Intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Artium in Human Resource Management at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr E Botha

November 2017
REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The study is guided by American Psychological Association (APA) writing style that is applicable to this dissertation. The referencing of all the sources in the study is in APA format as per the requirements of the North West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) under the programme for Human Resource Management.

- The dissertation is submitted in the form of two research articles. APA guidelines are also utilised in this regard, and the editorial style is that of the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology.

- This study only focussed on one academic institution with three different campuses therefore the experiences shared are not those of employees in other academic institutions and not general to the academic population as a whole.
DECLARATION

I, Thapelo Diego ChaaCha, hereby declare that “Intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution” is my own work and that all the views shared and expressed are my own. Any authors whose work was used are referenced in the study. I, furthermore declare that the research has not been utilised for qualification purposes at any other institution.

THAPELO DIEGO CHAACHA     NOVEMBER 2017
DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm that I have language edited the following parts of the dissertation entitled "Intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution" by Thapelo Chaacha for the degree Magister Artium in Human Resource Management:

• Summary
• Remarks
• Acknowledgments
• Declaration
• Chapters 1, 3 and 4

The responsibility of implementing the recommended changes and corrections rests with the author of the dissertation.

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Conceptualising the influence of rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement and on the intention to leave of younger employees

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone that supported me throughout this journey. Without your efforts and assistance, this would not be a success. I appreciated the time, energy, and support that you contributed towards the completion of my dissertation:

• I would like to thank God for blessing with the gift of life and the ability to pursue my journey.

• To my supervisor, Dr Elrie Botha, for all her support, belief, passion, and dedication to the research. I am humbled by your confidence in me and the study. The passion and high level of engagement in the project not only showed how much the research meant to you but also its importance to the institution.

• To my wife, Mrs Zamaswazi ChaaCha, you truly are a blessing. Thank you for your love, support, encouragement, and patience. I love you. Your understanding throughout this journey will forever be cherished. Asante Sana.

• To my mother, Ms Agnes ChaaCha, thank you for teaching me not to give up and for always being there, no matter the situation.

• To my mother in law, Ms Fikile Mawela, thank you for your endless prayers and support.

• To my cousins, Dr Mooketsi ChaCha, Ms Tsholofelo ChaCha, and my friend Mr Chukuchane Taole, from the onset you guys never stopped believing in me. Your support is appreciated. To the rest of my family, and all those that have always been supportive, I thank you.

• Colleagues, I thank you for your support and understanding. The time and knowledge you shared made this possible. To my fellow students and study group, your motivating words and actions mean a lot to me.

• To the research participants that made all this possible, I appreciate the time you put aside to be part of the research. Thank you for your honesty during the interviews, and for allowing me into your personal space.
• I thank Elize Zywotkiewicz and Isabel Claassen for the language editing of my study. Your contributions are appreciated.
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SUMMARY

Keywords
Academics, younger employees, rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction, work engagement, intention to stay and intention to leave.

The higher education sector internationally and nationally is facing multiple challenges. Staffing South African universities is a challenge with which the academic sector is confronted. The current academic workforce, mostly at senior level, will be retiring within the next few years. The challenge that this brings is that there will be major loss of expertise if nothing is done to transfer the knowledge well in time, and develop the younger academic workforce to take over the reins in the future. Developing the younger academic workforce is a challenge in itself, as younger employees with potential are not attracted to the sector, and a majority of those within the sector do not stay long enough in the higher education sector. Competition from other sectors for younger talented employees means that academic institutions have to investigate methods to attract, develop, manage, and retain younger academic employees in academia. It is therefore imperative to manage employees that are currently employed by universities to ensure that quality education and stability are maintained in the sector.

The research objective of the study was to explore factors that influence the intention to leave of younger academic employees in an academic institution. A qualitative approach was utilised in the study, a literature review and semi-structured interviews were conducted for the purpose of the research. The literature review focussed on conceptualising factors that influence younger academic employee’s intentions to leave. The second part of the study, on the other hand, utilised purposive sampling to identify participants that are relevant to the research topic. Semi-structured interviews were utilised to explore factors that influence the intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution. A thematic analysis approach assisted the researcher in discovering the meaning behind the participants’ experiences.

The findings of the study indicate that the phenomenon of younger academics is one that is not generally researched, with the focus of existing research mostly being on older academic employees. Some of the factors that were found to influence academics to stay in an academic environment include the environment, job satisfaction, rewards, and work engagement of these employees. Reasons influencing intention to leave include employment practices, the environment, support, expectations, and rewards experienced by younger academic employees. These are, however, not the only reasons for wanting to stay or wanting to leave the academic institution.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and motivation for the study

Higher education institutions internationally are facing challenges stemming from the changing economic environments (Huisman, de Weert, & Bartelse, 2002), contests from rival institutions, maintaining the balance between teaching and research and an ageing workforce demographic (Selesho & Naile, 2014). An important issue for South African institutions is ensuring that there are adequate and competent employees to fill the knowledge gap when the current older workforce retires (Council on Higher Education, 2015). The indication is to develop and retain academic employees in the labour market. The growth rates of student enrolments in South African institutions between 2001 and 2006 increased by 11 percent while academic staff employment increased by 9 percent, clearly indicating that there is gap between students and academic staff (Tettey, 2010). In the year 2011, South African higher education institutions employed almost 17000 academic staff with an average of one academic employee being responsible for 59 students, however, this varied among faculties and specific learning programmes (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). More than two million students are studying globally with the number expected to increase to eight million by the year 2025 (Altbach, 2013).

Retaining the current academic workforce is important and those reaching retirement need to impart knowledge to younger employees in the sector to avoid the loss of knowledge by institutions (Altbach, 2013). Knowledge such as research skills and techniques, teaching approaches, learning methods, community involvement, internal and external networking skills, and academic career guidance form part of the knowledge that is important to retain. Job mobility of employees is a challenge faced by both academic institutions and private sector organisations (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). For the purpose of this research, younger academic employees are deemed as those employees younger than 35 years, holding a master’s qualification or in the process of obtaining a master’s qualification, and not yet appointed as a senior lecturer within the institution.

Academic staff retention is a crucial factor as it has an effect on the existing staff members who have to fill the void left by those that have left. The consequence is that the quality of education may is affected as positions are filled by incompetent or inexperienced employees that increase the workload on those that have to train new employees that are recruited into institutions (Powell, 2010). The quality of work deteriorates due to increased workloads, which then affect the students’ academic performance. Institutions
need to retain employees for future learning and academic sustainability (Powell, 2010; Universities South Africa, 2014).

The corporate sector constantly offers black academic employees better salaries, thus contributing to the challenges faced by higher education institutions (Erasmus, Grobler, & Van Niekerk, 2015). When compared to those of private sector employees, reward structures of junior lecturers and lecturers are lower in the public sector. Such challenges hold institutions back from attracting and retaining junior academic staff. Senior lecturers receive market related packages when compared to public sector employees (Higher Education in South Africa, 2014). Differences in earnings between genders indicate that women are under-represented in higher-ranking positions, resulting in women earning lower salaries (Higher Education in South Africa, 2014; Council on Higher Education, 2016). The impact of this is that 54 percent of older employees might leave their jobs due to this imbalance, while 71 percent of the younger employees deem the external labour market to be more favourable for various reasons (Allen, et al., 2010; Botha, Bussin, & De Swardt, 2011; Robyn 2012).

Turnover costs of employees are often high for organisations due to separation costs, and the need to fill a vacancy, which has its own associated costs for the organisation (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). The estimated cost of employee turnover is over 90 percent of the employee’s annual salary cost to the organisation. Associated costs include those of benefits settlements, recruitment, selection, training, and on boarding (Netswera, Rankhumise, & Mavundla, 2005). Employee turnover reasons are important to investigate, as these might be similar or different in a diverse workforce and have an impact on organisational performance.

Organisations are facing diverse workforce opportunities and challenges making it quite complex to manage employee expectations. One such a challenge is the generational divide that exists within organisations. Different economic backgrounds, history, and cultural processes influence each generation differently therefore managing these employees effectively is crucial (Angeline, 2011). Various other factors affect different employees. Management therefore has the responsibility to reduce employee pressure by being more aware and having measures in place for managing the differences in groups in the organisation (Hill & Stephens, 2003). Employee expectations is another factor that is important to manage in organisations, therefore, engaging employees is crucial. Leadership has an important role in managing and influencing employees. Engaging employees remains a challenge for leadership, as disengaged employees often have high financial implications for organisations (Attridge, 2009). Leadership holds the responsibility to ensure that employees are self-efficant, competent, and confident, as academic institutions require employees that are able to thrive in the field (Seco & Lopes, 2013). Various factors that interest employees younger than 35 years need further exploring to gain insight into successfully recruiting and retaining these employees. Thus to ensure that the knowledge gap, employee costs, and workforce issues
are addressed in academic institutions. There is a lack of information regarding younger employees in academic institutions with specific reference to the concepts mentioned above.

1.2 Problem statement

Retaining academic employees is a crucial factor in the academic environment both nationally and internationally. The current workforce in academic institutions is ageing which makes it increasingly crucial for younger employees to be recruited, adequately trained, and retained in institutions worldwide (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). The competition among higher education institutions and the private sector to recruit the most talented staff also contributes to the workforce challenge faced by academic organisations. Economic development and sustainability of society rests on having members that provide the best-quality education and trained by the best professionals. The viability of academic institutions rests in the ability of adequately staff itself with the right type of employees (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). However, it is certain that institutions that are flexible, proactive, quick, and effective are more likely to retain more employees (Williams, 2003). Integrating the younger employees into the academic workforce ensures that they deliver quality work and that they are effective in their roles. However, in the United States, assigning temporary positions to young academic employees seems to be the norm, which poses a challenge, as it is not possible to expect or predict a clear career path under these transitory circumstances (Altbach, 1998; Jong, Schalk, & Cuyper, 2009; Wheeler & Buckley, 2004). In the United Kingdom, the overflow of university students requires more faculty positions, however, due to unfavourable work environments such as low salaries and a decrease in autonomy, have resulted in young employees searching for employment elsewhere (Huisman et al., 2002).

African institutions have also indicated that they are faced with workforce challenges as the impact of the workload has resulted in some personnel resigning and others accepting employment elsewhere. Research in African institutions has found that junior lecturers and lecturers are more prone to leaving their positions than their senior colleagues (Tettey, 2006). This indicates that placing more focus on these employees to combat their resignations as the current, more senior staff is already reaching retirement age. Many other reasons, such as rewards hold a pivotal role as research in Ghana indicates that academic institutions fail to compete financially with other sectors of employment, which contributes to employees choosing to work outside the academic environment (Tettey, 2006). Factors, such as inadequate training of new employees, have also led to the resignation of staff. A Nigerian institution found, that only 12 percent of new employees undergo an induction process (Anijaobi-Idem, Ijeoma, & Archibong, 2012). The concern of not providing
employees with adequate training is that employees find it difficult to adjust to the conditions of their work environments, which affects their performance, and perception of the organisation and its processes (Anijaobi-Idem et al., 2012; Elnaga & Imran, 2013). How well new and current employees’ basic expectations regarding agreed upon conditions, such as salaries, adequate training, resources, flexibility, autonomy, and leadership support, are met might affect their decisions to stay or leave an organisation in the long run (Angeline, 2011). Managing the loss of employees needs to be effective within organisations to reduce recruitment costs.

South African institutions are facing similar challenges, as retirement of senior staff becomes imminent. The biggest challenge institutions are facing is the potential loss of knowledge and skills. Universities are constantly losing employees to other institutions and the private sector both nationally and internationally (Selesho & Naile, 2014). This makes it crucial for the Higher Education Sector to investigate reasons that will keep employees in academic institutions, as well as those that cause them to leave. Placing more focus on younger employees to avoid loss of knowledge and to accommodate knowledge transfer is crucial for institutions (Mapasela & Strydom, 2004). Leadership and job satisfaction are significant factors of attraction for those employed in academia (Schulze, 2006). Current salaries that institutions offer to current and potential academic employees influence employee’s career decisions (Selesho & Naile, 2014). The work engagement of individuals in academia is important, as student numbers in higher education have increased by 60 percent between 1996 and 2011. This indicates that employees will need to be positively engaged in their work to cope with the demands of their jobs. Highly engaged individuals distinguish themselves by their vigour, absorption, and dedication to their jobs (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005). The self-efficacy of employees is important in demonstrating that employees have the skills that are necessary to execute their jobs confidently (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Self-efficacy is the individual’s belief in their abilities to succeed and accomplish assigned tasks (Bandura, 2006). Moreover, academic employees need to have a sense of self-efficacy with regard to research, teaching, and learning (Bailey, 1999). Both internal and external factors influence employees’ career decisions to remain within an institution or leave (Holtom, Mitchell, & Lee, 2006). These may include how well the individual perceives himself or herself to fit in in the organisation, and the task-related aspects of the job, and costs associated with leaving the organisation. Employees that view themselves as having a better fit are more likely to stay in a position (Zhang, Fried, & Griffeth, 2012). Previous research focusses on academics in general and not on the younger generation of academics and reasons why they would want to leave or stay within an academic environment (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013).

Research questions that arise from the discussion are:

- What factors influence younger academics employees’ intention to leave?
What factors influence younger academic employees’ intention to stay?

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate the main factors that influence the intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To investigate factors that influence intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution.
- To investigate factors that influence intention to stay of younger employees within an academic institution.

1.4 Paradigm perspective

A social constructivism perspective is taken in the research enabling the researcher to explore meanings that are experienced by individuals with the world that they interact with (Kim, 2001). Such a perspective enables participants to discover reality through human activity (Kukla, 2000), thus meaning is found through interactions with others in the environment in which they exist and learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities (McMahon, 1997). The research takes a phenomenological approach, focussing on the experiences of the individual (Lester, 1999). The approach is meaningful in qualitative research as it is effective when dealing with a small number of participants. It allows individuals to share their knowledge, and the researcher to gain insight into the participants’ intentions and decisions (Moustakas, 1994). Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher will be able to identify themes regarding individual’s perceptions of certain situations, and what action they intend taking.
1.5 Research method

The research consists of two phases, namely a literature review, and an empirical study.

Phase 1: Literature review

During this phase, a literature on various factors, such as rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement, and intention to leave is conducted. It is important to note that the words factors and concepts are used interchangeably in the study. Sources consulted are library catalogues, textbooks, the Internet, dissertations, theses, and journal articles.

Phase 2: Empirical study

The empirical study covers the research design, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis.

1.6 Empirical study

1.6.1 Research design

The study follows a qualitative approach to understand the relationships that exist between the concepts that are being studied (Maree, 2011). A phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of the participants, as this method assists in understanding participants’ actions (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach is utilised for this research, as the meaning behind the actions of employees is uncovered. The aim is to use the qualitative data collected to gain a comprehensive understanding of certain reasons for responses. Interviews will be utilised for data collection. A target population (n=12) will be utilised for semi-structured interviews to draw data across the three campuses. The first phase of the research will consist of a literature review, while the second phase of the research will entail semi-structured interviews.
1.6.2 Participants

The study draws participants from across three campuses of an academic institution with the focus being on academic employees that are younger than 35 years of age, are holding a master’s qualification or in the process of obtaining a master’s qualification, and not yet appointed as a senior lecturer within the institution. A target population of (n=12) will be purposively sampled to participate in the research as it is conducted with a specific purpose in mind (Struwig & Stead, 2007). The researcher seeks to understand and explore reasons that influence these specific employees’ intention to leave.

1.6.3 Data collection

The researcher conducted a literature review on the related concepts of the topic to investigate the factors that result in the intention to resign of younger academic employees within the academic environment. Collected literature from other studies was analysed to determine the most common factors that relate to the topic. Semi-structured interviews were utilised in the second part of data collection for the purpose of the research. Semi-structured interviews are be able to guide the researcher in gathering relevant information on the topic and further explore issues that require clarity (Maree, 2011). Semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer flexibility but will also assisted in retaining consistency, as all the participants responded to the same questions. Individual interviews conducted for the purpose and nature of this research topic assist in getting more quality information from participants.

1.7 Data analysis

The research data is manually analysed for the purpose of the study. Transcribed interview data from the semi-structured interviews required coding. Coding involves identifying meaning in transcripts (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The aim of coding is to organise data so that it makes sense for analysis. The process involves multiple steps for the data to be clearly analysed (Hann, 2008). The first step for coding the research will involve reviewing the literature on the topic; the second step will involve familiarisation with the data. The third step will involve the coding itself in which words or phrases that are prominent will be identified, and assigned a code. The first level coding necessitated using
Microsoft Word—a graphical word processing program. The second level coding required using Microsoft Excel to categorise the codes to identify themes and patterns regarding what is important to the participants. Through the refining process, similar codes will be grouped together to attach meaning to them to attain a clearer analysis and understanding of the data. The data will be analysed from a thematic analysis approach allowing participants to share their experiences and give clear descriptions of their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Marks & Yardley 2004).

1.8 Ethical considerations

The research will be conducted in an ethical manner. The researcher has attended ethics training by the Optentia Research Focus Area at The North-West University Vaal Triangle Campus. The ethical process will be followed under the same research area to address all potential risks that the research might bring about; therefore, the research will only be conducted once the North-West University Ethics Committee has granted approval for the research to be conducted. A consent form will be given to all participants in the research to assure them that all information will be treated as private and confidential. The consent form will also state that all information obtained will be utilised for research purposes only. Feedback on results will be given to participants through a summary report that will be communicated through the participants’ chosen method of feedback.

1.9 Chapter division

Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising the influence of rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement on the intention to leave of younger employees.

Chapter 3: Factors influencing intention to leave of younger employees in an academic institution.

Chapter 4: Conclusion, limitations, and recommendations.


Robyn, A. M. (2012). *Intention to quit amongst generation Y academics at higher education institutions.* Stellenbosch University: Stellenbosch.


CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Conceptualising the influence of rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement on the intention to leave of younger employees

Abstract

As part of a study that adopted a qualitative approach, this chapter focuses on a literature review of the concepts related to the topic. The objective of the study is to conceptualise the influence of rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement on the intention to leave of younger employees in an academic institution. This study seeks to explore what the available literature found to be among the reasons for employees’ intention to leave, based on information from different journals, theses, books and articles. The researcher also consulted Google to explore a wider range of literature. The focus was on information relating to employees under the age of 35, holding a Master’s degree or currently pursuing one at an academic institution.

Background to the study

Universities South Africa (2014) suggested a strategic framework with various aims to be achieved in the higher education sector by the year 2015-2019, inter alia staffing South African universities with younger academic staff members seeing that 20% of the current employees are due to retire in less than ten years. Transformation is also a key point within the sector, as there is a need for a more diverse workforce to aid institutions achieving their strategic objectives. The academic labour market was opened up to younger employees with the implementation of the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) by government (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). Human resource planning for the future has become an important factor at universities because younger academics are required to build a solid foundation within the academic environment. The objective of nGAP was to attract and recruit a new generation of academics into the academic labour market. The programme aimed to curb some of the anticipated challenges in the academic sphere such as retirement, long-term workforce plans, and institutional growth. It was projected that nGAP will recruit 1200 new academic personnel by 2019 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). However, the higher education sector faces serious challenges in attracting, recruiting and retaining these employees, due to the fact that it offers less favourable working conditions than the private sector (Higher Education in Context, n.d.). Competitors in the private sector target graduates and offer them incentives that academic institutions struggle to match in many instances (Chirikov, 2016; Kaye & Evans, 1999).
According to Szafrański and Voloshyn (2014), about 38% of younger academic employees internationally are faced with the challenge of management not understanding their needs due to lack of focus on them. Hence, the focus and purpose of this research is to discover the reasons that might cause younger academic employees who are currently employed in these institutions to want to leave the academic profession. Whenever employees leave, employment costs increase, due to the expenditure associated with their move and that of finding new employees (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). Since the cost of funding universities is also increasing, it is imperative that costs are managed effectively to reduce the strain on the income streams of such institutions (Higher Education South Africa, 2008).

Institutions need to implement better methods of attracting, developing and retaining academic staff in general. The knowledge gap that will be left by the retiring population will be huge if newer academics are not trained effectively (Dube & Ngulube, 2013). Pilukiene (2015) found that younger employees’ expectations are influenced by their social background, individual characteristics and the internal environment of the institution (i.e. factors such as salary and organisational culture).

Institutions need to realise and acknowledge that differences exist within the different generations at work and that it is essential to focus on the future needs of institutions when considering these dynamics (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). The younger generation of employees is active in an environment where fast transformation occurs in respect of the technology and business strategies that are being utilised. Different generations also have different needs that should be addressed, i.e. rewards, expectations, work environment and leadership needs. With a new generation of employees entering into the academic environment, it is important to note that they will have their own expectations. However, the expectations of younger employees who are already employed in the academic environment may never be ignored. Arising from this are opportunities that the higher education sector can focus on to retain some of these younger employees. Time spent at work needs to be fulfilling for employees, therefore developing the necessary skill set to execute their duties is also crucial (Mensah & Lebbæus, 2013).

The success of institutions depends on a competent staff complement that is consistent, that produces high quality graduates and quality research, and that is globally competitive (Dube & Ngulube, 2013). Therefore, turnover rates need to be managed effectively as the loss of quality employees will result in an imbalance within institutions (Netswera, Rankhumise, & Mavundla, 2005). The loss of younger academics in higher education is detrimental to the current and future needs of the sector. Reasons for these employees wanting to leave the sector need to be explored and efforts should be made to ensure that they stay within the sector, for instance by developing flexible models to accommodate them. Factors such as the expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, rewards, job satisfaction and work engagement of these employees need to be explored to better understand them and to assist in reducing their job turnover rate. Research indicated that Generation Y employees are interested in learning and development, a flexible work environment and
financial rewards; however, 41% of this generation prefers to communicate electronically, whilst 25% expects to be employed by more than six companies during their career life. Beržinskiené and Rudytė (2008) argue that the challenge for younger employees is that they are influenced by the external environment such as the need for a specific job in the labour market and opportunities for other kind of jobs as well.

Differences that exist – such as how these employees are rewarded internally, compared to their counterparts within the sector and externally, compared to peers in private organisations – are important to explore, as they might trigger employees’ wanting to leave. Junior employees are seen to be earning the least in the sector, but since even their peers in the private sector earn more than them, the academic sector is considered the least favourable work environment for them to stay in (Higher Education South Africa, 2014). PricewaterhouseCoopers (2013) suggest that organisations should focus on certain factors when it comes to younger employees, namely improved flexibility at work; a strong culture of support and recognition with interesting opportunities and work challenges; balance between personal life and work; engaging work; fostering a team spirit; and offering competitive rewards and salaries. Leadership within the sector is responsible for ensuring that enough support is offered to all employees so that they are self-efficient, engaged and satisfied with their jobs, in order to encourage them to attain organisational goals (Ramdass, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, various factors should be looked at in dealing with the challenges facing academic institutions. Employers and employees will have to manage expectations from both sides. Companies have limited resources to accommodate the expectations of younger employees, so the latter will have to re-evaluate their expectations to fit in with the company structures and culture (Musah & Nkuah, 2013). Other factors that relate to these employees need to be explored, such as the rewards, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement that the academic environment offers them.

Methodology

The study follows a systematic literature review as it focuses on a specific topic and literature relating to themes investigated in the research. Systematic literature review is essential in collecting data and summarising findings of the specific data collected (Leedy & Omrod, 2001). The main aim being conceptualising the influence of rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement on the intention to leave of younger employees in an academic institution. Differing journals, theses, books, Google and articles were consulted in exploring the concepts discussed. The process involved identifying topics considered as being under the scope of the research and its purpose. Material included in
the study related to younger academics and academic staff in general due to the lack of research focusing specifically on younger academics. Literature relevant in the higher education sphere and related concepts was explored. Information not relating to the concepts under the study and the higher education setting was excluded in order to conceptualise the influence of related concepts effectively. These concepts are discussed in more detail below.

Rewards

Rewards can be seen as a form of payment for work that was done for an employer. This payment may take different forms, i.e. salary or wage, and it may include benefits for which the employee may qualify in terms of labour legislation and the type of employment contract entered into (Negash, Zewude, & Megeresa, 2014). Rewarding employees includes both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to ensure that they remain engaged and that their needs are addressed (Snelgar, Renard, & Venter, 2013). Intrinsic rewards can be seen as those that involve accomplishment and employees’ feelings of self-worth; they are normally of a non-monetary nature while extrinsic rewards include the salary, associated fringe benefits, the work environment, job stability and security, and opportunities for promotion (Allen & Kilmann, 2001; Nienaber & Bussin, 2011). The younger generation of employees seeks flexible work environments and alternative careers that respond to their needs; they can be seen as having multiple careers (Higher Education South Africa, 2011). Within the university environment, academic staff is seen as an essential resource for achieving the institution’s goals – they can aid in research and teaching, and associate with professional associations (Badat, 2010; Jennifer, 1996). Rewards increase their research productivity and quality, because employees are rewarded when they reach set research targets (Bland & Schmitz, 1986; Seyama & Smith, 2015).

Previous research indicates that the compensation of employees is linked both to their high performance and to their intention to leave – the latter obviously applies when such compensation does not meet the employee’s demands (Armstrong & Cummins, 2011). Dissatisfied employees are more likely to leave the organisation because of inadequate rewards (DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004). Since the performance of academic employees has an impact on the quality of education that students receive, it becomes a necessity for universities to offer their employees competitive salaries so as to attract, motivate and retain quality employees in academic institutions. The challenge for universities is to motivate employees effectively, and thus to reduce the intention of younger employees to leave (Stewart, Belcourt, Arthur, & Snell, 2001).
Younger academic employees in South Africa are the least paid in spite of the fact that academic institutions need to attract and retain such employees to enhance the quality of higher education (Higher Education South Africa, 2014). Previous research indicates little is known about the link between individual differences and salaries, intention to leave and psychological rewards (Williams, McDaniel, & Nguyen, 2006). Psychological rewards can be perceived as supervisor support, recognition and trust experienced by the employee, all of which requires time and effort by fellow employees and supervisors (De Gieter, De Cooman, Pepermans, & Jegers, 2008). It has been reported that although satisfaction with rewards can reduce negative results, it may also restrict positive results. De Gieter and Hofmans (2015) recommend that institutions should not typically focus on extrinsic rewards (even though employee dissatisfaction with rewards may lead to increased turnover), but also on factors that empower employees to be competent in their roles and that encourage task variety. Institutions should furthermore train their young employees and foster a motivational environment that will satisfy their basic psychological needs. The study is however limited as it does not focus on younger academic employees. There is a clear need to investigate these employees and the factors that influence their employment status in academia (such as expectations of these employees).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s beliefs that reflect his/her ability to influence certain situations that have an impact on his/her life; whether at work or in one’s personal life. Self-efficacy gives individuals control over their lives as they are able to reflect and regulate on pre-determined personal goals and standards (Bandura, 1997). Previous research indicates that a person’s behaviour is influenced by outcome expectancy and intentions; thus self-efficacy can be termed as the confidence that individuals display in respect of their skills and abilities to execute work tasks at any given time (Bandura, 2001; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In an academic environment, the efficacy of lecturers is crucial – they must be efficient in respect of their primary roles, namely teaching and learning, research, and service in general. Owing to the need for more suitably qualified individuals in academia, it becomes important to focus on the development of strategies that can help academic employees to balance their workload between the above dimensions of their primary roles and their expected contribution to each (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Mapesela & Strydom, 2004).

In countries such as England, Australia and New Zealand, research is deemed more important than the other two dimensions of academic life (Sykes, 2006). However, academic employees need to successfully
complete tasks in each of the functions they hold. With a younger academic workforce needed in South Africa, greater emphasis needs to be placed on developing employees who are able to excel in all three dimensions or roles. Australian research indicates that senior academics have a greater sense of self-efficacy in conducting research than junior academics, while male academics are more self-confident in research when compared to their female counterparts (Hemmings & Kay, 2009; Vasil, 1992). Schoen and Winocur (1988) in contrast found that no differences exist between the two genders. Bailey (1999) argues that younger academic employees are more likely to conduct research if they are fresh post-doctoral employees. This situation may however be less favourable if they are still studying towards a higher degree. Senior academic staff members are seen to be more research driven than junior employees. The career progression of academics is characterised by acquiring a position, after which the individual obtains tenure with a major focus shifting towards research over time (Callaghan, 2015). Differences may exist between academics within specific fields and geographic regions due to the preferred local research methods; some countries may prefer the quantitative approach, while others prefer the qualitative approach (Robken, 2009).

Bailey (1999) continues to argue that younger employees may have a negative perception about research if they accepted lecturing jobs and expected to focus mainly on teaching and sharing knowledge with students – rather than to conduct research. The self-efficacy of younger academic employees and other influential factors need to be researched in greater depth to extend the limited knowledge that is available on the topic of younger academic staff. Institutions are highly dependent on efficient staff to produce quality students, quality research and meaningful contributions to society. According to Ramsden (2003), it is necessary to investigate the self-efficacy of employees to determine factors that influence this phenomenon.

Leadership

Leadership in academia is of crucial importance and involves motivating and guiding students; being self-aware and reflective; doing strategic planning; taking decisions; and even managing the overall finances of the department or institution in some instances. Thus, leadership in an academic environment can be deemed as influencing the success of others (Berg & Jarbur, 2014). The leader’s role expands to include guidance to employees in respect of teaching, learning, supervising and research so as to enhance the effectiveness of the employees. Leaders in the context of this study are required to mentor and coach employees to become academic experts and role models for younger academic employees. Leaders in the academic environment are normally appointed on the basis of their academic accomplishments rather than their leadership competencies and capabilities. However, leaders need to understand the different
generations of employees who are employed within their structures to effectively manage them. It is important that they understand that employees from different generations have different aspirations and work expectations – therefore a general understanding between leaders and employees is essential (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Academic leaders have an impact on employees’ intention to leave as the latter’s perception of leadership is related to their leaders’ commitment towards teaching and learning (Ramsden, Prosser, Trigwell, & Martin, 2007). The researcher is of the opinion that leadership plays a pivotal role in influencing younger academics to stay on in the academic environment. Leaders need to influence the values of academic employees and persuade them to share and identify with the goals of the employer institution. They also need to adhere consistently to individual goals and organisational goals to increase commitment (Ali, Sidow, & Guleid, 2013). Transformational leadership style is often adapted at institutions of higher learning through coaching and mentoring mechanisms, as these encourage team work, participation, attainment of the same goals, development of high-order thinking, effective communication, vision, and reflection to assess whether goals have been achieved or not (Davis, 2011). Transformational leadership is essential for managing academic employees – it aims to build an environment that is purpose driven, to increase staff retention and to reduce leadership impact on intention to leave (Metwally, 2014; Thoonen, Oort, Peetsma, Geijsel, & Sleegers, 2011).

Job satisfaction

According to Locke (1976, p.1300), job satisfaction can be defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”. Job satisfaction is also closely linked to satisfaction with working environment, rewards and benefits, organisational culture and practices (Niemann & Dovido, 1998; Sarwar & Abugre, 2013). Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) view job satisfaction as common, generalised perceptions that employees possess about their jobs. Job satisfaction is an important factor to organisations as it has an impact on individual, departmental and organisational productivity as well as the intention of turnover of employees (Oshagbemi, 2003). Associated results of employees who are dissatisfied normally include a high rate of absenteeism, labour procedure costs, recruitment, training and development, and separation costs for exiting employees (Toker, 2011). Job satisfaction within the higher education field is imperative to ensure quality education (de Lourdes Machado-Taylor et al., 2016).

It is important to ensure that employees are satisfied with their jobs, as institutions depend on them to make profit and deliver quality work (Kusku, 2003). Retention can therefore be linked closely to job satisfaction.
Research also shows that job satisfaction has a direct influence on intention to quit and that other factors that moderate the intention to quit are related to job satisfaction (Robyn, 2012; Steers, 1977). According to Rowley (2000), institutions that value and recognise the worth of their academic employees should be able to succeed in retaining their staff, despite the challenges posed by the forever-evolving and technologically advancing world. A study by Wong and Heng (2009) suggests that age plays no significant role in the level of job satisfaction of academic employees. Nevertheless, age and job satisfaction are important factors to investigate in order to keep younger academic employees employed in higher education institutions and reduce the turnover rate of these employees. Maintaining positive relations within academic institutions can be associated with job satisfaction of academic employees and result in better success rates of students (Saint, 2009).

Work engagement

Positive work engagement is an important factor in keeping employees satisfied with their jobs. Engaged employees appear to be more dedicated to their jobs, and they are not only effective but also willing to learn and sacrifice more than the average employee (Nelson & Simmons, 2003). Thus, work engagement is closely linked to employee well-being and constructive work behaviour, which creates positive links with job satisfaction and commitment, and reduces employee turnover (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Work engagement can be defined as a positive state of mind in relation to work; it is a consistent factor characterised by absorption, vigour and dedication. Work engagement is also seen as an employee’s involvement in his/her work, which is perceived through high participation and involvement (Roberts & Davenport, 2002). Various factors can influence the level of an employee’s work engagement (Jordaan, 2005). For instance, absorption can be seen as fully dedicated to work; vigour can be seen as positive relations to work situations with specific reference to job demands and job resources; and dedication can be seen as being inspired by one’s job and being enthusiastic about it (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Job resources (such as autonomy; support from others; psychological well-being; and task variety) need to be incorporated into the management of employee engagement and turnover intention (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Job resources are seen as those factors that reduce job demands and are associated with positive work functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Research conducted in a study indicated that 40% of academics were satisfied with their jobs besides the unavailability of job resources and a high presence of job demands (Doyle & Hind, 1998; Toker, 2011). A study conducted by Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) indicates that academics value growth opportunities and support from the manager as an element of vigour.
Dedication is also related to the same factors and career progression prospects, predicting a variance of 38% for employees. Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) found vigour to be higher among employees with less than ten years’ experience. Younger employees might be experiencing the pleasure of finding employment, as opposed to their peers who have been working longer than them. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) believe that a lack of employee growth, organisational backing and progression opportunities constitutes three categories that contribute towards employee disengagement in their work. Academic institutions can avoid such disengagement by allowing their academic employees autonomy in doing their jobs, by clarifying expectations and job roles, by having management to support their staff, and by promoting and rewarding employees (Kahn, 1990). Academic employees’ work engagement however yields very limited knowledge to the current research inquiry, especially in respect of younger employees in the academic sector and their intention to leave.

Organisations and academic institutions are faced with similar challenges in the labour market – they are competing for the same resources (highly competent employees) amidst changing work environments and economies, and turnover rates that are seemingly on the rise. Research by Chen, Ching, Wang, Hwa, and Chu (2010) indicates that younger employees are more prone to changing jobs frequently and only 20% of those employed indicated that they were positively engaged in their organisations. Previous studies also indicate that younger employees’ intention to leave was mostly associated with rewards; leadership and management; organisational environment; skills-related reasons; misunderstandings between management and other colleagues; transformational leadership; job satisfaction and engagement. All of these came out strong as indicators of intention to leave (Robyn & du Preez, 2013; Szamosi, 2006).

Intention to leave can be described as the employee’s decision to exit an organisation at their own free will (Basak, Ekmekci, Bayram, & Bas, 2013). It has however been indicated that high levels of job satisfaction reduce the intention to leave of employees, and they are more prone to stay if they are engaged in their roles and given opportunities to improve on their knowledge and skills (Robyn & du Preez, 2013). Richman (2006) believes that academic institutions need to retain younger employees as these employees have the ability to diversify their skills set and gain knowledge that can be utilised to sustain the long-term plans of institutions. Research reveals that younger employees are estimated to be in the service of an organisation for a maximum of two years before moving on, due to developmental reasons or promotion opportunities elsewhere (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2010).

Since younger employees have different expectations from the world of work, it becomes a challenge for organisations to constantly adopt new approaches and resources, as such processes require the organisations to change their structures. The factors that cause younger employees to want to leave academic environments need to be investigated, as academic staff retention is important for long-term sustainability and knowledge.
Discussion

The main aim of this article was to conceptualise the influence of rewards, expectations, self-efficacy, leadership, job satisfaction and work engagement on the intention of younger employees to leave an academic institution.

Table 1 below presents the literature on the concepts that the researcher found to have been investigated on the related topics. It is important to note that all sources are fully available in the reference list and that they include international and national studies. A total of 70 articles and eight other sources that are not included in the table were studied as part of the literature review. Self-efficacy (15) and Rewards (14) were found to be the most investigated topics with regard to younger academic employees, while Intention to leave (12) was also a popular theme among the most investigated topics. Differing views were raised in relation to the self-efficacy of academic employees: senior employees were seen to be more prone to conducting research than junior employees who entered the field with the aim of only teaching and not conducting research (Bailey, 1999). Younger academic employees were found to be the lowest paid; however, it is important to note that they sought flexible working environments that were responsive to their situation. Against this background, it was recommended that institutions should focus not only on extrinsic rewards but also on intrinsic rewards (Higher Education South Africa, 2011).

Work engagement (10) was the fourth most investigated topic as per the researcher’s literature review. Only 40% of academic employees were found to be satisfied with their jobs, but unfortunately this figure does not yield knowledge on younger academic employees in particular (Toker, 2011). Evidence found in respect of younger employees indicated that vigour was high in employees with less work experience (Coetze & Rothmann, 2005).

Job satisfaction (10) and Leadership (9) were in the middle range of the review conducted. Leadership in academia plays a significant role in influencing young academic employees to stay on within an institution (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Job satisfaction of these employees is closely linked to their intention (or not) to leave, which essentially has an impact on the quality of education offered at higher learning institutions (Bandura, 2006; Robyn, 2012). Academic employees need to be satisfied with their jobs in order for their employer institutions to prosper (Rowley, 2000).

Expectations (4) of these younger employees proved to be the least researched topic, based on the literature review conducted in this study. Expectations of younger academics were found to be influenced by different factors, ranging from social backgrounds to organisational culture. However, very limited knowledge is available on the topic as younger academics are working in a technologically advanced environment that is
forever changing (Pilukiene, 2015). Creating an opportunity for institutions to better understand the current and future needs of their different employees.

It is evident that more research needs to be conducted with regard to the expectations of younger academic employees, as current research is not only limited, but also not specific to younger employees. Generational differences also exist between older and younger employees. The competition between the private sector and the higher education sector should furthermore be noted when researching the generational differences between employees, as these sectors are competing against each other in the global war for acquiring the best talent. Younger academic employees are essential for building the pipeline for academic institutions’ endurance for future sustainability and quality development. The future of academic institutions is highly dependent on the quality of current and future employees of these organisations.
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Limitations of the study

The researcher encountered several limitations while conducting the literature review for the current study. For instance, most of the literature does not focus specifically on the population being studied; instead, they are broad studies that have been conducted on academics in general and not younger academics. The literature review also revealed that most of the studies were conducted by the same group of authors, making it difficult to find other relevant sources in the literature. Furthermore, a limited number of articles were found to be relevant to the study, as most studies focused on the self-efficacy and rewards of employees. This excluded relevant factors such as the expectations, leadership and job satisfaction of the younger employees that might result in their intention to leave.

Since younger academics are generally new to the world of academia, the amount of research that has been conducted on them is limited. Another limitation to the study is that there is a lack of information on the concepts on which the researcher focused, with no sturdy concepts being reflected. In addition, not all the information explored was relevant to the study population as some of the articles explored the nursing fraternity and could not be utilised in this study.

Recommendations

The study clearly highlights the lack of information that is present with regard to younger academics. It is consequently essential to conduct more relevant research about younger academics. Future studies should utilise methods such as mixed-method research and quantitative research to gain better and in-depth knowledge on the topic. There is a need to understand younger academics on an international level and not just from a South African perspective, as universities across the globe are wary of the brain drain phenomenon. Human resource departments of academic institutions also need to get involved in utilising efficient methods to manage their employees. It is important to investigate the intention to leave of younger academics across the whole of Africa, as there is a need to improve the higher education landscape on the African continent.
Conclusion

The study revealed that only scant information is available about younger academics’ intention to leave and the concepts discussed in this chapter. There is a clear indication that the focus has been on academics in general and there needs to be a shift to work towards the future. Current and future challenges of higher education institutions must be addressed to sustain the delivery of quality education. Most of the research that has been conducted on employee retention focuses on rewards and self-efficacy as the only ways of retaining employees. With the generational shift that is expected in the academic environment, research needs to be conducted on the differences that exist between the older and younger generations of academics.

Expectations of all the members of the younger generation might not necessarily be the same. Work engagement patterns need to be looked into. The role of leaders at academic institutions also needs to be investigated, as younger academic employees view this differently than the older generation of academics. With the implementation of projects such as nGAP in South Africa, it is of pivotal importance to ensure that younger academics stay in higher education institutions, not just because of contractual obligations, but also because of other factors investigated in the study.

The current study added great value by revealing that a lot needs to be done in terms of the academic employee backdrop. Academic institutions in some instances might need to re-work the human resource policies so as to accommodate the changing environment. Literature reveals that differences exist between the job preferences of generations, gender groups and individuals in general; hence it has become increasingly more challenging to attract, manage and retain employees in organisations across different sectors. It is imperative for institutions, government and the private sector to conduct more research on younger academics, as the survival of the higher learning environment is dependent on the quality of current and future employees in the academia.
References


CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Factors influencing intention to leave of younger employees in an academic institution.

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate factors influencing intention to leave of younger employees in an academic institution. The objective was to explore factors that would result in younger employees leaving the institution. Utilising purposive sampling in the research provided the researcher the opportunity to gain further knowledge on participants and explore their experiences. The participants identified in the research were under the age of 35, in possession of a master’s degree or in the process of obtaining a master’s degree. Seventeen semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed, after which a thematic analysis was conducted. Main findings of the study reveal that employment practices are the leading reason for the intention to leave of younger academics, followed by job satisfaction. While work engagement and well-being are further reasons employees would consider leaving the institution. The findings of the study can assist in developing effective methods of attracting, managing, engaging, and retaining these younger employees in the academic institution. The study adds value to institutions in terms of exploring factors that can result in younger academics leaving the profession and finding meaningful methods to encourage them to stay in these academic institutions. The study will also add value to human resource management practices of the institutions to better manage and design methods to reduce younger academics’ intention to leave the institution.

Introduction

Academics, in general, are necessary for institutions to thrive in the constantly changing world of work. Academic institutions are faced with multiple challenges, such as competition for employees by other sectors (Higher Education South Africa, 2014). The need to retain academics is important for institutions to deliver quality results and to achieve their mandate (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). The importance of reducing and managing the intention to leave of academics is therefore more important than ever. Intention to leave is defined as the employees’ voluntary decision to leave their current employment by seeking alternative employment (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). These intentions need to be managed with an increasing student population and the ageing workforce in mind (Higher Education South Africa, 2009). Younger academics therefore fulfil an imperative role in ensuring higher education institutions move forward. The older generation of employees is more experienced, highly qualified, and is generally seen as more productive, and having vast knowledge to offer higher education institutions (Badat, 2010).
Institutions need to ensure that sufficient time is provided for knowledge transfer between these employees and younger academic staff. The challenge lies in younger academic staff being offered better rewards by other sectors, which then results in their intention to leave and high turnover rates (Dube & Ngulube, 2013). Improved methods to retain employees need to be developed to avoid a brain drain, which will result in the loss of quality in higher education institutions (Makondo, 2014). The interchange of knowledge between the different age groups in academia is important. More studies that research younger academics are therefore necessary to understand them and their antecedents in the academic sphere more comprehensively. As with other sectors, the academic world globally is becoming highly complex, this creates an increasing demand for highly competent employees in this environment (Nwadiani & Akpotu, 2002). Attracting, managing, and retaining diverse employees is challenging as they are not only influenced by the remuneration they receive from their employers but also by other factors such as work-life balance, engagement, autonomy and other employment related benefits (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). The researcher is of the view that previous studies have mainly focussed on retaining senior academic staff while only a limited number of studies focus on young academics. Koen (2003) argues that limited financial benefits is the leading reason institutions cannot adequately retain younger academic employees. However, this does not mean that this is the only factor that influences young academics’ intention not to enter, or to leave the academic profession.

Factors such as expectation also have an influence on employees’ intention to leave. New entrants into the academic world have their own expectations and if these expectations are not met, it might influence them to leave (Islam & Alam, 2014). Personal factors such as well-being, family situation, and social conditions are also seen as aspects that would influence employees’ intention to leave (Rahman, Naqvi, & Ramay 2008). Thus, job satisfaction is also viewed as an important predictor of intention to leave as employees that are not satisfied with their jobs have an increased likelihood of leaving their jobs based on their evaluation of all the aspects of their jobs (Amah, 2009; Sypniewska, 2013). Young academic employees’ tendency to stay is also increased by recognition of their efforts, as they are driven by a sense of achievement (Chew, 2004). Work environments that are flexible in their recognition practices and reward structures are more likely to retain academic staff (Ng’ethe, Iravo, & Namusonge, 2012a). The role of academic leaders is therefore, to create environments that enable employees to stay, as employees are more likely to stay if they see the efforts and support from their managers through recognition, rewards, flexibility, and regular feedback (Michael, 2008; Ng’ethe, Iravo, & Namusonge, 2012b; Sayers, 2007).

Younger employees, in general, are driven by being included in the decision-making process, doing meaningful work, constant feedback, and communication (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Sissons & Jones, 2012). These employees take their development seriously therefore, a clear career plan is essential to guide them in achieving their goals. Management needs to offer clear support to these younger employees (Kim &
Yang, 2013). Additionally, young academic employees are motivated by factors, such as opportunities for development and promotion to stay in the academic environment (Netswera, Rankhumise, & Mavundla, 2005). The onus is not only on academic institutions, younger academic employees also have the responsibility to ensure that they are capable of performing in their roles. Employees with low self-efficacy are generally seen as having higher intent to leave (Peterson, 2009). It is important for academic institutions to equip these employees with the necessary skills to perform their jobs (Mapasela & Strydom, 2004). Employees that are able to perform in their roles appear to be more dedicated and have low levels of intent to leave, it is imperative that adequate methods are developed to train, and retain, these employees (Simons & Buitendach, 2013).

Furthermore, younger academic employees are faced with challenges, such as the pressure to complete their post-graduate studies at different levels of their careers to gain promotion to become lecturers or even senior lecturers. The burden of administrative processes on academics, in general, is seen as a factor that causes these employees to lose autonomy in their roles (Kogan & Teichler, 2007). Academic job roles are no longer limited to teaching, research, and community involvement. Factors such as external funding and integrating online learning are nowadays considered part of the academic profile (Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan, 2013). The above-mentioned factors add to the challenges experienced by the younger academics. Academic institutions have to ensure that these employees are provided sufficient training and development to ensure that they are able to perform in their roles (Chew, 2004).

The future of academic institutions rests on preparing adequate talent to sustain these institutions, therefore stability needs to be maintained. The South African government has developed the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) to address the possible challenges that might arise in terms of a shortage of skills in academia (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). The programme outlines what is expected of the incumbent, the university in which the role will be performed, and the responsibilities of the new academic. The programme is designed to gradually develop the new academic through a workload, which accommodates teaching and research, and related aspects. The new employees will be provided an experienced mentor to ensure that the programme is completed successfully. The researcher views the programme as a proactive move by the government to make academia more attractive to younger employees and those that qualify to work in such environments, as there is competition from other sectors for some of these potential employees. Such a programme is important but can become obsolete if factors that influence younger academics are not explored and managed in time.

Henceforth, this study focusses on factors that influence younger academic employees to leave their current jobs. There is limited research on the phenomenon, as literature focusses on academic employees, in general, and some studies include support staff and neglect younger academic employees. The study takes an exploratory view to examine these factors, as some new factors might become apparent through the
research. It is important to discover these factors as younger academic employees are essential to the survival of academic institutions and the future of education the country.

Research Methodology

The research is of a qualitative nature, as qualitative research entails exploring and understanding the meaning behind the experiences of participants involved in the research (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). A qualitative approach enables the researcher to describe, explain, and unload experiences of participants (Leavy, 2014), thus giving the researcher the opportunity to examine new concepts or thoughts that might arise (O’ Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). A phenomelogical approach was utilised in the research to allow the researcher to gain better understanding of the participants’ experiences from an objective perspective (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The use of semi-structured interviews aided participants to share their experiences with the researcher, resulting in better understanding of the meaning ascribed to those experiences.

Research Procedure

Once the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the institution to conduct the research, participants were approached for their consent to be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 employees across the institution. Audio recordings of the interviews were made to be utilised for transcription and coding. All recordings were stored electronically on a password-encrypted device. Participants were given the opportunity to raise any concerns through the research leader and all concerns were addressed. Ethical conduct was maintained throughout the process.

Participants

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify potential participants for the research. Purposive sampling is particularly effective as it is done with a specific objective in mind (Palys, 2008). Purposive sampling is done with specific characteristics of participants as qualifying characters due to the nature of inquiry of the research (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Permission to contact participants was granted by the institution, recruitment of participants was done through formal emails to which interested participants
responded. Consent was obtained from participants to continue with the research and interviews were setup with participants. These participants assisted the researcher to draw specific information about the phenomenon being investigated as they were well informed about the topic of interest, and consequently, shared knowledge and experience regarding the investigated topic with the researcher.

A target population of (n=12) participants was initially determined by the researcher. However, a total number of (n=17) participants were interviewed for the purpose of the research due to the availability of employees that were willing to participate in the research. The ethical process required only to interview participants willing to partake in the research. Participants had the following characteristics: They were younger than 35 years, in a lecturing or junior lecturing position, and either in possession of a master’s degree or in the process of obtaining a master’s degree. The participants included both female and male employees from different campuses, faculties, and schools to gain in-depth knowledge about the intention to leave of younger academics at these institutions.

Data Collection

Ethical clearance granted by the institution enabled the researcher to embark on the research project. Potential participants, identified through open source platforms, were sent emails to recruit them to participate in the research project. To maintain anonymity throughout the research, emails were sent to each participant individually. Consent to be interviewed and audio recorded by the researcher was obtained from interested individuals. Consent forms were signed by those participants who agreed to the interviews. All audio recordings were stored on password-encrypted devices to protect participants and to ensure that no data was lost during the process. All participants were ensured of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy throughout the process and in future publication of the research.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. Semi-structured interviews employ specific questions to be asked, and to guide the interview process, while allowing the participants a degree of freedom to express points of interest (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The process allows participants to mention aspects that the researcher might not have considered, thereby providing additional information on the topic being researched. The following interview questions were utilised:

- What factors would influence you to stay in your current job?
- What factors would influence you to leave or seek other employment?

  Probing questions:
Tell me more.

What else?

Could you explain the statement in more detail?

- Are you currently seeking employment elsewhere? Why?
- Is there anything else related to the topic or interview that you would like to ask, comment on, or clarify?

Data Analysis

Information obtained from the audio-recorded interviews was transcribed in order for the researcher to be able to code the data. A thematic analysis approach was conducted to allow the researcher to identify, group, analyse, and report on findings (Boyatzis, 1998). The thematic process presented an opportunity for the researcher to explore and understand the experiences of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding of the data was broken into two segments derived from the interview questions and the intention of the study. Coding can be seen as the process of discovering meaning in specific texts (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The first segment focussed on the answers derived from the interview question, What factors would influence you to stay in your current job? The second segment focussed on answers derived from the interview question, What factors would influence you to leave, or seek alternative employment? The first level of coding for the first question resulted in 81 ungrouped codes and the second level coding resulted in 18 codes. The first level of coding for the second question resulted in 71 ungrouped codes and the second level coding resulted in 16 codes.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained ethical clearance to conduct the research from the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) North-West University Vaal Triangle Campus (NWU, VTC). The researcher completed the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Online Training Module for the Social Sciences and Humanities, as well as the Research Ethics training session presented by the Health and Human Research Ethics Committee (HHREC) of the North-West University, Vaal-Triangle Campus (NWU, VTC). Informed consent to be interviewed and audio recorded was obtained from the participants. Audio recordings are stored on an electronic device that is password encrypted. The researcher is the only
person who knows this password. All participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any point in time, without any consequences to them. In addition, participants were made aware of the intended purpose of the research and how information obtained will be utilised. Participants were also notified that their information will be kept safe, and treated as confidential, and that they will not be identified in any information that will be published.

Findings

Following the 17 semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of the data obtained from the participants the subsequent findings were prevalent. Graph 1 below displays the coded factors that would influence younger academic employees to stay with the institution. Environment was found to be one of the leading reasons for these employees to stay in the institution, job satisfaction was ranked as the second leading reason for employees to stay in their jobs, while rewards and work engagement was the third leading reason for younger academics to stay in the institution. Growth and support is found to be the fourth reason that will keep these employees in the institution, with opportunity found to be the fifth reason. Social and family dynamics and development is ranked as the sixth reason for younger academic employees to stay in the institution. Additionally, job security, career progress, interdisciplinary work, general intention to stay, openness, accountability and well-being are found to be some further reasons for younger academic employees to remain with the institution. It is important to note that employment practices are seen as factors that would generally influence employees to leave, however respondents indicated that they viewed these practices as factors that, if addressed and improved, would motivate them to stay in the institution.
Graph 1: Intention to stay factors.

Table 1 represents the description of the coded factors, as indicated in Graph 1, influencing younger academic employees to stay in the institution.

Table 1: Description of factors that affect intention to stay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>The environment in the research can be seen as the work environment in which participants perform their work and includes factors such as flexibility, enabling environment, and a general description of the work environment by employees. “Environment here is much friendlier”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Job satisfaction can be viewed as the employees’ current view of their work. Descriptions utilised by participants include, “I love to teach”; “I love lecturing”; “I enjoy my job”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Rewards can be seen as extrinsic benefits such as salary, and intrinsic benefits such as rewards that are associated with one’s employment. Descriptions utilised by participants include, “I think high pay”; “Money”; “There is of course benefits of studying”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>Work engagement in this study, is viewed as the employees’ participation and involvement in their work. This is also related to the efforts that employees display in their work. Descriptions utilised by participants include, “I am here because I want to impart knowledge”; “I love academia”; “Align myself with passion”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Recognition can be described as acknowledgement of the employees’ efforts and being valued by the institution. Descriptions utilised by employees include, “Being appreciated”; “Recognising your contribution”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Growth can be seen as the employees’ aspiration to grow in their jobs and careers in the institution. Descriptions include, “Opportunity for me to grow”; “The growth part of the research”; “There is a lot of room to grow in our department”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>This is perceived as support from managers, department, or team, and the institution. Descriptions include, “If the support is given”; “Managerial support”; “Hard-working team”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Opportunity can be described as the employees’ view regarding possible opportunities that they have in the institution. Descriptions include, “Research funding opportunities”; “Better myself here, opportunity here”; “Opportunities that I have”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>This is the perceived development opportunities that the institution can offer employees. “People from industry teaching us”; “Investigate how to professionally develop people”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and family dynamics</td>
<td>Social and family dynamics refer to the social and personal reasons for employees to stay in the institution. “Another thing that would make me stay is my wife”; “If there was more entertainment for us young people”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>The employees perceive the institution as a secure environment. “First thing is stability in university environment”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>The employees’ belief in their own skills to perform tasks. “The ball is in my court.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>The well-being of employees. “We should care more about people”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employees see the need for interdisciplinary work as an important factor in encouraging them to stay. “Encouraging interdisciplinary work”.

Employees’ perceptions about their future careers. “Planning to work for five to six years”.

Employees’ view regarding their future in the institution. “I would love to stay in academia”.

The aim of the research was to investigate the factors that would influence younger academic employees to leave the institution.

*Graph 2* below represents the coded factors that would influence or are influencing younger academic employees to leave the institution. *Employment practices* were found to be the leading factor that would influence employees to leave; *environment and support* are the second leading factor that would influence employees to leave the institution. The third leading factor is the *location* of the campus. *Expectations, opportunities and rewards* is the fourth leading reason for younger academic employees to leave the institution. *Career progress, resources, workload, social and family dynamics* are the fifth factor that was found to have an influence on employees’ decisions to leave the institution. *Culture, growth and recognition* is the sixth leading factor that would influence younger academic employees to leave the institution. *Work engagement and well-being* is among the other factors that would influence younger academic employees to leave the institution.
Graph 2: Intention to leave factors.

Table 2 represents the description of the coded factors that would influence younger academic employees to stay in the institution, as indicated in Graph 2.

Table 2: Description factors that influence intention to leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment practices</td>
<td>This is seen as everyday employment issues that employees experience due to how they are treated and how it affects them. Descriptions include, “I’ve come to question the integrity of the management”; “the superior white male figure is really concerning”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>The environment in the research can be seen as the work environment in which participants perform their work and includes factors such as flexibility, enabling environment, and a general description of the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>This is perceived as support from managers, department, or team, and the institution. Descriptions include, “In the faculty where I work funding is very limited for junior staff members”; “Stop giving me so much work so that I can finish my studies”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>The specific location where the employee is located, or area in which the employee lives. Descriptions include, “Firstly the town we are situated in”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>The perceived expectations by both managers and employees that are not being met. “Very attractive, but wait until you get inside and then you realise that yoh…. this is really not what I signed up for”; “They are not aligned at all. They are not aligned, because you know. They will be saying we want you guys to be doctors”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Opportunities can be described as the employees’ view regarding prospects that they have in the institution or outside the institution. Descriptions include, “Seeking for better opportunities”; “When there are opportunities at other institutions”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Rewards can be seen as extrinsic benefits such as salary, and intrinsic benefits such as rewards that are associated with one’s employment. Descriptions include, “Greener pastures would be more pay”; “Salary disparities”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progress</td>
<td>Employees’ perceptions about their future careers. “Scared I would fall behind”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Family Dynamics</td>
<td>These factors include the social and personal reasons that would influence the employee to leave the institution. “They don’t care if you have a family and where your family is”; “I would leave if I get a position elsewhere closer to my partner, maybe you know”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>These can be viewed as the aspects that enable employees to perform optimally in their roles. “They don’t care if you have an office”, “We don’t have equipment”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>The amount of work that employees have to perform. “The amount of work you have to do is irritating”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Employees’ perspectives on how things are done in the institution. “I think it’s a culture where your input is not considered”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Growth can be seen as the employees’ aspiration to grow in their jobs and careers beyond the institution. Descriptions include, “I stay in one place forever that does not mean growth, it doesn’t show growth”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Recognition can be described as acknowledgement of the employees’ efforts and being valued by the institution. Descriptions include, “Because I feel that I am not valued in that sense”; “We are made so to speak glorified teachers”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>Work engagement in this study, is viewed as the employees’ participation and involvement in their work. This is also related to the efforts that employees display in their work. Description, “Not fulfilling”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>The well-being of employees. Description, “Your well-being is not considered”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the focus of the study being the intention to leave of younger academic employees, the following, as indicated in Graph 3, were found. Graph 3 below represents the population of the 17 interviewed research participants’. Nine (52%) employees intend staying in the institution. It was found that eight (47%) participants’ intend to leave the institution. Three (37,5%) of these employees wish to complete their studies before they leave the institution for another sector. While another three (37,5%) of these employees expressed clear intentions to leave the institution. The remaining two (25%) of these eight employees wish to complete their studies before they leave for another institution.
Graph 3: Intention to leave.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to explore factors influencing the intention of younger academic employees in the institution. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate these factors, followed by a thematic analysis of the information collected to discover the meanings associated with these factors. Two main segments of the research were analysed, namely factors that would influence younger academic employees to stay in the institution, and factors that would influence younger academic employees to leave the institution.

Based on the findings on intention to stay of the participants, the environment is indicated as the leading reason why these employees would stay in the academic institution. The environment, for the purpose of this article, is seen as the environment in which participants perform their work and includes factors such as flexibility, and an enabling environment, for example, “Create an environment in which you can follow your dream yourself” and a general description of the work environment by employees. Another factor associated with the environment was openness, as employees value such an environment. The researcher is of the opinion that employees generally seek an academic environment that is able to offer them flexible work arrangements, in which they can pursue their goals, where they can have privacy, and working conditions, which enable employees to participate in the decision-making process (Wood & Wall, 2007). Job satisfaction was found to be the second leading reason for younger academic staff to stay in the institution. In this article, job satisfaction is viewed as the employees’ attitude towards their jobs. The study
revealed reasons, such as enjoying being in an academic environment, and employees loving their jobs, as job satisfaction factors, for example, “I am comfortable with the institution and I would prefer not to leave”. Another factor that can be associated with job satisfaction is job security, as employees feel secure about their jobs. Previous research indicates that age has a positive correlation with job satisfaction of employees in the teaching fraternity, with older employees being generally satisfied with their salaries, increasing their levels of job satisfaction (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005; Rhodes, 1983).

Employees indicated that another factor that affected their decision to stay was the rewards they receive from the institution, for instance, some indicated salary and others mentioned that they appreciate study benefits offered at the institution, for example, “Your school should also invest in you”. This indicates satisfaction with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards offered by the institution as a measure that can be utilised to retain employees (Fallon, 2009). It is important to note that the rewards offered by the institution are important to these employees as it aids them in their development as well as allowing both the employer and employee to meet their contractual obligations. Despite these younger employees being the lowest paid, they nonetheless indicate satisfaction with and involvement in their work as an important factor. Work engagement is characterised by the employees’ involvement in their work. Some employees demonstrated high levels of involvement through their willingness to impart knowledge to students and to participate in the community in which they live, for example, “Another thing that will make me stay is the research”; “I have people that actually care about me and that I care for”.

The findings of the research reveal that employees require their efforts to be recognised. This demonstrates that the institution needs to value these employees in order for them to stay, for example, “Meaning people trusting me with really very difficult responsibility”. This can be linked to the rewards and support received from the institution, as there are different ways in which employees can be recognised, for example, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards; support from management, and support from colleagues (Nienaber & Bussin, 2011). Stemming from the findings are factors of growth and support that would keep employees in the institution “promotion and support for academic growth, “as long as there is support from the institution”. Growth was seen as the employees’ aspiration to grow in their jobs and careers beyond the institution, with employees mentioning prospects such as promotion and the need to advance in research, where support was seen to be received from managers and the institution (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). However, the findings indicate that opportunities need to be available for these employees to grow, suggesting that opportunities presented by the institution can assist employees that are self-effacing to develop. Another consideration for employees to stay was the role of social and family dynamics. Reasons provided included personal factors such as family, and the social environment in which employees find themselves, for example, “Perhaps if there was some entertainment for us young people”.

50
The main focus of the study was to investigate factors that would influence employees to leave the institution. The findings of the study are that 47% of the research sample intends to leave the institution. There are various reasons for this, the leading reason being employment practices, which for the purpose of the research, is seen as everyday employment issues that employees experience due to how they are treated and how it affects them, for example, “A person who has ten years more than you is going to be treated differently”. Employees’ general perceptions included the notion that they are treated differently to older colleagues. In some instances, a perception that employees are treated differently based on their gender, influences their decision to leave, for example, “Women never get promoted here”. Lack of respect from other colleagues was also seen as a determining factor. This is associated with the environment in which employees work, for example, “You are often seen as incompetent”. Research indicates that dissatisfaction with various factors of employment increases turnover intention (Johari, Ahmad, & Yahya, 2012).

The work environment can be seen as a place in which participants perform their work, and includes factors such as flexibility, enabling environment, and a general description of the work setting by employees, for example, “Changes in our working conditions, you know that decisions are made and we just have to comply whether we want to or not”. Employees indicated an environment that is not sociable, a culture that is not positive, and the need for a more robust environment enabling growth as some of the environmental factors contributing to their intention to leave (Ssesanga & Garret, 2005).

Employees are also influenced by the perceived lack of support from their managers and the institution (Theron, Barkhuizen, & Du Plessis, 2014). To substantiate this assertion, participants cited a lack of funding for junior staff members, and increased administrative work resulting in limited time for their studies to be completed, for example, “It’s like you are running a sole race in academia”. Others felt that their well-being is not considered. This indicates an increased workload that employees cannot manage. Due to an increased workload, employees feel that their career progress is slow as they fear that their careers will stagnate, for example, “When you are young here at the university, you are like slave worker”, while others are motivated to leave to increase career prospects (Pienaar & Bester, 2006). Resources are essential to ensure that employees carry out tasks that are required of them. Issues such as the quality of technology utilised, lack of equipment, and office space when employees are on-boarded in the institution have influenced these employees’ decisions to leave. Employees, for example, stated, “You cannot do learning with the students because the technology is letting you down”. Beyond this, employees are seeking better opportunities outside the institution (Chen & Hsieh, 2006). Some indicated that they would complete their studies first and then leave to go to other institutions, while other employees wish to complete their studies and then leave for other sectors. Employees highlighted the lack of growth as another factor that would motivate them to leave, as they view being employed in one place forever as a lack of growth, for example, “The
main thing generally being stagnating”. Career progress is another factor that would influence these employees to leave, as they do not want to fall behind in their respective fields (Lawton & Chernyshenko, 2008). This can be linked to employees seeking better opportunities outside the institution, for example, “If there are opportunities out there, even if it means having to study further elsewhere”. Some employees’ intention to leave is influenced by their expectations and their managements’ expectations of them being misaligned (Noor, 2011). Other employees are of the view that this is simply not what they expected or signed up for, as the job is completely different to what was advertised, for example, “I just feel that the job that is advertised is not actually the one”.

Rewards received by these employees also contributed to their intention to leave as they feel that their needs as not being met. Some seek flexible financial support and others generally seek better pay (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2011). Employees for instance stated, “Moneywise, I wish to go any time”. The lack of recognition of these employees resulted in them feeling undervalued and viewing themselves as only being important when management requires them to perform specific tasks (Theron et al., 2014). Employees stated the following about recognition, “Management only talk to you when they want something or want you to do something. It’s not simple, you know. I would appreciate it if the management would send me an email to say happy birthday, or just telling you that you are doing a good job but they only communicate with you when the want something”. Another factor that stood out is the location in which some employees were situated that was seen as influencing the intention to leave, as employees longed for a more serviceable town. It should, however, be stated that these employees were mostly satisfied with their jobs. Employees generally complained about basic services such as medical care, the schooling environment for their dependants, and a lack of social activities for younger employees progressively affecting their social lives and family dynamics increasing their intention to leave, “So it’s more about the city itself, it’s not about the job”.

Limitations

The study was challenged by a few limitations. The institution consists of three different campuses in different locations, this in itself means that the experiences shared by participants are subjective to their respective campus. The effect of this is that there is limited consensus on practices described by employees, as practices and experiences are campus specific. Another limitation of the study is that a population of n=17 was interviewed, thus not representing the views of the majority of the younger academic staff profile. With the study being limited to a certain age group, it was challenging for the researcher to source
supporting literature on younger academic staff. Some employees might have found being audio recorded by the researcher uncomfortable, even though they had initially consented to this. The researcher, who is an academic staff member of the institution, also belongs to the category of participants being researched. This might also have limited participants in openly expressing their views and sharing their experiences. Participants were made aware of the researcher’s position. However, objectivity was maintained throughout the process, as the researcher was vigilant to uphold ethical conduct.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, it is recommended that the institution pay more attention to younger academic employees as 47% of the employees that were interviewed indicated an intention to leave the institution. The institution can firstly conduct campus-focused research to address issues that can be resolved immediately in the institutional framework. Management has the ability to manage day-to-day activities, such as the perceived lack of respect from other employees, and the manner in which younger academic employees are treated. It is recommended that management play a proactive role in this regard. Employee support can be offered to employees in different formats, for instance research funding for these employees, and administrative support to reduce the workload of these employees. Reduced workloads for employees will increase their well-being, while providing resources for employees to perform their tasks will enable them to grow in their roles and respective fields. Employees are generally seeking better opportunities. It is crucial for the institution to create opportunities for the employees, such as consulting work outside the institution, exposure to networking with individuals outside the academic environment for learning and growth purposes, and opportunities for interdisciplinary work with colleagues in the institution.

The institution has to create an environment that promotes growth for these employees as they feel that being employed in one place for too long does not provide the growth they require. A review of growth needs should therefore be conducted timeously to align expectations of both the employee and the institution. Younger academic employees value recognition – not just financial recognition but also recognition in the sense that their contributions are appreciated and acknowledged by the institution, being allowed to participate in decision-making regarding matters that affect their work, and being involved in tasks that are meaningful to them. The recognition of employees includes rewards, as some employees seek better pay and added benefits. A flexible reward system therefore needs to be established to accommodate employees’ needs. The institution needs to conduct further research on generational reward differences and preferences. This will create a better benchmarking system to ensure that employees can be retained.
Employees’ needs differ – younger employees are in the process of establishing their families, therefore their needs are different to those employees that already have established families. Therefore, employment practices must make provision for these differences. Employees’ engagement levels need to be maintained in order for them to stay in the institution, as some employees stated that they would prefer to leave for another institution. This indicates that the issue is not with the job but rather with the institution. It is further recommended that the institution engages with local municipalities on how to improve basic services such as medical care, basic education, water and electricity, as well as the management of environmental and social issues and the improvement of community facilities to cater for younger employees, in general.

Trustworthiness and credibility

Credibility of any study in research is important. Credibility refers to factual representation of perspectives and data of participants by the researcher (Polit & Beck, 2012). The following steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study;

- Literature focusing on the study and industry was consulted to ensure worthiness of the study.
- All participants in the study met the criteria for interviewing.
- Conducted interviews were all audio recorded and stored safely.
- Interviews were transcribed and listened to multiple times during the coding phase. Notes that were taken during interviews were also consulted during coding.
- First level coding took place, with theory on related concepts being consulted, this was followed by second level coding to ensure consistency of concepts and credibility of the study.
- All participants were made aware of the fact that the researcher forms part of the population being studied, before and during the interviews.
- The research supervisor was consulted during the study, in order to ensure consistency in data interpretation and other related aspects of the research.
- The researcher also followed ethical rules set by the institution.

Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to explore factors that would influence younger academic employees to leave the institution. The study revealed various factors that could result in employees leaving. These include employment practices, where management is seen as lacking integrity, and white male superiority
is dominant, in an environment in which there is a general lack of respect for young academic employees, inadequate support for these academics to complete their studies, which perpetuates a culture of disregard for employee contributions, a lack of recognition of employees’ efforts and well-being, increased workloads, lack of resources to perform optimally, and misaligned expectations, and the location of the campuses. The need for growth, and better rewards, creates a desire for better opportunities with other institutions and in other sectors. With 47% of the participants stating that they intend to leave the institution, management and leaders have a lot to consider regarding ways to reduce the intention to leave of these employees. It is important to note that 25% of the participants intend to leave for other institutions. Factors that influence younger academic employees to stay can be seen as an enabling environment, job satisfaction, rewards, work engagement, recognition, growth, support, and opportunities that these employees receive. It is therefore imperative that the environment in which these employees work is flexible, not only in terms of working hours, but also in terms of recognition of these employees in various approaches that are able to meet their needs. Support should also be offered to these employees to ensure that they are engaged in their work and are satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, institutions need to ensure that sufficient opportunities are given these employees to grow in their roles. Management can be proactive in curbing or reducing the intention to leave of these employees. More flexible programmes, like the nGAP, could be developed to assist employees in reaching their goals and achieving success, which in turn will reduce the intention to leave of younger academics.
References


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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

The chapter focusses on the conclusion of the study based on the intended study purposes. In addition, it discusses the limitations of the study and recommendations that are applicable to future research and the academic institutions.

4.1 Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to explore the intentions to leave of younger academic employees within the institution. The study focussed on employees younger than 35, in possession of a master’s degree or in the process of obtaining a master’s degree. A qualitative approach was undertaken in the study. This was supported by a literature review, and semi-structured interviews that were thematically analysed.

The study is important because of the need of younger academics and the current ageing academic workforce. Due to the ageing workforce approaching retirement within the next ten years, it is important to ensure that sufficient knowledge is transferred between these different generations (Badat, 2010). It is important to manage and retain younger employees in academic institutions as the future of academic institutions strongly depends on quality employees. Costs associated with recruiting, and training new employees, as well as possible separation costs, increase the importance of reducing the intention to leave of younger academic employees (Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). Two main objectives of the study were to explore factors influencing the intention to leave of younger academic employees, and factors influencing the intention to stay of younger academic employees in an academic institution.

Factors influencing the younger academics’ intentions to leave were conceptualised in Chapter 2, while Chapter 3 focussed on the factors influencing the intention to either leave or stay of younger employees in an academic institution. The findings of the study revealed that there is limited research regarding the retaining of younger academics in South Africa.

Overall, the exploration discovered that most of the research conducted in this regard has largely focussed on academics in general. There is limited research on younger academics and their intention to leave. The literature review in Chapter 2 aimed to conceptualise the influence of various factors on intention to leave of younger academic employees in an academic institution. The study revealed self-efficacy and rewards to be the most investigated topics with regard to younger academics. It was found that different perceptions on self-efficacy might exist due to field specifications of academics. However, younger academics are seen
to be less likely to conduct research if they are busy with higher degree studies (Bailey, 1999). It is important to note that research productivity is positively linked to rewards upon achieving research targets (Seyama & Smith, 2015). Self-efficacy of these employees regarding research is seen to be low, as it is a skill that is not actively practised (Bandura, 2001). Chapter 2 of the study highlights the impact of this, and indicates that employees are more likely to leave the work environment that is not supportive of and responsive to their needs.

This conclusion can be linked to the findings of the empirical study in Chapter 3, were younger employees indicated that they have concerns regarding their workload, and inability to complete their studies on time, thus reducing their interest in research and limiting their scope of work to teaching and administrative duties. Chapter 3 further explored factors influencing employees’ intentions to stay. The rewarding of academic employees is seen as an important factor in retaining employees, however, young academic employees are still the lowest paid, despite the higher education sector competing with the private sector for talented employees and graduates that are able to fill available vacancies (Metcalf, Rolfe, Stevens, & Weale, 2005). However, it is important to note that these employees are not only influenced by monetary compensation, and it is vital for the institution to research other factors that influence the rewarding of employees. Chapter 3 of this study confirms that younger academic employees seek flexible financial structures to meet their needs, but also that higher salaries in general will assist in employees staying within the institution (Molotsi, 2012; Muchinsky, 2005). Younger academic employees’ value recognition, consequently it is imperative that their efforts are acknowledged within the institution. In this regard, intrinsic and extrinsic forms of recognition are fundamental (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2009; Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011).

Line managers of these employees can play a strategic role in recognising the employees’ efforts. Immediate recognition for tasks completed, effective communication channels, and regular feedback are seen as some of the mechanisms that can be utilised to deal with this challenge. Improved reward mechanisms are associated with the performance of employees and low levels of intention to leave (Huselid, 1995). Performing employees are often engaged in their work (Barker & Bal, 2010). Highly engaged employees are often associated with lower levels of intention to leave (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003). Thus, it is beneficial for institutions to ensure that employees are satisfied with their jobs. Job satisfaction is one of the leading reasons for younger academic employees to remain in the sector. Chapter 3 of this study reveals and confirms some of the findings in Chapter 2 in this regard, as it was found to be one of the most investigated topics in academia. Job satisfaction of younger academics was found to be high in this study and the second leading reason for these employees to stay in the institution. Employees cited the fact that they love their job and job security as some of the factors that influence their perception about their jobs. Employees with high levels of job satisfaction have low levels of intention to leave (Noor,
It is obvious that employees have expectations, about their jobs, younger academic employees’ intentions to leave are also influenced by expectation as they view their jobs as not what was advertised to them and management’s expectations of them not aligned to the job they undertook (Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006; Noor, 2011; Watty, 2013).

Younger academic employees are significantly influenced by employment practices and the environment in which they work to leave the institution. Younger employees are generally not satisfied with how they are treated compared to their senior colleagues, and also have concerns regarding how these employees treat them. Such practices create a hostile environment for these employees to carry out their tasks and to achieve career and organisational goals, thus increasing their intention to leave. Employees that experience an unhealthy work environment have increased intentions to leave (Schmalenberg & Kramer, 2008). The study found that younger employees value recognition of their inputs and appreciation for their efforts by colleagues and management. To reduce employee turnover, institutions need to create cultures that foster support for staff in general (Masum, Azad, & Beh, 2015). Perceived lack of support from managers and the institution in general regarding funding and increased administrative workloads results in employees fearing that their careers are stagnating, therefore they would prefer to leave the institution. Employee well-being is also affected by the increased workload (Ahsan, Abdullah, & Fie, 2009). The resulting effect is that employees seek better opportunities outside the organisation to progress in their career and experience better environments (Bett, 1999). Providing quality resources to lessen the strain that is experienced by academics is essential to reduce their intention to leave. Management is challenged to create an environment that is supportive, conducive to growth, and to ensure that the workloads of these employees are reasonable.

The study found that external factors, such as the location of the university campus, have an influence on younger academics’ intentions to leave. Netswera, Rankhumise, and Mavundla (2005) state that employees’ intentions are influenced by external factors, such as social environment, and where these employees’ partners are located. Employees view the lack of basic services, such as health services, quality basic education for their children, and the lack of social activities that are associated with certain municipal cities as discouraging. The young academics’ lifestyles are therefore negatively affected and result in these employees seeking to relocate to towns and municipalities that are more compatible with their needs (Metcalf et al., 2005). It is important to note that this in an external factor that institutions need to be aware of as some of the employees, while still satisfied with their jobs, indicated this as among the contributing factors influencing their decision to leave. When recruiting young academic employees, it is important that academic institutions consider the fact that some of the employees have young families, while others are starting their families. Employees might leave their jobs if they affect the welfare of their social and family dynamics.
4.2 Limitations

- The research only focused on qualitative approaches and methods. The sample criteria only included specific individuals, that is, those under 35, in possession of a master’s degree or busy pursuing a master’s degree. The study is specific to one institution with different learning sites, which means that concerns may differ from site to site, making it difficult to pinpoint problems across the institution, as they might be site specific.
- The specific academic faculty could have been identified to reveal where the risk is higher per department for the institution in terms of intention to leave of academics.
- Some of the respondents gave short answers, making it difficult for the researcher to ask further questions.
- The research is limited to only one institution with three different campuses.
- There is generally limited knowledge on younger academics within South Africa.
- There are very few academic papers on younger academic employees, in general.
- The limited number of papers makes it difficult to explore other concepts that relate to younger academics.

4.3 Researcher reflexivity

The researcher fell into the same category as the research participants and met the criteria that was used to determine inclusion. Therefore the researcher had to remain objective in the study to avoid conflict of interest. The researcher maintained objectivity through interaction with the research supervisor to ensure consistency. However, reflecting on the study, the researcher experienced challenges. The lack of research regarding younger academics in South Africa is clearly stipulated in the study, making it difficult to research the topic, however it brings about new opportunities to explore and research younger academics in South Africa. The research methods and approach allowed the researcher to explore the meanings behind the employees’ thoughts through interviews and was confirmed by other sources in the study. Interviewing participants exposed the researcher to personal biases and differing views on the institution. Participants experience the institution differently in their faculties and physical locations of their campuses also add to the frustrations of employees. The researcher is of the view that employment practices across campuses are not consistent and that raises many of the subsequent issues faced by both employees and the institution. Younger academic employees are passionate about their fields and careers and do not wish to leave the
institution. Reasons for wanting to leave the institution should be taken in consideration by management. The direct and indirect benefits of the research are that the information could be utilised to retain employees and cut on recruitment costs. The institution will also be able to develop a new knowledge era with these employees to manage the impact of the knowledge gap as older employees retire.

4.4 Recommendations

Two specific sets of recommendations, for practice and future research, are discussed below.

4.4.1 Recommendations for practice

It is recommended that human resource management of institutions develop practices that are able to attract, develop, manage, and retain younger academic employees. The view of the academic environment as an employment option for older candidates only, needs to be changed. Higher education leadership and management have a major role to play in changing views on the academic profession. Academia should be attractive to candidates with high potential and valuable skills as an environment in which they can develop. Based on the findings of the study the following are recommendations for practice:

- Improved work methods should be created to assist younger academics to complete their higher degree studies, and for them to gain teaching and research experience. Thus, encouraging a balanced workload with reduced frustrations for younger academics.
- Reward practices need to be flexible to meet younger academics’ needs, as there are now generational differences that exist within the work environment. The recognition of employees no longer lies in monetary value alone but also in other aspects that these employees regard as valuable.
- Different recognition programmes need to be in place, for example, bonus rewards can also be linked to teaching and not only to research.
- Onboarding of these employees should be improved to ensure that employees are sufficiently competent to be part of the organisation.
- Updated resources need to be in place to support these employees to perform their work effectively and efficiently.
- The work environment needs to be supportive of these employees. A change in mindset of older employees in how younger academics are treated is required. Most of the younger employees
complain that they are treated differently by the older employees and that the system favours older colleagues over them.

- The institutional culture should be one where younger academics are recognised, valued, rewarded fairly, and treated equitably.
- Increased access to funding will assist younger employees with career progression and reduce the anxiety with regard to their careers stagnating. This funding can be utilised for training, research and exposure to different projects that employees wish to undertake.
- Leaders and managers have the responsibility to ensure constant feedback to these employees.
- To reduce anxiety levels of these employees, a balance is needed between teaching, learning, and research and the transforming academic environment. Employees are seen to be tasked with keeping up with modern trends but also need to get the basics right. That is, completing their master’s or doctoral studies, and developing effective teaching skills in order to become proficient in their roles.
- Different mentors, for example, a research mentor, and/or a teaching and learning mentor need to be assigned to these employees.
- Younger academic employees should also be pro-active in their careers to develop research, and teaching skills and to integrate the use of technology in their careers.
- Management needs to integrate their expectations with those of the younger academic employees.
- Well-being programmes should accommodate employees on various levels.
- Links should be established with local municipalities to develop the community and establish institutions that can provide basic services for employees and the community in general. The private sector also has a role to play in this regard.
- Institutions should develop programmes that cater for these needs of young academics with families, for example, childcare services, and facilities.
- Institutions should develop and implement programmes similar to the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) for those employees that are not already included in such programmes.
- The Department of Higher Education has a valuable role to play in ensuring that the needs of both the employees and the academic institutions are met.
- Human resource practitioners should be proactive in developing new talent and performance management models to meet the demographic requirements of the changing workforce.
4.4.2 Recommendations for future research

Further research should be conducted on the phenomenon of younger academic employees. Different research methods should be employed in this regard to explore various influences on work preferences of younger academic employees. Research specifically focussing on the intention to leave, requires further exploration to gain more knowledge on younger academics in the South African environment. This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilising a small sample of employees, consequently excluding other employees that might fall outside of the research criteria. Future research should also focus on methods used by other sectors that can be applied in the academic industry to reduce the intention to leave of younger academics. Mixed method research should be conducted to obtain more data on younger academics.

Research should be conducted between different institutions to explore issues in other institutions to reach a South African consensus on the topic and other related topics and to develop a model for managing younger academic employees within South Africa. More studies that are unique to the South African higher learning environment should be conducted. Human resource practitioners in academia should also consider researching, developing, and implementing human resource methods that are applicable to younger academic employees, in general. Management studies, focussing specifically on developing leaders among these employees, should also be researched further to create an awareness regarding the academic employee.
References


Molotsi, T. K. (2012). *An Investigation into academic staff shortage in the College of Science, Engineering and Technology of the University of South Africa*. MBA dissertation. South Africa: University of South Africa, School of Business Leadership.


APPENDIX A

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BASSREC) on 02/05/2017 after being reviewed at the meeting held on 03/04/2017, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IERC) hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorization that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

| Project title: intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution. |
| Project Leader/Supervisor: Dr Elize Botha |
| Student: Mr Thapelo Chaacha |
| Ethics number: NWU-IERC-2017-00034 |
| Application Type: MA Human Resource Management |
| Commencement date: 2017.05.02 |
| Expiry date: 2023.05.02 |
| Risk: Low |

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the BASSREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the BASSREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IERC via BASSREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the study, and upon completion of the project.
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - annually a project may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval for the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these changes at the BASSREC. Would there be deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IERC via BASSREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IERC and BASSREC retain the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
- withdrawal or postpone approval if:
  - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the BASSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
- the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately;
- new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deemed necessary.

The IRERC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via: ChairIRERC@nwu.ac.za, or 018 216 3489.

The IERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or BASSREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA Du Plessis

Digitally signed by
Prof LA Du Plessis
Date: 2017.05.03

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IERC)
To Whom It May Concern

Confirmation: Research Ethics training

I hereby wish to confirm the successful attendance and completion of a Research Ethics training session as presented by the Health and Human Research Ethics Committee (HHREC) of the North-West University, Vaal-Triangle Campus (NWU, VTC). The training of the 1 February 2017 was successfully attended and completed by:

Chaacha, T (20975767)
Promoter/Supervisor is Dr E. Botha

Signed

Ithumelong P. Khumalo, PhD
Chairperson: HHREC
Associate Professor: Psychology
Certificate

January 24, 2017

This is to certify that Mr. Thapelo Chaacha has successfully completed the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Online Training Module for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

Macquarie University
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Ethical Clearance Number: HS-2017-0034

Intention to leave of younger academic employees within an academic institution

Purpose of Study: To investigate the main factors that influence the intention to leave of younger employees within an academic institution.

Please initial each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or academic penalty.

3. I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by designated individuals from the North West University Vaal Triangle Campus. It is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.

4. I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC), Ref No HS-2017-0034

5. I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.
6 I understand how this research will be written up and published.

7 I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

8 I consent to being audio recorded.

9 I am aware that the researcher is an employee of the institution and forms part of the category of employees being researched.

10 I understand how audio recordings will be used in research outputs.

11 I agree to take part in the above study.

12 I agree for my personal data to be kept in a secure database for the purpose of contacting me about future studies.

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APPENDIX E

Recruitment Guide

Recruitment of the participants will be conducted by the primary researcher Dr Elrie Botha as she understands the research and the format in which it is taking place. This is done in order to ensure the participants fully understand the purpose of the research and not experience uncertainty from being recruited by an individual who does not understand the research topic and process.

**Below is a recruitment guide that will be utilised.

Dear Mr/Ms...

I am Dr Elrie Botha, research supervisor for Thapelo ChaaCha a Master student in Human Resource Management at the Vaal Triangle Campus. He is currently conducting research on the Intention to Leave of Younger Academic Employees within an academic institution. The research mainly seeks to explore what are the reasons for younger academic employees for wanting to leave the institution. The employees being focused on are those that are below the age of 35, are in possession of a Master’s degree or are busy obtaining one, is a junior lecturer or a lecturer.

The research will take form in a qualitative format via Semi-Structured interviews that will take a maximum of an hour (60 minutes of your time). The interview will be conducted in an environment suitable to you. An audio recording will be made to assist the researcher in capturing all information.

Your identity will be kept anonymous throughout the research, all information obtained will be utilised only for the purpose of the research. Personal information will be kept private and confidential. The information will be stored in a locked environment (secure cupboards). All audio recordings will be kept in a password encrypted file and they will be named according to your interview/participant number. You can opt-out of the research at any point of the process.

The research has been cleared by the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of the North West University Vaal Triangle Campus.
Should you wish to participate in the research, contact details of the researcher are below:

**Researcher:**
Thapelo ChauCha:
Email: Thapelo.ChauCha@nwu.ac.za
Tel: 016 910 3561

**Research Supervisor:**
Dr E. Botha:
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## APPENDIX F

### Interview Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thank you for granting me this opportunity to interview you. I am Thapelo ChiaCha from North West University. I am currently busy with my Master studies in Human Resource Management. My research is centred on the Intention to Leave of younger academics within the academic environment. I am currently interviewing employees younger than the age of 35, that are busy with a Master’s degree or holds one, is a junior lecturer or a lecturer. &lt;br&gt;Your answers will be treated as confidential. You will not be identified on any information that will be published. All the information will be kept safe and the information will only be utilised for intended purposes. &lt;br&gt;Do you have any questions related to the study?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;What factors would influence you to stay in your current job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;What factors would influence you to leave/seek other employment?&lt;br&gt;Probing:&lt;br&gt;➢ Tell me more&lt;br&gt;➢ What else…&lt;br&gt;➢ Could you explain the statement in more detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 min</td>
<td><strong>Question 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;Are you actively seeking employment elsewhere? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 min</td>
<td><strong>End</strong>&lt;br&gt;Is there anything else related to the topic/interview you would like to ask, comment on, clarify?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>