).

Analysis of variance revealed that academics at the residential university felt significantly more positive about their system of administration than those at the distance education institution ( $F = 3.0977$  compared to  $2.7021$ ;  $F = 2.999$ ;  $p = .003$ ). This may be explained by the fact that teaching by correspondence causes significant administrative duties. Rank also influenced the results. In contrast to Kledaras and Joslyn's (1992, 4–5) study, lecturers were significantly more satisfied than the associate professors ( $F = 3.1597$  compared to  $2.3750$ ;  $F = 4.946$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) with their own administration. It could be that associate professors are more often expected to carry administrative burdens associated with committee work than are lecturers.

Table 5: Academics' views on compensation and job security

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Salary	36 (38.2)	21 (22.3)	35 (37.2)
Salaries paid by this institution in comparison with other higher education institutions	38 (40.4)	26 (27.7)	26 (27.7)
Salaries paid by this institution in comparison with others outside the higher education system	59 (62.8)	22 (23.4)	11 (11.7)
Freedom to do outside work for additional income	31 (33)	23 (24.5)	36 (41.5)
Fairness of merit payments in the institution	34 (36.2)	33 (35.1)	22 (23.4)
Retirement benefits	34 (36.2)	33 (35.1)	26 (27.6)
Other benefits (e.g. flexibility of working hours)	13 (13.8)	10 (10.6)	71 (75.5)
Job security	26 (27.6)	23 (24.5)	43 (45.7)
Role of unions	23 (24.5)	49 (52.1)	20 (21.3)

According to Table 5, three-quarters of the sample were satisfied with benefits university staff have, such as flexibility of working hours (75.5%). On the other hand, only 11.7 per cent were satisfied and nearly two thirds were dissatisfied with salaries paid by their institution in comparison with others outside the higher education system (62.8%). Different groups responded similarly regarding the above-mentioned aspects. This is in contrast to the study by Lillydahl and Singell (1993, 237) that found that unionised faculty members were more satisfied with wages, benefits and, to some extent, job security than non-unionised members.

Table 6: Academics' views on promotions

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Politics surrounding promotion	61 (64.9)	24 (25.5)	8 (8.5)
Importance attached to teaching for promotion	58 (61.8)	19 (20.2)	17 (18.1)
Importance attached to research for promotion	51 (54.3)	14 (14.9)	29 (30.9)
Importance attached to community service for promotion	51 (54.3)	25 (26.6)	16 (17.1)
Importance attached to performance at promotion interviews	32 (34.1)	39 (41.5)	20 (21.2)
Politics surrounding promotion	47 (50)	35 (37.2)	9 (9.6)

Regarding academics' views on promotions, Table 6 reveals that, in general, they were dissatisfied with this aspect. Between half and two-thirds of the sample were unhappy about the politics surrounding promotion (64.9%); the importance attached to teaching (61.8%), research (54.3%) or community service (54.3%) for promotion; and the number of vacancies available at a higher level (50%). Non-union members were significantly more satisfied with promotions than union members ( $t = 2.6854$  compared to 2.1950;  $r = 3.389$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This is understandable since employers may join unions when they are dissatisfied with aspects of their work, especially with aspects concerning promotion. However, the Lillydahl and Singell (1993, 241) study mentioned above did not report this difference.

Table 7: Academics' views on management and leadership

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Quality of leadership in the university	29 (30.9)	24 (25.5)	40 (42.5)
Communication between university management and staff	31 (32.9)	30 (31.9)	32 (34.1)
Quality of chief administrative officers	31 (32.9)	33 (35.1)	28 (29.8)
Freedom to criticise management	35 (37.3)	33 (35.1)	23 (24.4)
Faculty meetings as conducted	32 (34)	29 (30.9)	32 (34.1)
Quality of leadership in the department	19 (20.2)	19 (20.2)	54 (57.5)
Departmental meetings as conducted	18 (19.1)	18 (19.1)	58 (61.7)
Relationship between you and your departmental head/manager	12 (12.8)	8 (8.5)	74 (78.7)
Support you get from your departmental head/manager	11 (11.7)	11 (11.7)	72 (76.6)
Feedback from your departmental head/manager	14 (14.9)	21 (22.3)	57 (60.6)

Table 7 reveals that the academics seemed relatively satisfied with the management and leadership at their institutions. About three-quarters indicated their satisfaction with the relationship between themselves and their departmental head/manager (76.6%) as well as with the support they get from him/her (78.7%). About two-thirds were satisfied with departmental meetings as they are conducted (61.7%) and with the feedback received from their departmental head or manager (60.6%). In contrast, a UK study (Oshagbemi 1997, 358) revealed that academics were dissatisfied with 'lack of leadership' and 'indifferent and inefficient management'. Another South African study also recommended that attention should be given to leadership and management styles (Venter 1998, ii).

Ethnicity may influence satisfaction with management. No significant differences were found with Bonferroni's t-tests, but significant differences were found with Levene's test. African academics were significantly more satisfied than coloured academics with management and leadership ( $F = 3.8$  compared to 2.35;  $F = 3.117$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). It should be kept in mind that there were only two respondents in the coloured group and that the standard deviation was high (1.06). Hence this aspect needs further investigation. Female academics were also significantly happier than males with management ( $F = 3.4191$  compared to 3.0484;  $F = 2.241$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Traditional female expectations that place females in subordinate positions, may have played a role.

Table 8: Academics' views on co-workers' behaviour

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Quality of colleagues in department	4 (4.3)	17 (18.1)	72 (76.6)
Support from colleagues for the activities that you carry out	18 (19.1)	21 (22.3)	55 (58.5)
The academic communication among colleagues	28 (29.8)	31 (33)	34 (36.2)
Personal relationships with colleagues	5 (5.3)	9 (9.6)	80 (85.1)
Personal friendships with colleagues	3 (3.2)	15 (16)	75 (79.8)
Clerical support in your department	19 (20.2)	18 (19.1)	55 (58.5)
Support from administrative personnel outside your own department	22 (23.4)	28 (29.8)	44 (46.8)

Table 8 indicates that, in general, academics are satisfied with their co-workers' behaviour. Satisfaction was especially indicated with personal relationships with colleagues (85.1%), personal friendships with colleagues (79.8%) and quality of colleagues in the department (76.6%). Approximately half (58.5%) were satisfied with the clerical support in the department and the support from colleagues with activities they had to carry out. Lowest on the satisfaction scale (36.2%) and highest on the dissatisfaction scale (29.8%) were indicated for academic

communication among colleagues. No significant differences were found between groups for satisfaction with co-workers' behaviour. This differs from a previous study by Hemmasi et al. (1992, 439–441) that found female academics to derive significantly more satisfaction than males from relations with co-workers.

Table 9: Academics' views on physical conditions and support facilities

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Availability of funds to travel to professional meetings	37(39.4)	23 (24.5)	32 (34)
Availability of funds to attend conferences	40 (42.5)	22 (23.4)	30 (31.9)
Freedom to use photocopying facilities	10 (10.7)	10 (10.6)	73 (77.7)
Freedom to make telephone calls	13 (13.8)	11 (11.7)	68 (72.4)
Availability of supplies (e.g. stationery)	17 (18.1)	11 (11.7)	64 (68.1)
Quality of office equipment (e.g. computer)	31 (33)	11 (11.7)	50 (53.2)
Locality of your office	8 (8.5)	11 (11.7)	73 (77.7)
Availability of nearby parking facilities	24 (25.5)	11 (11.7)	57 (60.7)
Physical attractiveness of building/office	10 (10.7)	18 (19.1)	53 (65.9)
Pleasantness of working environment (e.g. temperature of office)	14 (14.8)	12 (12.8)	64 (68.1)

Academics were generally satisfied with the physical conditions of their work. About three quarters indicated their satisfaction with their office locality (77.7%) and their freedom to use photocopying facilities (77.7%) or make telephone calls (72.4%). Nearly two-thirds were satisfied with their working environment (68.1%), the availability of supplies (68.1%), the physical attractiveness of their building or office (65.9%) and the availability of nearby parking facilities (60.7%). Only about half of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of their office equipment, such as their computer (53.2%). Most dissatisfaction was indicated for lack of funding to attend conferences (42.5%).

Rank influenced the above-mentioned satisfaction. Professors, probably because they had first choice of office and parking space, were significantly more satisfied than senior lecturers with physical conditions and support facilities ( $F = 4.0692$  compared to  $3.3838$ ;  $F = 3.116$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Males, probably because things like neatness and attractiveness are traditionally less important to them, were significantly more satisfied with their physical surroundings than females ( $F = 3.8$  compared to  $3.4141$ ;  $F = 2.429$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

### Academics' job satisfaction in general

Some general questions pertaining to job satisfaction were also posed. Table 10 illustrates the responses.

Table 10: Academics' general job satisfaction

Item	Dissatisfied Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	Satisfied Total (%)
Overall reputation of institution	6 (6.4)	10 (10.6)	76 (80.8)
Control over personal career	17 (18.1)	22 (23.4)	50 (43.2)
The opportunity to use your skills/abilities	14 (14.9)	12 (12.8)	65 (69.2)
Sense of accomplishment	18 (19.1)	14 (14.9)	60 (63.8)
Opportunity for continued learning	4 (4.3)	8 (8.5)	80 (85.1)
Opportunity to have a significant impact on others	5 (5.4)	21 (22.3)	65 (69.2)
Recognition for your work within the university	25 (26.5)	28 (29.8)	38 (40.5)

Respondents expressed themselves favourably on general job satisfaction. This is in stark contrast to South African studies by Webster and Mosoetsa (2002, 59) and Venter (1998, ii) who identified a deep pessimism among many South African academics. The above table shows appreciation of the opportunity for continued learning (85.1%) and for the overall reputation of the institution (80.8%); 69.2% were also satisfied with the opportunity to have a significant impact on others and to use their skills and abilities. This confirms Venter's (1998, ii) results that academics are satisfied by the fact that they make a contribution with their work. In contrast, less than half of the respondents were satisfied with the control they had over their personal careers (43.2%) and with the recognition they received for their work within the university (40.5% satisfied and 26.5% dissatisfied).

The above-mentioned section was followed by some additional general questions. To the question, 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job?', only 12.7 per cent replied that they were dissatisfied while a significant 74.5 per cent were satisfied. When asked how they would respond if a person told them that he/she was interested in a position at that university, 5.3 per cent would advise against it, 26.6 per cent would have some doubts and 66 per cent would recommend it. When asked how well they would say their positions measured up to the sort of position they wanted when they started, 8.5 per cent indicated that it was not all that they wanted, 45.7 per cent that it was more or less what they wanted, but not completely, 33 per cent that it was very much what they wanted and 10.6 per cent that it was more than they expected. In reply to the question, 'What best describes how you feel about your job?' 7.4 per cent indicated that they disliked it or felt indifferent, 55.3 per cent liked it and 27.7 per cent loved it. Of the respondents, 8.5 per cent would have liked to change jobs or were uncertain about the issue, 53.2 per cent were not eager but would do so if they could do better and 26.6 per cent would not change their jobs for anything else; 3.2 per cent disliked their job more than most people dislike theirs, 41.5 per cent liked their job about as well as most people like theirs, 48.9 per cent liked their job better than most people like theirs and 3 per cent thought that no one liked his or her job better than they did.

## **Correlation between different aspects of a lecturer's job and general job satisfaction**

The following correlations (in rank order) between the different aspects of job satisfaction were significant on the one-percent level: physical conditions and support (.53); research (.46); compensation and benefits (.46); teaching (.44); own administration (.44) and community service (.28). On the five-percent level of significance were management and leadership (.26); coworkers' behaviour (.24) and promotions (.22).

## **CONCLUSION**

The research is limited by the fact that it was conducted at only two departments in the humanities at two different universities, hence conclusions are confined to these two departments. The results should be further investigated in other contexts. However, the following points are significant.

In stark contrast to some previous South African studies, it was found that the academics were positively inclined towards general job satisfaction. In rank order, job satisfaction had the highest correlation with physical conditions and support, research and thereafter compensation and other benefits the university offers. HE institutions need to uphold the factors that currently generate satisfaction. These include involving lecturers in courses that they are interested in; preserving their academic autonomy, the right to choose the direction of their own research and the opportunity for continued learning; upholding the availability of research leave and flexible working hours; bolstering positive interpersonal relationships between colleagues; ensuring pleasant physical surroundings and preserving the reputation of HE institutions.

Factors that caused dissatisfaction included government interference in teaching; poor quality of students' work; research-related aspects such as lack of time to do research, shortage of research assistants, uncertainty about how to do research and the quality of their research efforts; promotion criteria and politics surrounding promotion; time spent on administrative work, the amount of paperwork involved and the level of interaction at meetings; poor academic communication among colleagues; salaries in comparison with salaries outside the HE system, lack of funding to attend conferences and lack of recognition for work within the institution.

To improve the job satisfaction of academics, the above-mentioned issues need to be addressed as follows: higher admission criteria for students; improved availability of research assistants, research support and workshops for improvement of academics' research skills; a new look at policies surrounding promotion or that cause huge administrative burdens for lecturers; the stimulation of academic communication by, among other things, making funding more readily available for conference attendance; and conscious efforts to give recognition to lecturers for



work done well. In this regard, heads of departments play an important role. If academics experience job satisfaction, they will generally be inspired to create environments conducive to learning.

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