

## **Influence of Academics' Designation and Experience on their Job Satisfaction in Universities in Rift Valley Region of Kenya**

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### ABSTRACT

*Institutions of higher learning, universities in particular recognise staffing as a vital part of the management process to ensure the success of universities and the education sector as a whole. The education sector is responsible for developing a sustainable pool of highly trained, skilled and competent human resource capital, and universities are charged with the provision of relevant quality education and ought to foster national cohesion and integration. In fulfilling this mandate however, it is important to have job satisfaction guarantees through correct placements for academics which will ensure committed and stable workforce. It is the aim of this paper to find out the influence that designation and experience of academics' has on their job satisfaction. The study targeted chartered public and private universities in the Rift Valley Region (RVR), Kenya. The study population consisted of university management, deans and lecturers from the selected universities. The study employed convergent parallel mixed methods design with random and systematic sampling techniques to select the respondents. Purposive sampling was also used to select information-rich cases. Data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis guide. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and t-test, One-way Analysis of Variance and regression coefficients. It was established that the dons with the most experience were highly satisfied in their job. Job designation was a significant determinant on perceived job satisfaction levels among the academic staff with the professors demonstrating the highest job satisfaction.*

**Key words:** Designation, Job satisfaction, Experience, University, Academics

### Introduction

An attitude that reflects how people generally feel about their jobs as well as about various job related aspects can be referred to as job satisfaction (Spector, 2008). Job satisfaction is therefore in simply the extent to which individuals like their jobs or are fulfilled by them. According to Schulz and Schultz (2006), an individual's satisfaction at job can be highly influenced by his/her occupational level such that a greater autonomy, responsibility, and greater opportunity for satisfying motivator needs can be seen in one at a higher occupational level. Job satisfaction could also be dependent of the category of job, this as expounded by Schulz and Schultz (2006) include categories such as professional, managerial, and technical jobs which experience high job satisfaction, unlike workers in service industries, wholesale and retail business who reported lowest level of satisfaction.

A study carried out in the early 1939 sought to establish the relationship between job satisfaction and occupational level among employed men, a significant relationship was found in the study. More so, the nature of job was found to be the most frequent reason for which participants felt not satisfied. The degree of job satisfaction was directly related to an employees' present and aspirational position (Super, 1939).

In 1979, Ebeling, King and Rogers investigated the relationship between hierarchical position and job satisfaction in national sample of employed adults. A significant relationship was found between the two variables. Remarkably a significant relationship was maintained even when covariates of age, income, and occupational prestige were analysed (Ebeling *et al*, 1979). Another study by Robie, Ryan, Schmieder, Parra and Smith (1998) not only portrayed a relationship between job satisfaction and job level, but also established that job satisfaction was directly proportional to the level of at which one is in his/her job; thus job satisfaction of an individual increased significantly with an increase in the level of the job. Occupational position significantly influences job satisfaction across employees in a restaurant setting (Hancer & George, 2003).

Al-Sheikh and Shareer (2008) also studied the relationship between job satisfaction among teachers and some of the variables such as (academic qualification, teaching experience and educational stage), and the results showed a statistically significant difference at the level of job satisfaction due to all variables with the exception of years of teaching experience. in an academic setting a study by Al-auksh and Hussein (2008) indicated that the level of job satisfaction demonstrated by faculty is moderate portraying a statistically significant difference in the level of job satisfaction in the domains of academic environment and performance evaluation in favor of private universities. Mansour (2010) supported that that the level of job satisfaction among faculty was moderate; the study brought out a

statistically significant difference in the level of job satisfaction dependent on experience. More experienced faculty showed a higher level of job satisfaction.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory suggested that each employee possessed his individual needs and with the right motivation, can satisfy these needs by altering their behaviour and work attitude towards the job or assigned task depending on job expectancy. This study thus shows that motivating factors for individuals will differ from each other based on one's expectations. Similarly, Salanova and Kirmanem (2010) in their research conclude that the level of job satisfaction is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors, the quality of supervision, social relationships with the work group and the degree to which individuals succeed or fail in their work.

In Kenya, Muindi (2011) found that a significantly strong positive correlation existed between job satisfaction among non-management lecturers and participation in decision-making in the School of Business, University of Nairobi (UoN). Gudo, Oanda and Olel (2011) indicated that inadequate involvement of staff and students in decision-making impacted negatively on quality teaching and learning in public universities and to some extent in private universities. To this end, job satisfaction can be said to be influenced by designation thus a higher ranking may portray a higher level of job satisfaction as those in higher positions are more engaged in the decision making process than those at lower ranks.

Kenyan university academics are generally highly educated, according to MoHEST Taskforce for the Development of the National Strategy for University Education (2008). However, this MoHEST Taskforce reiterated the academics' capacity to carry out their mandate effectively and their recognition as essential assets to society and world - class institutions depend on their training, experience, commitment and quality of their productivity. Therefore, this Taskforce recommended that specific mechanisms be put in place to address the academic staff wellbeing, to ensure their motivation, retention and productivity.

From the fore mentioned studies, very little has been documented on the influence of work experience and designation of workers on job satisfaction. Guided by two hypotheses:

H<sub>A1</sub>: There is a significant difference between job satisfaction of lecturers with respect to their job designation, and

H<sub>A2</sub>: There is a significant difference between job satisfaction of lecturers with respect to their teaching experience,

The author sought to find out the influence that academics' designation and experience had on their job satisfaction in universities in Rift valley region of Kenya.

### **Materials and Methods**

The academics in chartered universities in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya formed the study population. Mixed methods design that used convergent parallel mixed methods for both quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed. The study targeted all the academics in the chartered public and private universities in Rift Valley Region (RVR) of Kenya.

The nine chartered universities in Rift Valley Region (RVR) of Kenya (CUE, 2015) were stratified into chartered public universities and chartered private universities; thus six chartered public universities and three chartered private universities. The represented universities are those that have their main campuses in the region.

Purposive sampling was done for management because these were key participants who provided critical information that was sought in this study; 16 members of the management team were considered for the study. They are also responsible for academic staff management, hence may have some effect on job satisfaction of lecturers. The author also adopted purposive sampling technique to select participating Deans hence 121 of them participated in the study. The Deans being the officers in charge of administrative and academic functions in their faculties/schools interact with academic staff on a day-to-day basis. Thus, they are critical stakeholders who may

directly influence academic staff job satisfaction. On the other hand, systematic sampling was employed to select participating lecturers. A sample of 362 lecturers was selected to participate in the study.

Questionnaires and interview schedule were the modes of data collection adopted for the study. The set of questionnaires were administered to the lecturers and deans while the management was interviewed. Descriptive statistics, that is, frequencies, percentages and means were used for quantitative data. Descriptive statistics covered demographic characteristics of the participants and all response variables from closed ended questions in the questionnaire. According to Mugenda (2008) descriptive statistics gives the primary features of the data gathered on the variables as well as the impetus for carrying out further analyses on the data. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were any significant differences between independent groups and the staff job satisfaction levels. The groups, which had a continuous response variable and at least one categorical factor, comprised of the ages of the lecturers, The independent-samples t-test (or independent t-test, for short) was used to compare the means between two unrelated groups gender parity of the respondents.

**Results and Discussion**

Results on designation revealed that most (43%) of the lecturers were in the lecturer position while 35% represented by the deans fell in the senior lecturer position. The prestigious associate professor and professor positions had only (22.3%) and (6.6%) of respondents respectively, as shown in Figure 1.

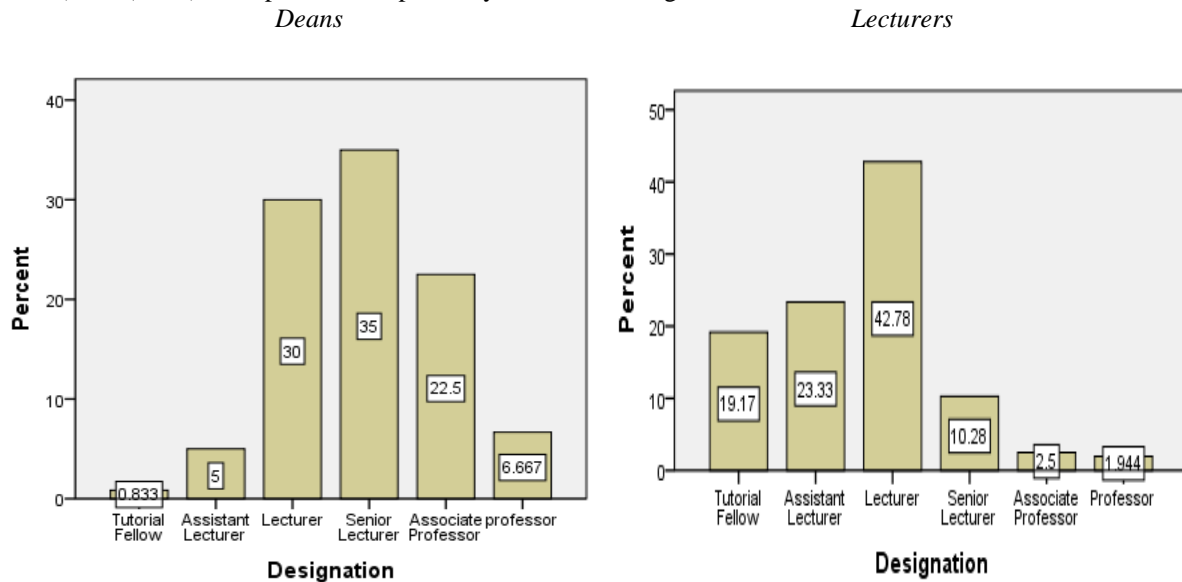


Figure 1: Distribution of lecturers and deans by designation

The effect of job designation on job satisfaction was analyzed, with the results being displayed in Table 1. The mean score obtained from tutorial fellows was 4.0, while the mean obtained from assistant lecturers was 2.67. For lecturers the mean was 2.58, while the mean for senior lecturers was 2.73, associate professors was 2.76 and professors had a mean of 2.75. An Analysis of Variance was conducted to examine whether the six means were significantly different from each other. This resulted in an  $F_{obt}$  of 1.77 (at  $F_{crit} = 4.82, P = 0.176, \alpha = 0.01$ ). This shows that  $F_{obt} < F_{crit}$  and hence the six means are statistically significant. Therefore job designation was a significant determinant on perceived job satisfaction levels among the academic staff with the professors having the highest job satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis that predicted significant difference in the level of satisfaction among academic staff depending on their job designation was accepted.

A study conducted in the South West Nigeria universities examined the components of job satisfaction and its predictive measures on job satisfaction of administrative staff (Olorunsola, 2013). It was found that components of job satisfaction; university and administrative policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, working

conditions, work itself, recognition and achievement significantly predict job satisfaction of administrative staff. In this study, tough promotional procedures may also explain why there are many respondents in the lecturer and senior lecturer positions. This is in agreement with Tettey (2006) who established that promotional procedures in African Universities were long, stressful and cumbersome. According to Tettey, some requirements were unreasonable, for example, possession of a doctorate degree as a prerequisite for promotion beyond the position of a lecturer.

Moreover, employee attrition can also explain the lower numbers in the top positions. To support this observation, Kipkebut (2010) argued that promotion for lecturers is dependent on teaching, research and publications but due to financial constraints, non-prioritisation of research by government and inadequate publishing facilities, publishing of refereed articles has become a monumental challenge in Kenya and among other African academics. Further, already concerns about academics not having sufficient time to publish and engage in research activities, aspects which are crucial for promotion and for building stature as an academic, loom in academic debates (Mapesela & Hay, 2005).

Dockel (2003) argued that employees should not only be rewarded financially but they should also be offered opportunities to grow within their organisation. Employees who feel stagnant in their positions generally aren't motivated and will not stay in unfulfilling positions. Promotion offers opportunities for growth and is also one of Herzberg's motivators which can be used to enhance job satisfaction.

**Table 1: Analysis of variance showing Job Designation**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>
Between groups	91.467	3	45.733	4.467	.001
Within groups	276.400	117	10.237		
<b>Total</b>	<b>367.867</b>	<b>120</b>			

Toker (2011) investigated the levels of job satisfaction among academics in the universities of Turkey and examined the effects of demographics on levels of satisfaction among them. The findings showed that the levels of job satisfaction of the academics were moderately high. The results of the study further indicated that professors reported a higher job satisfaction level as compared to the lower cadre academicians such as research assistants. Mbogo (2015) made comparisons in job satisfaction in her study among distance education personnel between the ranks of lecturer, heads of department/supervisor, and administrators. The findings indicated a statistically significant difference between lecturers and administrators with lecturers reporting higher job satisfaction than administrators.

This paper also identifies the influence that work experience has on job satisfaction. Majority of the respondents had 1-5 years of experience with 76% being deans, 49.3% lecturers and 62.5% members of management. It was interesting to note that those who had a work experience of 16-20 years comprised 4.1%, 7.7% and 25% for deans, lecturers and management, respectively. Table 2 illustrates this scenario.

The work experience of the majority of the respondents were in the 1-5 years of experience bracket with 76% being deans, 49.3% lecturers and 62.5% members of management. However, the longest serving lecturers, 20 years and above, had the highest job satisfaction indicating that job satisfaction improved steadily with teaching experience.

**Table 2: Representation of Respondents by Years of Experience**

Experience	Deans		Lecturers		Management	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1-5 Yrs	92	76	179	49.3	10	62.5
6-10 Yrs	15	12.4	93	25.6	2	12.5
11-15 Yrs	5	4.1	28	7.7	4	25
16-20 Yrs	5	4.1	31	8.8	-	-
Over 20 Yrs	4	3.3	31	8.8	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

The effect of teaching experience on job satisfaction was measured and the mean score for academic staff with experience between 1 and 5 years was 4.14, those whose experience ranged between 6 to 10 years had a mean score of 5.26 while those who had more than 20 years of experience attained a maximum score of 7. This established that academic staff with the most experience as lecturers rated themselves as highly satisfied. In order to test for significance, a one-way analysis of variance was performed and this resulted in  $F_{obt} = 24.81$  (at  $F_{crit} = 4.82, P=0, \alpha=0.05$ ). The results are displayed on Table 3. This indicated that the mean scores obtained from the three sets differed statistically from each other, with the longest serving lecturers (20+) scoring a maximum of 7. The study therefore established that job satisfaction improved steadily with teaching experience. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the level of satisfaction among academic staff depending on their teaching experience was accepted.

**Table 3: Analysis of variance showing teaching experience**

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	$\alpha$
Between group	112.93	150	56.47	24.81	0	0.005
Within groups	238.97	300	2.28			
<b>Total</b>	<b>351.90</b>	<b>450</b>				

In a study by Mbogo (2015) on job satisfaction of distance education personnel in Kenya’s Christian institutions of higher education posted similar findings. Subgroups were collapsed into two; those who had served between 1 and 5 years and those who had served between 6 and 25 years. She established that personnel of extension studies who had served in their institutions for more than five years were more satisfied with their promotion opportunities than their counterparts who had served for a shorter period. In contrast, a study by Horton (2007) examined employee satisfaction surveys for five universities in the USA, United Kingdom (UK), and Canada which showed that the level of education was negatively associated with job satisfaction, that is, the higher the education level, the less satisfied one become due to unfulfilled aspirations and vice versa. The study also found that aspirations of lecturers were key in determining their satisfaction.

These concur with the findings of Bender and Heywood (2006) who conducted a study of PhD holders in sciences, working either inside or outside academic environment in USA and also found that job satisfaction was positively correlated with tenure. Also, Toker (2011) investigated the levels of job satisfaction among academics in the universities of Turkey and examined the effects of demographics on levels of satisfaction among them and found that length of service in higher education as a whole was significantly related to job satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

Teaching experience has a significant relationship with job satisfaction, thus the dons with the most experience were highly satisfied in their job than those who reported low experience. Job designation was a significant determinant

on perceived job satisfaction levels among the academic staff with the professors demonstrating the highest job satisfaction.

### Recommendations

Staff retention should be given priority as the study findings revealed that the work experience of the deans, lecturers and members of management had the majority at the 1-5 years of work experience category in the university. In addition, the job satisfaction levels of this group were also low. It is an indication of a discontent and the university should work towards solving this situation by consideration to motivate the staff with low experiences so that they are retained in the long run hence high job satisfaction.

Promotion procedures and promotion opportunities should be reviewed to give hope to deserving members of certainty in the career progression. Results on designation revealed that the lecturer position and the senior lecturer position hold the majority of the academic staff members with most lecturers being in the lecturer positions. The study also found that promotion criteria had discrepancies and Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) stepped in to fight for the rights of their members. From this finding, it is recommended that management seals every loophole in its staff promotion policy allowing for fairness in the first place. In addition, promotion criteria should take care of a wide range of factors that should be considered at promotion.

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