

**THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF LOCUS OF CONTROL BETWEEN ROLE  
OVERLOAD, JOB SATISFACTION AND TURNOVER INTENTION**

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**To Whom It May Concern**

This certifies that the following dissertation has been edited for language accuracy:

**The mediating effect of locus of control between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention**

by

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- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (which agrees largely with the APA style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables.

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## SUMMARY

**Title:** The mediating effect of locus of control between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention

**Key words:** Locus of control, qualitative and quantitative role overload, job satisfaction, turnover intention, intention to leave, higher education institution

Contemporary South African higher education institutions have undergone many drastic changes in recent years with regard to the demographic composition of students and organisational structures. Huge demands in terms of transformation have been placed on these institutions while they have simultaneously been transforming from former Technikons to Universities of Technology. This causes staff to be faced with major changes which affect all aspects of the institution. The objective of this research was to investigate whether role overload, job satisfaction and locus of control could be used to predict turnover intention of employees in a higher education institution. Further objectives included empirically determining whether locus of control had a mediating effect between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention.

A cross-sectional survey design was used and an availability sample was taken from a South African higher education institution ( $n=210$ ). Five measuring instruments were administered as part of a larger questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data and a series of regressions was used to test for the hypothesised mediating effect.

The reliability coefficients obtained for the scales indicated that the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for qualitative role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention were acceptable; however, those for quantitative role overload and locus of control were below the recommended cut-off mark. The results showed that there was a strong relationship between the dimensions of overload, indicating that the feeling of having too much to do in the time available is accompanied by the feeling that individuals do not have the skills to complete their required tasks. Furthermore, it was found that if

employees feel that they have too much to do and that they do not possess the skills to complete tasks, they will be dissatisfied with their jobs. Both quantitative and qualitative role overload contributed to the participant's thoughts of leaving the institution and it was concluded that a satisfied employee is less likely to think of leaving the organisation. Locus of control had minimal relationships with quantitative and qualitative role overload, as well as with turnover intention. Locus of control was, however, found to be related to job satisfaction.

Locus of control was found to be a poor predictor of turnover intention and did not mediate the relationship between role overload and job satisfaction on the one hand, and turnover intention on the other. It was concluded that job satisfaction was the strongest predictor of turnover intention.

By way of conclusion, recommendations were made both for the organisation and for future research.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Die mediërende effek van lokus van beheer tussen roloorlading, werkstevredenheid en intensie om te bedank

**Sleutelwoorde:** Lokus van beheer, kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe roloorlading, werkstevredenheid, intensie om te bedank, hoër opvoeding instelling

Hedendaagse Suid Afrikaanse hoër opvoeding instellings het vele dramatiese veranderinge ondergaan in die onlangse geskiedenis, veral ten opsigte van die demografiese samestelling van studente en organisatoriese strukture. Hoë eise is aan hierdie instellings gestel ten opsigte van transformasie, terwyl hulle gelyktydig ook verander het van voormalige teknikons na Universiteite van Tegnologie. Hierdie situasie het daartoe aanleiding gegee dat personeel blootgestel is aan groot veranderinge in alle aspekte van die instansies. Die doelwit van hierdie navorsing was om die rol van roloorlading, werkstevredenheid en lokus van beheer te ondersoek in die voorspelling van intensie om te bedank. Verdere doelwitte het ingesluit om empiries te bepaal of lokus van beheer enige mediërende rol speel tussen roloorlading, werkstevredeneheid en intensie om te bedank.

'n Dwarssnee opname ontwerp is gebruik met 'n beskikbaarheidssteekproef vanuit 'n Suid Afrikaanse hoër opvoeding instansie ( $n=210$ ). Vyf meetinstrumente is administreer as deel van 'n groter vraelys. Beskrywende statistiek is gebruik om die data te analiseer en 'n reeks regressie analyses is gebruik om die voorgestelde mediërende effek te ondersoek.

Die skale se verkreeë betroubaarheidskoeffisiënte het aangedui dat die Chronbach Alpha waardes vir kwalitatiewe roloorlading, werkstevredenheid en intensie om te bedank aanvaarbaar is. Nietemin, die waardes vir kwalitatiewe roloorlading en lokus van beheer was onder die aanbevole afsnypunt. Resultate het aangedui dat daar 'n sterk verhouding bestaan tussen die dimensies van roloorlading, wat aandui dat individue wat voel dat hulle meer het om te doen as wat die beskikbare tyd toelaat, ook waarskynlik sal ervaar dat hulle nie die nodige vaardighede het om die werk te

doen nie. Verder is ook gevind dat, indien werknemers voel dat hulle nie genoegsame tyd of vaardighede het vir die voltooiing van take nie, hul meer ontevrede met hul werk mag wees. Beide kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe roloorsading het bygedra tot werknemers se intensie om te bedank, en daar is tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat 'n werknemer wat werkstevredenheid ervaar minder geneig is om te bedank. Lokus van beheer het minimale verwantskappe met kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe roloorsading en intensie om te bedank vertoon. Lokus van beheer is wel bewys om verwant te wees aan werkstevredenheid.

Daar is gevind dat lokus van beheer 'n swak voorspeller van intensie om te bedank is, en dat dit nie die verhouding tussen roloorsading en werkstevredenheid aan die een kant, en intensie om te bedank aan die ander, medieër nie. Daar is tot die slotsom gekom dat werkstevredenheid die sterkste voorspeller is van die intensie om te bedank.

Ter afsluiting is aanbevelings vir die organisasie en toekomstige navorsing gemaak.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This mini-dissertation focuses on the mediating effect of locus of control between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention for staff at a higher education institution. Chapter 1 gives the problem statement, which is the reason for the current research, as well as a literature review, which will establish what previous research has found regarding these constructs. The objectives of the study and the main paradigms from which the research is conducted are also discussed. Information on the research method, sample, measuring battery and statistical analysis is provided. Chapter 2 will consist of the research article and Chapter 3 will give conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

### **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

#### **1.1.1 Overview of the problem**

In today's competitive business world, it is necessary to conduct research on how employees can function at their best and, at the same time, to the advantage of the organisation. Investigation enables the necessary constructs to be understood more clearly as well as how they can be used to reduce such phenomena as turnover intention, job dissatisfaction and role overload. Brown, Jones and Leigh (2005) state that these constructs are typical of today's fast-track organisational environments and that it will benefit organisations and managers to examine them closely in order to retain those talented employees who can bring success to the organisation.

Each of the proposed constructs has its merits, but it appears that it is essential to gather information on employees' job satisfaction, as dissatisfaction with employment seems to cause low levels of performance, increased absenteeism, high labour turnover and decreased productivity (Meyer, 2002). It has been noted that organisations with satisfied employees are more effective (Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge, & Werner, 2003; Robbins, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2003). Satisfied employees speak positively about the organisation, help fellow employees, and

exceed normal expectations in a job (Robbins et al., 2003). Job satisfaction is also considered a strong determinant of turnover (Grobler, Wärmich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2002), with employees who are more satisfied showing less turnover intention.

Labuschagne, Bosman and Buitendach (2005) point out the necessity for studying job satisfaction in contemporary South Africa, as it involves emotions which can have a major impact on one's life. Schulze (2006) argues that it also has implications for physical and mental well-being. DeLoach and Monroe (2004) state that being satisfied with one's job is important because much time and effort is spent on the job; thus, job satisfaction influences those experiences gained through a job. Jobs are part of who we are, our humanness, and therefore it is crucial that we feel satisfied with them (DeLoach & Monroe, 2004). It seems that personal effectiveness is closely associated with being satisfied in one's occupation.

Quantitative role overload refers to having too much work to do in the time available (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976). Qualitative role overload is associated with being assigned tasks that require skills beyond those that the individual possesses (Sverke, Hellgren, & Öhrming, 1999). Bolino and Turnley (2005) refer to role overload as having too many responsibilities or activities to perform in terms of time and ability. It is necessary to study role overload as it has been linked to poor work motivation, low self-esteem and absenteeism (Louw & Edwards, 1997). Brown et al. (2005) are of the opinion that role overload is a serious and increasing problem that forces employees to stretch their attention, efforts and resources too thinly in order to try to cover unrealistic demands. Role overload also distracts an employee's attention (Brown et al., 2005). Once information has been gathered on this construct, the leaders who are responsible for addressing it can facilitate learning from it (Schultz et al., 2003).

Perrewè et al. (2005) are of the opinion that individuals experiencing role overload will cope better if they have perceived control over events. Locus of control refers to whether individuals attribute the cause of events to their own actions or to external forces (Cadinu, Maass, Lombardo, & Frigerio, 2006). Louw, van Ede and Louw (1998) state that locus of control is necessary as it aids adjustment. Labuschagne et al.

(2005) have also pointed out that work locus of control changes according to circumstances, which makes it necessary to study this construct. Studying locus of control is also worthwhile since it has a pervasive effect at work that affects performance and relationships (Cilliers & Kossuth, 2004). Spector (1988), in cross-sectional data, has shown that locus of control plays a role in job stress (of which overload is an aspect).

Robbins et al. (2003) state that turnover is increasing costs in advertising for staff, and in recruiting, selection and training. It leads to an upheaval that causes disruptions within an organisation and hinders its effectiveness. Grobler et al. (2002) add to this by stating that turnover costs South African organisations several million rand a year in decreased productivity, increases in accidents and quality problems. Because turnover has many causes, it is prudent to conduct as much research on it as possible.

It is clear that the proposed constructs are ones that every organisation would need to monitor, as they are prevalent and pervasive. It is imperative for managers to know what the employees' attitudes are, as these influence behaviour and give warning of potential problems. Obtaining knowledge on the constructs proposed for this research can keep management a step ahead, allowing it to generate interventions to deal with problems that may occur. In order to create an environment offering meaning, support, variety and independence, managers should know what factors result in job satisfaction (DeLoach & Monroe, 2004). Knowledge and understanding of constructs such as these give an organisation the power to intervene before costly problems are encountered.

Even though many cross-sectional studies have been done on each of these constructs in a variety of contexts, there is a need to study the aftermath of a transformation process as large as the one that has taken place at the higher education institution in question. Not only will this research contribute to the vast body of knowledge already available, but it will also benefit the selected higher education institution and its employees by examining constructs that influence their specific working environment.

Turnover intention is of great concern to any institution as it has been found to predict actual turnover (Trimble, 2006). It can be problematic, as it reduces the effectiveness

of the organisation (Smith & Brough, 2003 cited in Samad, 2006). If such issues are not addressed, the quality and sustainability of higher education institutions will be threatened and highly skilled employees will be lost, which will impact negatively on the institution (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004). This will be accompanied by major disruption to the institution as it makes costly attempts at replacing staff (Grobler et al., 2002). Recognising the impact on organisations of phenomena such as turnover intention ensures that support and assistance can be put in place (Pienaar & Bester, 2006).

This research is essential for contemporary South African higher education institutions since many of them have undergone drastic changes in the past few years (Viljoen & Rothmann, 2002). The changes in the number and diversity of students also add new elements to the workload, satisfaction and intention to quit of the higher education employee.

The particular higher education institution under study is a university of technology. A university of technology is a unique institution within the family of higher education institutions. Apart from having technology as the object of study, a university of technology also has to carry out the basic responsibilities of a university. Universities of technology are distinguished by the following characteristics: they educate people for the world of work, have practical 'hands-on' programmes, incorporate experiential learning in the qualifications, and engage in practical and applied research (Du Pré, Koorts, Mjoli, Moore & Van Rensberg, 2003)

The particular higher education institution being studied had its inception in 1966. Since 1987, it has established four satellite campuses around the country. In 1996, it adopted the Transformation Charter and the academic structure underwent reorganisation. By 1998, this higher education institution reflected the demographics of South African society, with 63,4% of its 14 627 students being black. The year 2003 heralded its redirection towards becoming a university of technology, which became official in 2004. During 2005 and 2006, transforming the nature of the institution took priority. At present, there are 613 academic and administrative personnel working at the campuses where this research is being conducted.

### 1.1.2 Literature review

From the literature, it is clear that the topics under consideration have been well researched cross-sectionally. Definitions have been provided and relationships between some of the constructs have been found to exist in previous research. This literature is explored below.

Firstly, the meaning of a higher education institution should be explored. A higher education institution is an institution that provides higher education on a full-time, part-time or distance basis (<http://www.saqa.org.za>). Higher education refers to all learning programs leading to qualifications higher than Grade 12 or its equivalent in terms of the National Qualifications Framework, including tertiary education (<http://www.saqa.org.za>).

Job satisfaction appears to be one of the most researched topics, and different authors define it in different ways. DeLoach and Monroe (2004, p. 209) defined job satisfaction as 'having task significance, supervisory support, autonomy and no role overload' amongst other things. Job satisfaction was further explained as how much pleasure employees get out of their work (DeLoach & Monroe, 2004). Moodley and Coopoo (2006) add to the definition by stating that it is an emotional response to a job situation that is determined by how well an employee's outcomes meet or exceed his expectations. Job satisfaction relates to the perception and evaluation of jobs in which needs, values and expectations play an important role (Labuschagne et al., 2005). It can also be defined as the employee's feelings about elements of the work situation (Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). Afolabi (2005) mentions that these feelings which arise from the actual work experience lead to employees being positively committed to the organisation. Buitendach and De Witte (2005) emphasise that it is a personal evaluation; while Louw and Edwards (1997) state that it is a general attitude. Louw et al. (1998) point out the importance of this construct by saying that it is related to aspirations of personal fulfillment. For the purpose of this research, the definition of job satisfaction provided by Locke (1976) in Hellgren, Sjöberg and Sverke (1997, p. 417) is adhered to: it states that 'job satisfaction is a positive emotional state reflecting affective reactions to the perceived content and characteristics of specific facets of the job situation'.

Job satisfaction has been linked to Herzberg's motivation theory, where some factors lead to satisfaction and others to dissatisfaction (Moodley & Coopoo, 2006; Samad, 2006; Schultz et al., 2003; Schulze, 2005; Singh & Surujlal, 2006). The reason for this is that a job is very broad and encapsulates many facets (Robbins et al., 2003). Some of the factors affecting job satisfaction are the work itself, promotion opportunities, supervision, co-workers, working conditions and pay (Moodley & Coopoo, 2006; Robbins et al., 2003). Other factors that cause employees to experience job satisfaction are participative decision-making, being able to use one's knowledge and skills, and organisational values that employees can identify with (Carrim, Basson & Coetzee, 2006). Locke (1976) and Lam (1994, both in Singh & Surujlal, 2006) state that reasonable workloads have also been found to lead to job satisfaction. It follows then, that many researchers have concluded that role overload has a negative impact on job satisfaction (Pienaar & Bester, 2006).

Role overload is a work environment factor (DeLoach & Monroe, 2004). Veloutsou and Panigyrakis (2004) define it as the cumulative volume and variety of work that exceeds a person's ability to perform the task. Put more simply, it means that an employee is asked to perform more than he is able to (Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). Role overload is connected to the amount of work that needs to be done and the time frame for completion (Ngo, Foley & Loi, 2005); there is also the perception that the available resources are inadequate to deal with the role demands (Brown et al., 2005). When employees feel overburdened by their workload, they often suffer from work exhaustion, which leads them to contemplate quitting (Ahuja, Chudoba, Kacmar, McKnight, & George, 2007).

Quantitative role overload refers to having too much work to do in the time available (Beehr et al., 1976), while qualitative role overload refers to being assigned tasks which require a level of skill beyond those which the individual possesses (Sverke et al., 1999). Role overload has been linked to internal locus of control in that individuals experience less strain and can cope better when they have a sense of *perceived control* (Perrewè et al., 2005). Locus of control may play an important part in employees' experience of role overload.

Locus of control refers to whether a person is self-directed or not (Louw & Edwards, 1997). Schultz et al. (2003) explain it as the extent to which an individual believes he can control events affecting him. Locus of control refers to circumstances where an individual perceives a degree of freedom for effective action (Cilliers & Kossuth, 2004). In this research, Levenson's (1981, p. 15) definition of the internal-external control construct is adhered to. She defines it as 'a generalized expectancy to perceive reinforcement either as contingent upon one's own behaviours (internal control) or as the result of forces beyond one's control and due to chance, fate or powerful others (external control)'. Spector (1988) further explains this personality variable by stating that external locus of control refers to the perception of the outcomes in life being controlled by external factors and internal locus of control referring to one's actions having control over the outcomes in life. These two types of locus of control have marked differences in perceptions and behaviours.

Those with an internal locus of control are more satisfied, report less role stress and believe they have more autonomy and control (Spector, 1988). Internality has been associated with positive well-being (Spector, Cooper, Sanchez, O'Driscoll & Sparks, 2002), self-confidence, emotional maturity and well-adjusted behaviour (Cilliers & Kossuth, 2004). Those with an internal locus of control seem to perform better (Afolabi, 2005), are better leaders, show initiative, independence, high motivation and engage in complex thinking (Singh, 2006). They can be counted on to give their best in organisational and interpersonal situations (Singh, 2006). Internality is associated with being more involved in work, reduced absenteeism and exerting more control in many aspects of a job (Carrim et al., 2006). Singh (2006) states that in general, when predicting success in roles, internality exceeds externality.

Employees with an external locus of control believe that what happens to them is a matter of chance or luck and because of this; they expect to be ineffectual (Louw & Edwards, 1997). They tend to drift through life, are less self-directed, feel frustrated and blame others when things go wrong (Louw & Edwards, 1997). Schultz et al. (2003) explain that those with an external locus of control accept that their lives lie in the hands of others, fate or chance. Spector and O'Connell (1994) point out that those with an external locus of control find the work environment more stressful and threatening. They tend to experience more stress and dissatisfaction because they

cannot handle the pressure, uncertainty and challenges that accompany demanding work (Carrim et al., 2006). Cilliers and Kossuth (2004) add that their performance depends on incentives. Previous research has found that externality is associated with decreased job satisfaction and greater intention to leave, because such individuals perceive that they have little control over their jobs (Afolabi, 2005; Robbins et al., 2003).

Turnover intention refers to an employee's inclination to leave the job (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). De Cuyper and De Witte (2005) state that this is a work-related behaviour. This construct can be linked to voluntary turnover that is employee-initiated because they seek better employment conditions, prospects or job satisfaction (Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004). Samad (2006) refers to Mobley, Horner and Hollingsworth's (1978) model where employees experience dissatisfaction, which starts the process of cognitive withdrawal where employees begin to examine the pros and cons of leaving their job.

Intention to leave has aspects that can be controlled by the organisation, such as promotion opportunities, pay, change and management; it has aspects which cannot be controlled, for instance, the external labour market; and finally, it is affected by employee-specific factors such as career drivers and responsibilities (Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004). Sutherland and Jordaan (2004), Trimble (2006) and Veloutsou and Panigyrakis (2004) argue that, because intention to leave is the best predictor of turnover, it is important to address it before major financial losses are incurred, knowledge and momentum are lost, productivity decreases, major disruption is encountered and the morale of the remaining employees drops (Grobler et al., 2002; Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004).

### **The relationship between role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention**

Carrim et al. (2006) found that those with an internal locus of control had higher general, intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Naudè (1999) found that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to experience more job satisfaction in terms of their ability, achievement, authority, co-workers, independence, responsibility and

supervision. Singh (2006) and Labuschagne et al. (2005) state that individuals with an internal locus of control are more satisfied because they are able to cope more effectively with stress. Individuals with an internal locus of control are more satisfied with their jobs and are expected to have less turnover intention than those with an external locus of control (Afolabi, 2005). However, Robbins et al. (2003) state that it is difficult to predict turnover of individuals with an internal locus of control, as they could decide either to take action and leave or to stay and take steps to become more successful and satisfied.

Afolabi (2005) found no support for the influence of locus of control on turnover intention, and states that internality and externality are no different in this respect. However, Afolabi (2005) states that this conclusion cannot be generalised beyond the study's sample, so it is possible that locus of control may indeed influence turnover intention in other samples. Chiu, Chien, Lin and Hsiao (2005) state that those with an external locus of control are more passive and may be less likely to contemplate turnover, even if they are dissatisfied. Another factor to consider is the fact that locus of control has been found to change over time (Labuschagne et al., 2005; Legerski, Cornwall & O'Neil, 2006).

Moodley and Coopoo (2006) state that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and promotions, while job dissatisfaction is associated with lack of promotion opportunities and skills development workshops, and salary issues. Satisfaction with growth and promotion, however, was found to be negatively influenced by role overload, while satisfaction with responsibilities and achievements was found to have a strong negative correlation with intention to leave (Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). From Sutherland and Jordaan's (2004) work, it appears that dissatisfaction with promotions and the nature of the work are the components of job satisfaction that correlate most highly with intention to leave. Role overload is an important indicator of the nature of the work, as it has been found to have a negative relationship with job satisfaction (Chang & Hancock, 2003; Ladebo & Oloruntoba, 2005; Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Schulze, 2005).

Job dissatisfaction has been pinpointed as the start of the turnover process (Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004), leading to intention to leave (Afolabi, 2005). Previous research has

found that job dissatisfaction is connected to the intention of leaving an organisation or employer (Carrim et al., 2004; Louw & Edwards, 1997; Pienaar & Bester, 2006). Veloutsou and Panigyrakis (2004) are also of the opinion that low levels of job satisfaction are generally associated with increased intention to leave. Ngo et al. (2005) and Singh and Surujlal (2006) have also argued that job satisfaction affects intention to leave because less-satisfied employees have a greater tendency to leave the organisation.

Role stressors (of which overload is a part) have been found to have positive effects on intention to leave (Ngo et al., 2005). This is supported by Bolino and Turnley's (2005) opinion that overload could produce higher levels of turnover. Ahuja et al. (2007) found a pattern where work overload led to work exhaustion, which, in turn, was a key factor in turnover.

Since an inverse relationship exists between overload and job satisfaction, the most common consequence of role overload seems to be decreased job satisfaction (Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). Bunnell (2006) found that the ways in which role overload manifests itself can affect job satisfaction. Pienaar and Bester (2006, p. 589) cite many studies where role overload has been found to have a negative impact on job satisfaction, which manifests in employees not having enough time for other aspects of their jobs (especially for research, in the context of higher education institutions). Veloutsou & Panigyrakis (2004) also found role overload to be most influential when it comes to job satisfaction. Role overload also exerts a positive effect on intention to leave (Bolino & Turnley, 2005 & Ngo et al., 2005).

More interestingly, studies regarding these constructs have been conducted on higher education staff in the past. Role overload was found to present a career dilemma for academics, and was identified as a stressor (Ladebo & Oloruntoba, 2005; Pienaar & Bester, 2006). The heavy workloads of higher education staff, especially teaching, have a significant negative correlation with job satisfaction (Ladebo & Oloruntoba, 2005; Schulze, 2005). Academics feel overwhelmed by administration tasks and find that they have little time for research (Schulze, 2005). Tytherleigh (2003) found that academic and research staff reported the highest levels of overload and felt that they had been given unrealistic deadlines and unmanageable workloads. These high levels

of overload were related to high levels of job dissatisfaction (Tytherleigh, 2003). Most job dissatisfaction centres on lack of promotion opportunities and financial remuneration which is not in line with what staff expect (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Schulze, 2005). Ladebo and Oloruntoba (2005) state that among higher education staff, those experiencing greater job dissatisfaction also have more thoughts about quitting.

The most significant finding for the current research is Spector's (1988) result of work locus of control having a significant negative correlation with job satisfaction and turnover intention and a positive correlation with role stressors respectively. Another important pattern also emerges from the literature. It seems that role overload impacts on job satisfaction, which in turn influences turnover intention (Bunnel, 2006; Grobler et al., 2002; Ngo et al., 2005). The only research to dispute this pattern is that of Veloutsou and Panigyrakis (2004), who found role overload and job satisfaction to have no significant influence on intention to leave. Another important aspect observed by Afolabi (2005) is that internality is associated with greater job satisfaction and lower turnover intention while externality is not.

These previous research findings create a background for the proposed mediating effect of locus of control in the current research. Thus, it would be expected that role overload significantly influences job satisfaction, which in turn may influence intention to leave. However, locus of control may influence the course of these events, as internality makes an employee feel more in control of the situation while externality does not. Locus of control may thus decide the outcome of whether an employee seriously considers leaving the organisation, or staying despite the experience of role overload and job dissatisfaction.

The objective of this research is to perform a cross-sectional study which focuses on a South African higher education institution that has recently undergone a transformational process. All the constructs will be studied simultaneously, of which no example could be found in the existing literature.

Based on the above-mentioned description of the research problem, the following research questions can be formulated:

- How is role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention conceptualised in the literature?
- What are the relationships between role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention in a higher education institution?
- Can role overload, job satisfaction and locus of control be used to predict turnover intention?
- Does locus of control have a mediating effect between role overload and job satisfaction on the one hand, and turnover intention on the other?

In order to answer the above research questions, the following research objectives are set.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

### **1.2.1 General objective**

The general objective of this research is to determine whether locus of control has a mediating effect between role overload and job satisfaction and turnover intention.

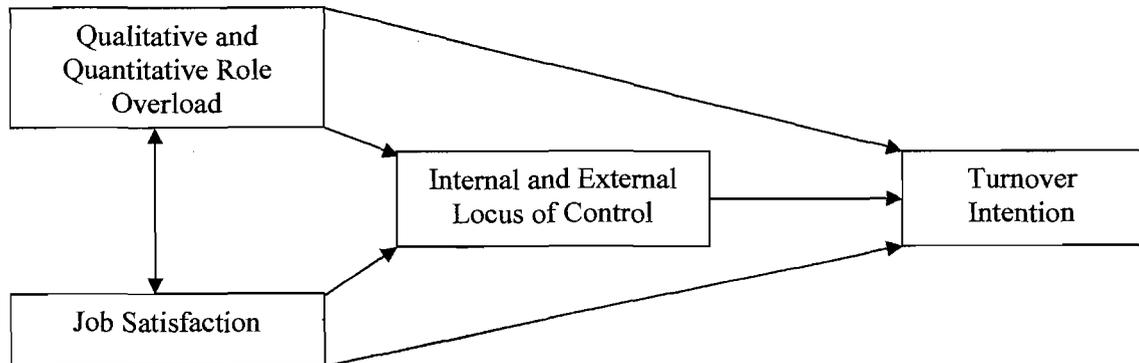
### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To conceptualise role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention in the literature.
- To determine what the relationships between role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention are in a higher education institution.
- To determine whether role overload, job satisfaction and locus of control can be used to predict turnover intention.

- To determine whether locus of control has a mediating effect between role overload and job satisfaction on the one hand, and turnover intention on the other.

The way these objectives will be met is graphically represented in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1.* The hypothesised role of locus of control between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention.

### 1.3 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

It can be said that a paradigm directs the research, as researchers commit themselves to the components of the chosen paradigm (Mouton & Marais, 1988, p. 149). A paradigm is a 'set of assumptions which are used as a starting point' (Louw & Edwards, 1997, p. 14). De Vos et al. (1998) explain that a paradigm is a model or pattern which alternates between normal and revolutionary periods within the scientific endeavour and that it alludes to the way a researcher views his material. Paradigms and their supporting theory therefore exert a heavy impact on research (De Vos et al., 1998). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) state that the virtue of paradigms is that a researcher can immediately tell whether a specific problem has been stated clearly and whether the specific problem relates to the general problem. Mouton and Marais (1988) state that a paradigm defines the problem area for the researcher, i.e., what should be researched and how it should be done. Paradigms also provide clues about possible explanations in the form of model solutions and theoretical predictions (Mouton & Marais, 1988). The chosen paradigm also determines what will be regarded as a valid solution (Mouton & Marais, 1998).

### **1.3.1 Intellectual climate**

The intellectual climate refers to ‘the variety of meta-theoretical values or beliefs which are held by those practising within a discipline at any given stage’ (Mouton & Marais, 1988, p. 20). According to Mouton and Marais (1988), these beliefs tend to display the qualities of postulates or assumptions. In this case, the intellectual climate will be Industrial Psychology and its sub-disciplines as well as the assumptions and paradigms accompanying them. Considering that the intellectual climate takes paradigms and assumptions into account, these will have a certain bearing on the direction the research takes.

### **1.3.2 Discipline**

This research falls within the boundaries of the behavioural sciences and, more specifically, Industrial Psychology. Industrial psychology is defined as ‘the study of human behaviour in the work situation’ (Louw & Edwards, 1997, p. 10). It is a specialised field which focuses on the workplace and aims to understand the nature of the workplace and the way in which organisations and individuals in them function (Louw & Edwards, 1997). It is related to mainstream psychology as it also emphasises the scientific study of thinking and behaviour (Muchinsky, Kriek & Scheuder, 2002).

Muchinsky et al. (2002) agree that it is a speciality area of psychology, but state that it has a more restricted definition than that of psychology as a whole. Their definition emphasises the scientific study of people in their work environment (Muchinsky et al., 2002). Industrial psychology implies assessment, measurement, problem-identification, selection, placement and management as well as changing, training, development and motivating (Muchinsky et al., 2002). It encompasses normal and deviant behaviour in interaction with work situations (Muchinsky et al., 2002).

The sub-disciplines of Industrial Psychology on which this research focuses are personnel psychology, organisational behaviour and vocational psychology. Personnel psychology is defined by Cascio (1998, p. 3, in Muchinsky et al., 2002, p. 4) as ‘an applied discipline that focuses on individual differences in behaviour and job

performance, and on methods of measuring and predicting such performance, while personnel/human resources management is the attraction, selection, retention, development and utilisation of human resources in order to achieve both individual and organisational objectives'. This sub-discipline is relevant to the research as it encompasses aspects such as turnover intention and individual differences concerning locus of control.

According to Muchinsky et al. (2002), organisational behaviour focuses on role-related behaviour, group pressure on individuals, feelings of organisational commitment and communication patterns within an organisation. Schultz et al. (2003) are of the opinion that organisational behaviour is focused on perception, personality, attitudes, motivation and managing performance. This is relevant to the current research, as locus of control can be influenced by personality and is about perception, and job satisfaction is an attitude. Role overload can also fit into this sub-discipline since it is connected to role-related behaviour.

The vocational aspect refers to employees having a satisfying career path and dealing with problems they may experience at work (Muchinsky et al., 2002). This area of industrial psychology has its place in this research, as job satisfaction may affect how satisfying an individual's career path is, while turnover intention may be a result of the individual's experiencing problems at work.

### **1.3.3 Meta-theoretical assumptions**

Two paradigms are relevant to this research. Firstly, the literature review is conducted within the Behaviourism paradigm and Social Cognitive Learning Theory, and secondly, the empirical study is conducted within the Functionalism paradigm.

#### **1.3.3.1 Literature review**

According to Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991, p. 614), the Behaviourism paradigm is a school of thought which 'states that the behavioural sciences should focus on the study of the relations among observable stimuli and responses'. The following basic

assumptions are relevant in this regard (Louw & Edwards, 1997; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003):

- The goal of Behaviourism is to predict and control human behaviour.
- Environmental determinism refers to the idea that behaviour is completely determined by environmental factors and that the environment moulds an individual's specific attributes (Meyer et al., 2003).
- The object of study is observable behaviour.
- Objective observation refers to impartial sensory perception or observation as the only true source of gathering knowledge (Meyer et al., 2003). Considering that this research is not done from the standpoint of staunch Behaviourism, objective observation has been broadened to include emotions, which are measured and scored by tests (Meyer et al., 2003).
- A relationship between stimuli (events in the environment that impact on and affect the senses) and responses (particular behaviour) exists.

The Social Cognitive Learning Theory falls within the Behaviourism tradition; it is in agreement with the behaviourally-oriented theories that behaviour is learnt and that the focus of study is observable behaviour (Meyer et al., 2003). Louw and Edwards (1997) describe it as the cognitive-behavioural approach, which examines beliefs and attitudes by focusing on easily observed behaviour and cognitions (beliefs and thoughts).

The main proponents of the cognitive-behavioural approach relevant to this research are Julian Rotter and Albert Bandura. Rotter was of the opinion that behaviour is mainly learnt, but that our experiences and the value we place on the expected outcomes of our behaviour are more important in the learning process than objective reinforcers within the environment (Meyer et al., 2003). Rotter's work showed that expectations determine people's self-directedness (i.e. locus of control) (Louw & Edwards, 1997). Rotter's main assumption appears to be that behaviour is acquired through social situations (Meyer et al., 2003). Bandura, on the other hand, held the assumption that a person's behaviour is the result of a process of interaction between the person, environment and the behaviour itself (Meyer et al., 2003). Together,

Rotter and Bandura's theories make the cognitive-behavioural approach more comprehensive than Behaviourism alone (Meyer et al., 2003).

The Behaviourism perspective fits in with the research as there are stimuli at work (role overload and job satisfaction), and the employees' responses (turnover intention mediated through locus of control). The Social Cognitive Learning Theory reinforces the study because it examines beliefs, attitudes and cognitions. The viewpoint that behaviour is learnt is supported by the research, as locus of control can be learnt and socialisation takes place in organisations.

### **1.3.3.2 Empirical study**

According to Lundin (1996, p. 403), Functionalism is 'a school of psychology that emphasises the importance of activities or psychological functions'. These functions usually take the form of adjustments to the environment (Lundin, 1996). Brennan (1991, p. 330) defines it as 'an attitude that emphasises and values the utilitarian and applied aspects of psychological activities'. Functionalism emphasizes mental processes and the practical value of psychology (Brennan, 1991). Lundin (1996) states that it is concerned with the utilitarian, common-sense issues in psychology and is interested in the applications of the mind. Functionalism is a flexible and eclectic system with propositions drawn from many sources: it maintains that introspection is not the only method of gathering data (Lundin, 1996). Brennan (1991) states that Functional psychology is open to practical applications and that it admits data of observable behaviour. Carr (one of Functionalism's proponents) recognised both subjective, introspective methods as well as objective measures in psychology (Brennan, 1991).

Lundin (1996) points out that there are three conceptions of Functional psychology. Firstly, it is the study of mental operations; the task is to discover how mental processes work. Secondly, the mind is seen as a mediator between the environment and the needs of the individual. Lastly, Functionalism is concerned with the whole psychophysical relationship between the individual and his environment. The main tenet, however, is that behaviour is adaptive (Lundin, 1996, p.127).

Functionalists want to know how the mind works and what uses the mind has (Brennan, 1991). They value the importance of adaptation to environmental influences. The focus of this attitude lies in the direction of the results of psychological investigation (Brennan, 1991).

According to Brennan (1991, p. 179) the basic principles commonly shared in Functionalism are:

- Mental processes are adaptive and have purpose.
- Mental activity is elicited by environmental stimuli.
- Motivation always affects mental processes and modifies stimulus influences.
- Behavioural responses have consequences.
- All mental activity is continuous and coordinated.

According to Brennan (1991), one of the impacts of Functionalism is that it does not provide a complete view of psychological activity with fundamental philosophical assumptions and set research strategies and goals. However, even though it is not a formal system, it still provides a bridge from Structuralism to Behaviourism (Brennan, 1991).

This paradigm supports the current research, as it culminated in Behaviourism (Meyer et al., 2003), which is the other important paradigm in this study. According to Lundin (1996), Functionalism accepts individual differences; this is of importance for the present study, which focuses on attitudes and perceptions of individuals. The many references that tie Functionalism to Behaviourism (Brennan, 1991; Lundin, 1996; Meyer et al., 2003) add weight to the use of Behaviourism as the other principal paradigm in this research. The only negative impact that the use of Functionalism has on this study is that it does not provide a break between stimulus and response but maintains that psychological activity should form a continuous whole (Lundin, 1996). Two criticisms of Functionalism which could affect the present study are that it has a vague and formless nature and that it is too eclectic; reconciling too many conflicting views (Lundin, 1996).

### **1.3.4 Market of intellectual resources**

The market of intellectual resources refers to ‘the collection of beliefs which has a direct bearing upon the epistemic status of scientific statements’ (Mouton & Marais, 1988, p.21). The market of intellectual resources consists of two major types of beliefs, namely, theoretical and methodological.

#### **1.3.4.1 Theoretical beliefs**

Theoretical beliefs can be described as ‘beliefs of which testable statements about social phenomena are made’ (Mouton & Marais, 1988, p. 21). Theoretical beliefs are regarded as assertions about the ‘what’ (descriptive) and ‘why’ (interpretative) aspects of human behaviour, and include all statements forming part of the hypotheses, typologies, models and theories (Mouton & Marais, 1988).

#### **A. Conceptual definitions**

The relevant conceptual definitions are given below:

A higher education institution is an institution that provides learning programmes which lead to qualifications higher than Grade 12 or the NQF equivalent on a full-time, part-time or distance basis (<http://www.saqa.org.za>).

Job satisfaction refers to ‘a positive emotional state reflecting affective reactions to the perceived content and characteristics of specific facets of the job situation’ (Locke, 1976 cited in Hellgren et al., 1997, p. 417).

Quantitative role overload is defined as ‘having too much work to do in the time available’ (Beehr et al., 1976, p. 42) while qualitative role overload is described as being assigned tasks that require skills beyond those which the individual possesses (Sverke et al., 1999).

Levenson (1981, p. 15) refers to locus of control as the internal-external control construct, which she defines as ‘a generalised expectancy to perceive reinforcement

either as contingent upon one's own behaviours (internal control) or as the result of forces beyond one's control and due to chance, fate or powerful others (external control)'.

Turnover intention refers to an employee's inclination to leave his or her job (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000).

## **B. Models and theories**

A model is defined as a system of hypothetical principles that represent the characters of a phenomenon and from which predictions can be made (<http://www.hyperdictionary.com>). It is a simplified description of a complex process (<http://www.hyperdictionary.com>). According to Mouton and Marais (1988), a model is used to suggest new areas of research because certain relationships and dimensions are emphasised to an unusual degree.

A theory is defined as a 'framework that can be used to comprehend and explain events' (Ferrante, 2000, p. 30). Hyperdictionary (2007) explains that it is a well-substantiated explanation of an aspect of the natural world, an organised system of accepted knowledge that applies in a variety of circumstances to explain a specific set of phenomena. Mouton and Marais (1988, p. 142) cite Kerlinger's (1973, p.9) definition: 'a theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations between variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena'.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene factor theory, or two-factor theory as it is otherwise known, is relevant to the current research. The main assumption of this theory is that motivation is influenced by attitudes towards work (Louw & Edwards, 1997). Robbins et al. (2003) state that one's attitude to work is basic and can determine success or failure.

Herzberg asked the question, 'What do people want from their jobs?' (Louw & Edwards, 1997; Robbins et al., 2003; Schultz et al., 2003). He did this in order to determine when they felt extremely good and when they felt extremely bad about

their jobs (Louw & Edwards, 1997; Schultz et al., 2003). He found that when employees were feeling good they attributed it to internal factors and when they felt bad they put it down to external factors (Schultz et al., 2003). This led him to divide what he found into two categories:

- The intrinsic factors which are the satisfiers or motivational factors that lead to job satisfaction.
- The extrinsic factors which are the dissatisfiers or hygiene factors and lead to job dissatisfaction (Louw & Edwards, 1997; Robbins et al., 2003; Schultz et al., 2003).

Table 1

*Motivator and Hygiene Factors (Adapted from Louw & Edwards, 1997).*

Motivators in descending order of importance	Hygiene factors in descending order of importance
Achievements	Company policy and administration
Recognition	Supervision
Work itself	Relationship with supervisor
Responsibility	Working conditions
Advancement	Salary
Growth	Relationship with peers
	Personal life
	Relationship with subordinates
	Status
	Security

Table 1 shows Herzberg's main findings on satisfiers and dissatisfiers.

Next, Figure 2 illustrates the need to eliminate work environment factors causing job dissatisfaction and maintain the hygiene factors.

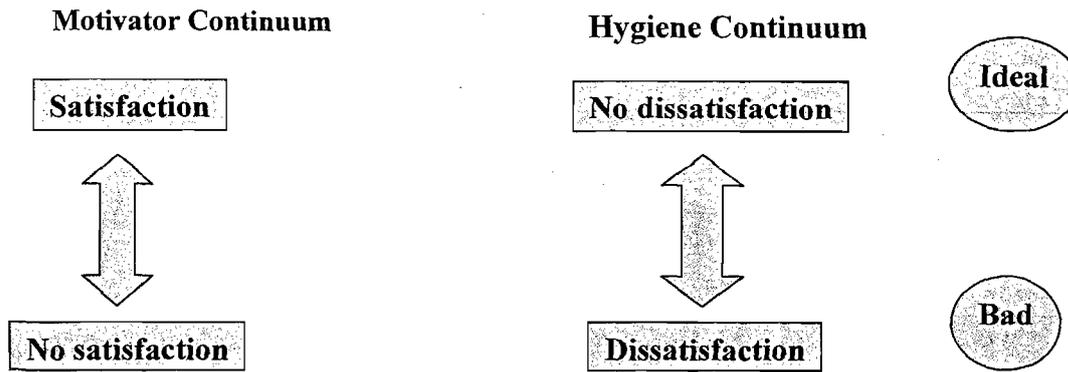


Figure 2. Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (Schultz et al., 2003, p. 60).

The end result to be sought from this theory is that the factors leading to job dissatisfaction should be eliminated, the hygiene factors should be maintained to prevent job dissatisfaction and the motivators should be emphasised (Schultz et al., 2003).

Various other models have been taken into account for this study, as they clearly show the relationships between the constructs being measured. Firstly, DeLoach and Monroe's (2004) model of job satisfaction shows the different dimensions that contribute to the construct. It clearly illustrates that job satisfaction has a multidimensional character.

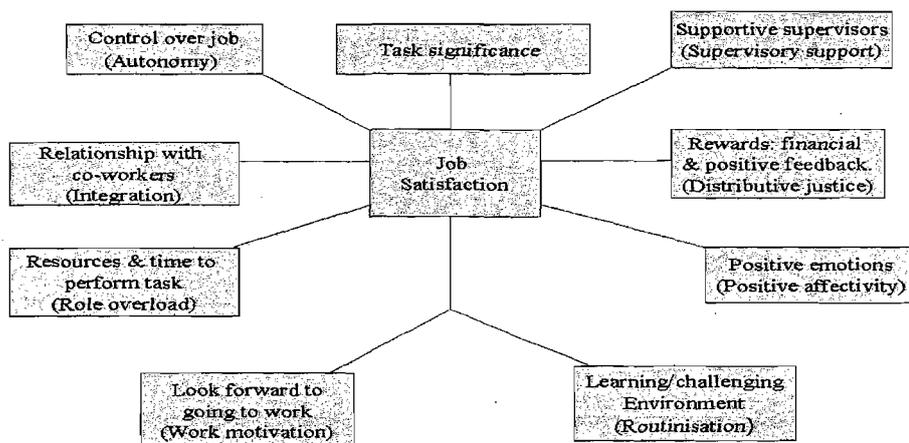
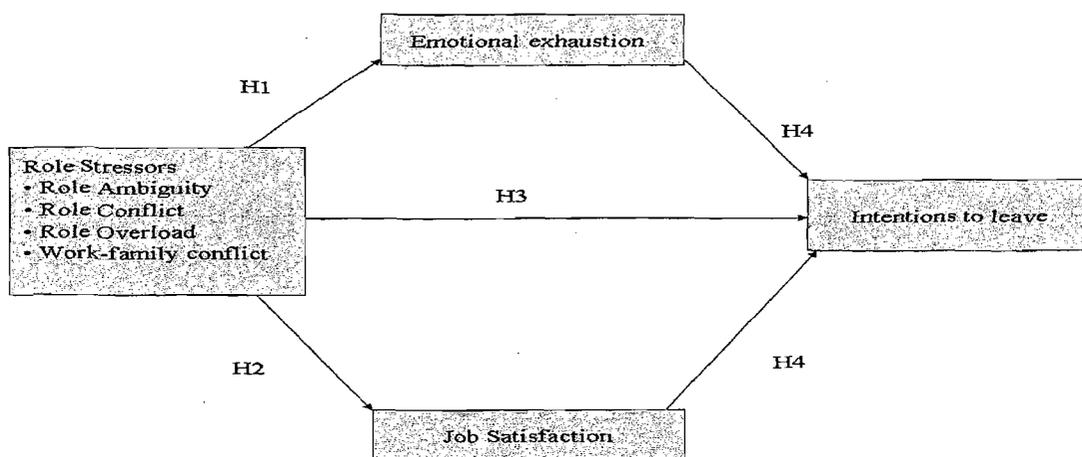


Figure 3. Dimensions of job satisfaction (Adapted from DeLoach & Monroe, 2004).

The second model was proposed by Ngo et al. (2005). Their research supported the hypothesis that role stressors (including role overload) are positively related to emotional exhaustion. The hypothesis that role stressors are negatively related to job satisfaction was partially supported and the authors confirmed that role stressors are positively related to intention to leave. The mediating effects of emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction on role stressors and intention to leave were partially supported. This model adds weight to the current research, as it indicates that relationships between role stressors (of which overload is a part), job satisfaction and intention to leave have been found in previous research.



*Figure 4.* Relationships between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover (Adapted from Ngo et al., 2005).

The third and final model to be reviewed for the current research is the revised model of Veloutsou and Panigyrakis (2004), which indicates the type of relationship found as well as the correlation between the relevant constructs.

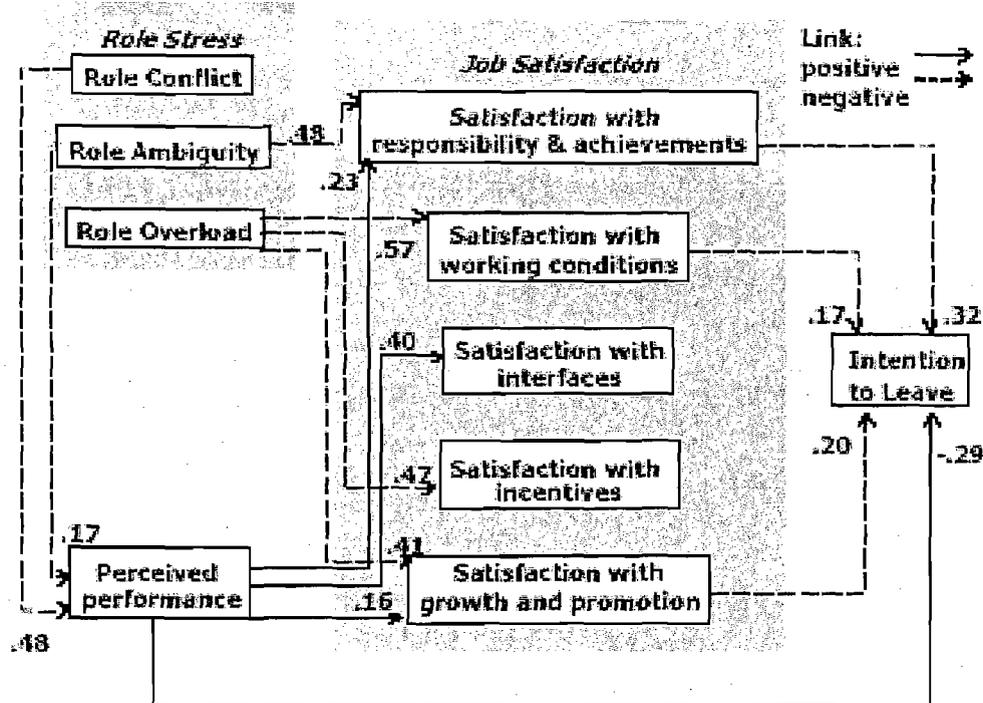


Figure 5. Framework of role stress, job satisfaction and intention to leave. (Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004, p. 119).

### 1.3.4.2 Methodological beliefs

Methodological beliefs can be defined as ‘beliefs concerning the nature of social science and scientific research’ (Mouton & Marais, 1988: p. 23).

The empirical study is presented within the Functionalism paradigm. According to Brennan (1991), the root assumptions of the Functionalism framework are:

- Mental processes are adaptive and have purpose.
- Mental activity is elicited by environmental stimuli.
- Motivation always affects mental processes and modifies stimulus influences.
- Behavioural responses have consequences.
- All mental activity is continuous and coordinated.

This paradigm is relevant to the research as turnover intention will be activated by environmental stimuli such as role overload and the factors contributing to job

satisfaction. Adaptive mental processes come in the form of locus of control. Behavioural responses such as looking for alternative employment are consequences within this paradigm.

## **1.4 RESEARCH METHOD**

This research, pertaining to the specific objectives, consists of two phases, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

### **1.4.1 Phase 1: Literature review**

In phase 1 a complete review is conducted regarding job satisfaction, qualitative and quantitative role overload, locus of control and turnover intention. The sources that will be consulted include:

- Textbooks
- Journal Articles
- Internet

### **1.4.2 Phase 2: Empirical study**

The empirical study consists of the research design, participants, measuring battery, and statistical analysis.

#### **1.4.2.1 Research Design**

The aim of the research design is to act as a plan for conducting a study (Muchinsky et al., 2002). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) add that the research design is the way the research is structured in order to answer the research questions; it plans the overall programme of what the researcher intends to do. The research design determines the framework, organisation and configuration of the different aspects of the research (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Mouton (2001) states that the research design focuses on the final product (the aim), the point of departure or research problem and the logic of it

(i.e. what evidence is needed to adequately address the research problem?). Mouton and Marais (1988) explain that the aim of the research design is to plan and structure the research in such a manner that the eventual validity of the findings is maximised.

The research can be classified as descriptive and exploratory. It is descriptive as it examines a specific higher education institution in depth and emphasises the frequency with which the stated variables occur in the chosen sample (Mouton & Marais, 1988). Statistical analyses will also form part of the research; these will include correlations, measures of association and regression analyses (Mouton & Marais, 1988). The main goal of the researcher in a descriptive study is to describe as accurately as possible what exists (Mouton & Marais, 1988). Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991, p. 618) stress that a descriptive inquiry 'aims to map out what happens behaviourally' or, in other words, to examine the state of reality.

De Vos et al. (1998) and Mouton and Marais (1988) state that exploratory studies involve the exploration of research areas which are relatively unknown. This is done in order to 'gain new insight into the phenomena under investigation, to determine the focus of future research and to develop new hypotheses about existing phenomena' (De Vos et al., 1998, p. 124; Mouton & Marais, 1988, p. 43). This is relevant to the research problem since literature reviews will form part of the process of gaining insight and comprehension, as suggested by Mouton and Marais (1988).

The specific design that will be used is a cross-sectional design. This type of design is comprised of observations that are collected at a specific point in time (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit, & Strashiem, 1994). This design is suitable as it will reflect the South African higher education milieu at present and thus add to the body of knowledge in South African Industrial Psychology.

A survey design will be used as this is field research with a quantitative orientation (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). This design will allow questions to be put to a representative sample and have quantitative information drawn from it (Louw & Edwards, 1997). As Gomm (2004) points out, questionnaires put distance between the respondent and researcher, therefore making it more likely that respondents will disclose information that is potentially embarrassing or sensitive to them. The method of delivery will

allow the respondents to complete the questionnaire in their own time (De Vos et al., 1998). Delivery by hand could raise response rates owing to the personal contact; in addition, it gives the respondents an opportunity to clarify any problems (De Vos et al., 1998). Senior administrators as well as heads of departments and deans will be approached to help with distribution of the questionnaires in order to get a maximum response rate. The use of questionnaires is a self-report method which allows participants to describe their own behaviour and state of mind (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991).

The design is suitable as the data will be collected once only, which is less time-consuming than conducting interviews with large numbers of people. Confidentiality is ensured by using anonymous questionnaires which are placed in sealed boxes after completion. The cross-sectional design is suitable for the research as it will reflect the atmosphere in the higher education institution after its period of transition and change in leadership.

#### **1.4.2.2 Participants**

An availability or convenience sample is proposed. This strategy involves making use of a sample at hand (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). De Vos et al. (1998) explain that the respondents are those who are the nearest and most available. Owing to the voluntary nature of this study, it can further be classified as an availability sample that the researcher can study with the greatest convenience (Steyn et al., 1994). Although this sampling strategy is weak, it is frequently used (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The researcher is aware that it can lead to sampling error and bias (Steyn et al., 1994). During analysis and interpretation of the data, extreme circumspection will be used (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

The staff of a higher education institution will be participating in the research; this will include staff from across all divisions in the institution, for example, academic, library services, finances, human resources and projects and services. This should give a representative result of the situation in the institution. During the data collection, approximately six hundred and thirteen ( $n = 613$ ) employees will be requested to complete the questionnaire.

### 1.4.2.3 Measuring Battery

Role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention will be measured in a survey named *The Experiences in the Modern World of Work Questionnaire*. The different measures were developed by Beehr et al. (1976), Sverke et al. (1999), Hellgren et al. (1997), Levenson (1981) and Sjöberg and Sverke (2000) respectively.

The *Experiences in the Modern World of Work Questionnaire* investigates how changes in the modern world of work affect employees' experiences of their work. This measure obtains the positive and negative experiences of people at work and how these affect them personally, their performance and the organisations in which they work. The questionnaire provides a section for demographic characteristics such as year of birth, gender, household status, educational qualifications, home language, employment status, tenure, union membership and earnings per month. All the items are answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Quantitative role overload is measured by three items developed by Beehr et al. (1976). A typical item is 'I am given enough time to do what is expected of me in my job'. A high score indicates a heavier workload. Sverke et al. (1999, p. 24) reported that these items have an alpha coefficient of  $\alpha = 0,77$  when averaged across four measurements. Qualitative role overload is measured by four items. A typical item is 'My work contains elements that are too demanding'. A high score represents more difficult and demanding tasks. Sieberhagen (2006) reported the reliability to be  $\alpha = 0,77$ .

The job satisfaction scale comprises three items, of which a typical example is 'I am satisfied with my job' (Hellgren et al., 1997). The higher the score, the greater the satisfaction with the job. The alpha coefficient has been reported to be  $\alpha = 0,86$  (Hellgren et al., 1997).

Locus of control is measured by 8 items taken from the work of Levenson (1981). Typical examples are 'When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky' and

‘When I get what I want, it’s usually because I worked hard for it’ which represent external and internal locus of control respectively (Levenson, 1981). High scores tend to reflect an internal locus of control. Levenson’s (1981) measure has not been used in South African research, but presented with sufficient reliability in longitudinal analysis with Swedish samples (alpha coefficient: 0,69 – 0,67 and 0,72 – 0,74 between Times 1 and 2; Näswall, Baraldi, Richter, Hellgren, & Sverke, 2006). The researcher is not aware of any South African study reporting the use of this measure, so determining its reliability will be a unique contribution of this study.

Three items measure turnover intention. A typical example is ‘I feel that I want to leave this job’ (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). A high score is indicative of a strong intention to leave the job. The authors report a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0,83$  for the three items.

The reliability coefficients are all moderately high. Huysamen (1996a) (in Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005) states that a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0,65$  or higher is an acceptable one on which to base decisions about groups. Thus they are acceptable for the current research.

#### **1.4.2.4 Statistical Analysis**

The following statistical techniques will be used in order to obtain answers to the research questions. Descriptive statistics will provide information on means, skewness, kurtosis and so forth. Correlations will be calculated in order to determine the relationships between variables. These calculations can be done by making use of the SPSS programme (SPSS, 2007).

A mediator, namely locus of control, will be used in this research to act as a quantitative variable which intervenes between a stimulus (the independent variables, which are job satisfaction and role overload) and response (turnover intention, which is a dependent variable) (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

To test for the various mediating effects, the procedures as described in Baron and Kenny (1986) will be followed. Mediation can be illustrated by regressing the

mediator on the independent variable and showing it to have an effect, then by showing the dependent variable to have an effect on the independent variable in a second regression, and finally by regressing the dependent variable on both the proposed mediator and the independent variable, and finding that the mediator affects the dependent variable (see Baron & Kenny, 1986).

## **1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Research proposal and problem statement.

Chapter 2: Research article.

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## **1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the reason for the current research was discussed and a literature review was conducted in order to define the constructs to be researched and to determine what previous studies have found regarding these constructs. Research questions were formulated and turned into objectives for the study. The main paradigm and its assumptions, from which this research will be conducted, were described, as well as the discipline and sub-disciplines for which this research is intended. The various theories and models which are relevant to this research were also explored. The research method was explained; this includes the design the researcher plans to use, the participants, the measuring battery as well as the statistical analysis techniques that will be used to answer the research questions. An outline of the chapter division was also given.

The research article will appear in the following chapter. This will include an in-depth literature review, followed by the results obtained from the research, which will then be discussed.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF LOCUS OF CONTROL BETWEEN ROLE OVERLOAD, JOB SATISFACTION AND TURNOVER INTENTION

R. Lane

## ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between role overload, job satisfaction, turnover intention and participants' locus of control in a higher education institution. Specifically, the possible mediating effect of locus of control between overload and job satisfaction on the one hand, and turnover intention on the other, was investigated. A cross-sectional survey design was used and an availability sample was taken ( $n=210$ ). Measuring instruments for all variables were administered as well as a biographical questionnaire. Results indicated that job satisfaction was the strongest predictor of turnover intention. Locus of control was found to be a poor predictor of turnover intention and did not mediate the relationship between overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention.

## OPSOMMING

Die primêre doelwit van hierdie navorsing was om die verhouding tussen roloerlading, werkstevredenheid, intensie om te bedank en deelnemers se lokus van beheer te bepaal in 'n hoër opvoeding instansie. Spesifiek is daar ook ondersoek ingestel na die moontlike mediërende effek van lokus van beheer tussen roloerlading en werkstevredenheid aan die een kant, en intensie om te bedank aan die ander. 'n Dwarsdeursnee-opname en 'n beskikbaarheidssteekproef is gebruik ( $n=210$ ). Meetinstrumente vir al die veranderlikes is geadministreer sowel as 'n vraelys rakende biografiese inligting. Lokus van beheer is gevind om 'n swak voorspeller van voornemens om te bedank te wees en het ook nie die verhouding tussen roloerlading, werkstevredenheid en intensie om te bedank medieër nie.

Turnover intention, job dissatisfaction and role overload are constructs that are typical of today's fast-track organisational environments (Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005). In the past few years, South African higher education institutions have undergone drastic changes, necessitated by the changing political, economic, technological and social environments (Viljoen & Rothmann, 2002). Apart from correcting past educational discrimination based on race, Viljoen and Rothmann (2002) state that transformation is necessary to bridge the gap between these institutions and the needs of the changing environment. It is important to note that the merging and transformation of institutions was a government initiative and thus, enforced by legislation.

According to Du Pré, Koorts, Mjoli, Moore and Van Rensberg (2001), international and South African trends made it necessary for higher education institutions to align and adopt strategies in order to keep up with global trends. Huge demands were being made on educational and training facilities. The transformation of former technikons to Universities of Technology focuses on stimulating economic growth, increasing international competitiveness and injecting highly skilled graduates into the workforce (Du Pré et al., 2001). The restructuring of education meets the needs of an increasingly technological economy, enabling participation in a changing global context, and providing an indigenous supply of highly skilled individuals to address the challenge of the skills shortage (Du Pré et al., 2001). Viljoen and Rothmann (2002) state that because tertiary education institutions are undergoing transformation, staff are faced with major changes. Demands in these institutions are increasing, yet they remain under-equipped, especially regarding finances. Transformation is a time-consuming and complex task which affects all aspects of the institution. It is also necessary to examine the employees' experiences of organisational transformation to ensure that productivity and effectiveness are maintained. Investigating job satisfaction, role overload and turnover intention among higher education staff tasked with providing these outcomes seems warranted in the aftermath of a transformation process as large as the one that has taken place at these institutions.

Important to this research is that the meaning of 'higher education institution' should be explored. A higher education institution provides higher education on a full-time, part-time or distance basis (<http://www.saqa.org.za>). Higher education refers to all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than Grade 12 or its equivalent

in terms of the National Qualifications Framework, and includes tertiary education (<http://www.saqa.org.za>). The particular higher education institution that forms the focus of this study is a university of technology. This is a unique institution within the family of higher education institutions. Besides technology being the object of study, this institution also has to carry out the basic responsibilities of a regular university, such as being driven by applied research and development (Du Pré et al., 2001). Universities of technology are distinguished by the following characteristics: they educate people for the world of work, equip them with skills through practical 'hands-on' programmes, incorporate experiential learning into the qualifications, and engage in practical and applied research.

During the three-year period from 2004 to 2006, specific changes and strategies for enabling change at the particular higher education institution being studied included: the occupation of an old local campus and the renaming thereof, the establishment of various new institutions, management visits abroad to gain more knowledge of this type of institution, summits to acquaint staff with the characteristics of a university of technology, and the introduction of a new academic structure. Student registration also passed the 17 000 mark.

Koorts (2000) is of the opinion that educators in higher education institutions are faced with large student numbers from poor educational backgrounds and that they encounter a lack of resources and organisational transformations resulting from the merging of institutions. Rothmann, Mostert and Strydom (2006) also add that resource allocations have decreased owing to competing state demands. Owing to the nature of the job and the obligation to attract funding, these multiple roles may lead to a high occurrence of role overload for tertiary education employees. Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) identify workload as an occupational stressor for academic and support staff in tertiary education. The rushed pace of work, too much paperwork and unmanageable workloads are significant stressors (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005). Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) cite research which found that the stress levels of academic and support staff have increased and are set to increase over time. As a result, academics are a group of employees that have been found to have some of the highest levels of overload (Rothmann et al., 2006).

Role overload is a work environment factor which results from the cumulative volume and variety of work that exceeds a person's ability to perform the task (DeLoach & Monroe, 2004; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). Furthermore, it is connected to the unmanageable amount of work needing to be done and the time frame for completion (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Ngo, Foley, & Loi, 2005). Work overload refers to having more work in a job than one can handle and also having to work long hours (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004; Pienaar & Sieberhagen, 2005). This manifests in employees not having enough time for certain aspects of the job, such as research, required in the higher education context. For the purposes of this research, a distinction is made between qualitative and quantitative role overload. Quantitative role overload refers to having too much work to do in the time available (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976), while qualitative role overload is associated with being assigned tasks that require skills beyond those which the individual possesses (Sverke, Hellgren, & Öhrming, 1999).

Brown et al. (2005) are of the opinion that role overload is a serious and increasing problem, as employees are forced to stretch their attention, efforts and resources too thinly to cover unrealistic demands. It also results in an inability to cope with tasks that must be completed and difficulties that pile up because they cannot be overcome (Chiu, Chien, Lin, & Hsiao, 2005). Multiple demands exceed an employee's resources and this means that there is not enough time to complete set tasks (Elloy and Smith, 2003). Role overload is thus negatively linked to the next aspect of the research, which is job satisfaction (Pienaar & Bester, 2006).

It has been well-documented that organisations with satisfied employees are more effective (Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge, & Werner, 2003; Robbins, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2003). Job dissatisfaction may even have negative outcomes for an organisation, for example, low morale, reduced productivity and turnover (Eliason, 2006; Garcíá-Bernal, Gargallo-Castel, Marzo-Navarro & Rivera-Torres, 2005). Thus, research on the effects of job (dis)satisfaction is justified by the impact it has on business performance.

According to Mumford (1991, in Garcíá-Bernal et al., 2005), there is no universal definition of job satisfaction. However, it is considered as the positive or negative

feelings with which employees perceive their jobs (García-Bernal et al., 2005). It is a global feeling about the job, or a related constellation of attitudes about various facets of the job (Griffith, 2004). Various authors and researchers appear to agree that it is an attitude with an affective component (Dole & Schroeder, 2001; Eliason, 2006; Griffith, 2004; Jaramillo, Mulki, & Solomon, 2006; Udo, Guimãrães, & Igbaria, 1997; Wright, 2006) and that it is determined by how well employees' outcomes meet or exceed their expectations (Rothmann & Agathagelou, 2000; Pretorius & Rothmann, 2001; Moodley & Coopoo, 2006). It also relates to the employee's perception and evaluation of a job in which needs, values and expectations play an important role (Labuschagne, Bosman, & Buitendach, 2005). For the purpose of this research, however, the definition provided by Locke (1976, in Hellgren, Sjöberg, & Sverke, 1997, p. 417) is adhered to. It states that 'job satisfaction is a positive emotional state reflecting affective reactions to the perceived content and characteristics of specific facets of the job situation.'

Job satisfaction has been linked to Herzberg's motivation theory, which posits that some factors lead to job satisfaction and others to dissatisfaction (Moodley & Coopoo, 2006; Samad, 2006; Schultz et al., 2003; Schulze, 2005; Singh & Surujlal, 2006). Some factors affecting job satisfaction are: the work itself, promotion opportunities, supervision, co-workers, working conditions, pay, participative decision-making and being able to use one's skills and knowledge (Carrim, Basson, & Coetzee, 2006; Lu, 1999; Moodley & Coopoo, 2006; Robbins et al., 2003). García-Bernal et al., (2005) concur that economic aspects, interpersonal relations, working conditions and personal fulfilment are four factors which determine job satisfaction. Oshagbemi (1997) added that job security, secretarial assistance, retirement benefits, flexible working hours, self-development opportunities and the varied nature of work also contributed to increased job satisfaction. The main conclusion is that various elements of the job are responsible for job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Oshagbemi, 1997). Job satisfaction is linked to the next construct examined in this study, as previous research indicates that those with an internal locus of control are more satisfied with their jobs (Carrim et al., 2006; Naudé, 1999).

Locus of control refers to whether an individual believes that events are caused by his own action or by uncontrollable external forces (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Cadinu,

Maass, Lombardo, & Frigerio, 2006; Chiu et al., 2005). This belief has implications for attitudes, perceptions and behaviours in a job setting (Chiu et al., 2005). Pretorius and Rothmann (2001) define it as the perceptions individuals have of the relationship between their behaviour and the resultant reward or punishment. For this research, Levenson's (1981, p. 15) definition of the locus of control construct is used. She defines it as "a generalised expectancy to perceive reinforcement either as contingent upon one's own behaviours (internal control) or as the result of forces beyond one's control and due to chance, fate or powerful others (external control)".

Chiu et al. (2005) suggest that employees differ in their levels of locus of control and that this influences how they cope with problems. They suggest that those with an internal locus of control view stress as something that can be controlled. Reed, Kratchman and Strawser (1994) note that those with internal and those with external locus of control encounter identical situations, but perceive that their options will have different impacts on their lives. Thus, these two perceptions of locus of control can have marked differences in behaviours (Spector, 1988).

Those with an external locus of control believe that they have little control over what happens to them since it is a result of fate, chance, luck or destiny (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Louw & Edwards, 1997). As a result, they tend to expect to be ineffectual (Louw & Edwards, 1997). Those with an external locus are more passive, likely to be less productive and more liable to adopt group influences (Chiu et al., 2005; Selart, 2005). The reason for this may be that these individuals find the work environment stressful and threatening, and experience more stress and dissatisfaction because they cannot handle the pressure, uncertainty and challenges that accompany demanding work (Spector & O'Connell, 1994).

On the other hand, those with an internal locus of control believe that events in life result from their own behaviour (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001), and they are also more likely to take an active stance in their environment (Chiu et al., 2005). Klein and Wasserstein-Warnet (2000) have linked success to internal locus of control since such people have faith in their ability to achieve self-appointed objectives and transform the environment. They have a belief in their own competence, which leads to higher self-confidence and -reliance (Selart, 2005). Spector (1988) states that they tend to be

more satisfied and report less role stress. In general, when predicting success in roles, internality exceeds externality (Singh, 2006). Those with an internal locus of control are also expected to have less turnover intention than those with an external locus of control (Afolabi, 2005).

Turnover is responsible for great expenditure in advertising, recruiting, selection and training, costing South African organisations several million rand a year (Grobler, Wörnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2002; Robbins et al., 2003). Rosser (2004) adds that costs are also incurred through socialisation investments, disruption and replacement. The general upheaval causes disruptions within an organisation and hinders its effectiveness (Robbins et al., 2003; Samad, 2006). It seems that behavioural intentions constitute the most immediate determinant of actual behaviour (Janssen, de Jonge, & Bakker, 1999; Rosser, 2004; Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004; Trimble, 2004; Udo et al., 1997; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). Turnover intention is a process of cognitive withdrawal where employees start to examine the pros and cons of leaving their job (Samad, 2006). It is the last element in a sequence of withdrawal cognitions and an intermediary between evaluations that are related to the decision to leave (Chiu & Francesco, 2003). Generally, it is a planned behaviour and a good predictor of actual behaviour, as previous research has established a link between behavioural intention to quit and actual turnover (Chiu & Francesco, 2003). For the purpose of this research, turnover intention will be referred to as 'an employee's inclination to leave the job' (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000, p. 250).

It follows, then, that studying turnover intention is important. Turnover intention could threaten quality and sustainability in higher education institutions, as highly skilled employees could be lost, which could have a negative impact on the institution (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004). This could be accompanied by major disruption to the institution, as it implies costly attempts to replace staff (Grobler et al., 2002).

Turnover intention is an important organisational behaviour which has been identified as a problem in jobs in higher education (Van Dick et al, 2004). It is vital to pinpoint the factors influencing turnover intention in order to reduce actual turnover (Lee & Liu, 2006). Faculty members may have the intention of leaving because of a

combination of demographic variables, perceptions of work life and engagement of work (Rosser, 2004). Hwang and Kuo (2006) state that the way employees perceive their employment conditions will have an effect on their intention to change jobs.

### **The relationship between role overload, job satisfaction, locus of control and turnover intention**

It has been noted that role overload affects job satisfaction negatively (Chiu et al., 2005; Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). In their research, Van der Doef, Maes and Dieksta (2000) found that high time pressure was associated with decreased job satisfaction. More specific to higher education institutions, it seems that job stressors affect job satisfaction negatively (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005).

With regard to role overload and locus of control, Chiu et al. (2005) state that locus of control influences the stress experienced through the perceived ability to cope and change things and that those with an external locus of control cannot cope effectively with role overload. Those with an internal locus of control are able to cope more successfully (Rothmann & Agathagelou 2000).

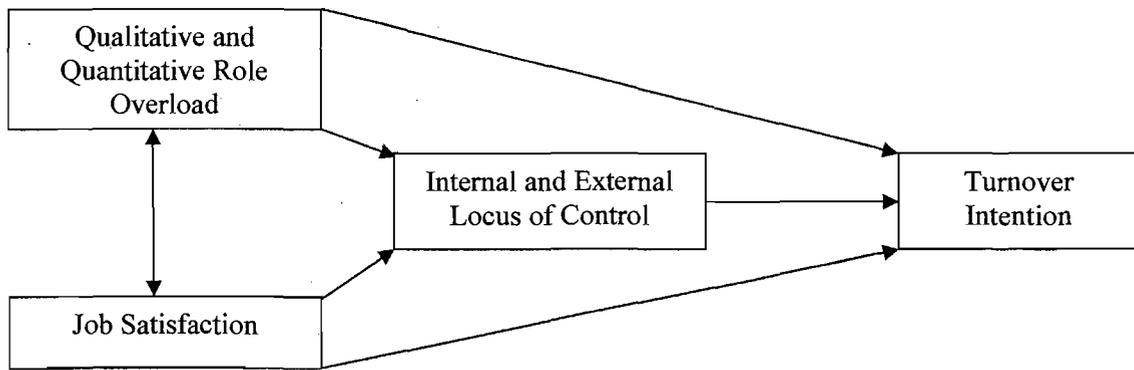
Reed et al. (1994) state that role overload may influence turnover intention positively, while Udo et al. (1997) are also of the opinion that role stressors are positively related to turnover intention. Role overload can trigger the chain of psychological states that lead to turnover intention, and time constraints cause frustrations which accurately predict turnover intention (Firth et al., 2004; Rosser, 2004).

Many studies have linked locus of control and job satisfaction and show that those with an external locus of control are less satisfied with their jobs (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001). Thus, better coping ability (as indicated by an internal locus of control) has a positive relationship to job satisfaction (Cunningham, 2006). External locus of control was found to have a negative correlation with job satisfaction, while those with an internal locus of control appear more satisfied with their jobs (Rothmann & Pretorius, 2001; Selart, 2005).

It has been found that those with an internal locus of control have less intention to quit (Adeyemi-Bello, 2004). Keller's (1984) work indicates another angle, as those with an internal locus of control are more likely to leave an unpleasant job situation. In addition, those with an external locus of control are less likely to leave even if they are dissatisfied; they will wait for environmental factors to force them to leave or to create some sort of change (Chiu et al., 2005). The way in which people cope has an effect on turnover intention (Cunningham, 2006). Those with an internal locus of control will not use withdrawal to deal with frustrations, as they believe that they are able to cope (Rothmann & Agathagelou, 2000). It may thus be argued that either an internal or an external locus could be a better predictor of individuals' turnover intentions.

Job satisfaction has been found to reduce turnover intention (Chen, Chang, & Yeh, 2004). Therefore, it follows that job satisfaction has a clear impact on turnover intention and psychological withdrawal (Chen et al., 2004; Rothmann & Agathegelou, 2000). The turnover process starts as a series of structural and individual determinants of job satisfaction: when job satisfaction is low, employees develop a behavioural intention to quit the job and seek alternative employment (Chiu & Francesco, 2003; Rosser, 2004). Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer and Sablynski (2007) state that job dissatisfaction starts with initial thoughts of leaving, followed by a comparison between the current job and alternatives, and ending with intention to leave the organisation.

These previous research findings create a background for the proposed mediating effect of locus of control in the current research. Thus, it would be expected that role overload significantly and negatively influences job satisfaction, which in turn may relate positively to intention to leave. However, locus of control may influence the course of these events, as internality may make an employee feel more in control of the situation, while externality does not. Locus of control may thus be the deciding factor in the outcome of whether an employee seriously considers leaving the organisation, or staying despite the experience of role overload and lack of job satisfaction. The hypothesised relationship between these variables is graphically presented in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1.* The hypothesised role of locus of control between role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention.

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional survey design was used to achieve the objectives set for this research. Permission for the research was granted by the University of Technology's Research Directorate. An availability sample was taken from the staff of the higher education institution. This included staff from across all divisions in the institution, for example academic, library services, finances, human resources and projects and services. During the data collection, approximately six hundred and thirteen ( $n = 613$ ) employees from three campuses were requested to complete the questionnaire and place them in sealed boxes to ensure anonymity. Letters from the researchers and the institution's Research Directorate were given to participants in order to explain the nature of and reasons for the research.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participants in this study.

Table 1

*Characteristics of the Participants (n=210)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	141	67,10
	Male	64	30,50
Living with children	No	117	55,70
Household situation	Single	38	18,10
	Married/living together	137	65,20
	Living with parents	16	7,60
	Divorced/separated	10	4,80
	Remarried	6	2,90
	Education level	Grade 10	6
	Grade 11	4	1,90
	Grade 12	24	11,40
	Technical College Diploma	19	9,00
	Technikon Diploma	47	22,40
	University Degree	54	25,70
	Postgraduate Degree	55	26,20
Language	Afrikaans	91	43,30
	English	24	11,40
	Sepedi	3	1,40
	Sesotho	37	17,60
	Setswana	16	7,60
	isiSwati	1	0,50
	isiXhosa	13	6,20
	isiZulu	11	5,20
	isiTsonga	3	1,40
	Other	3	1,40
Employment Status	Permanent	153	72,90
	Substitute position	6	2,90
	By the hour	7	3,30
	For projects	4	1,90
	Trainee	6	2,90
	Other	30	14,30
Part- or full-time	Full-time	171	81,40
	Part-time	32	15,20
Union member	Yes	144	68,60
	No	66	31,40
Changes in work	Yes	124	59,00
	No	83	39,50
Voluntary/involuntary change	Voluntary	73	34,80
	Involuntary	56	26,70
Change for better or worse	Better	89	42,40
	Worse	44	21,00

Table 1, above, shows that the study population consisted of 67,10% female participants while 30,50% were male. The majority (65,20%) of the sample were either married or living with a partner; however, 55,70% of the sample did not have children under 12 years of age living with them. The average age of the employees was 40,30 years and 206 of the participants reported that they had worked at the institution for an average of 9,9 years. The average earnings of 161 participants was up to R20 000. Furthermore, the participants predominantly hold postgraduate degrees (26,20%). Afrikaans is the home language spoken by 43,30% of the sample, while the indigenous languages (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, isiSwati, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu and isiTsonga) make up a representation of 43,20%. The majority of the study population is permanently employed (72,90%) and 81,40% are employed on a full-time basis. It was indicated that 68,60% of the sample are union members. With regard to changes in work or assignments, 59% stated that they had undergone changes during the past 12 months. 34,80% indicated that the changes were voluntary, and 42,40% mentioned that these changes were for the better.

### **Measuring Battery**

The *Experiences in the Modern World of Work Questionnaire* investigated the impact of changes in the modern world of work on employees' experience of their work. This measure obtained the positive and negative experiences of people at work and how these affected them personally, their performance and the organisations in which they work. The questionnaire provided a section for demographic characteristics such as year of birth, gender, household status, educational qualifications, home language, employment status, tenure, union membership and earnings per month. The majority of these items were of a self-report and fill-in nature.

Quantitative role overload was measured by three items developed by Beehr et al. (1976). A typical item was 'I am given enough time to do what is expected of me in my job'. A high score indicated a heavier workload. Sverke et al. (1999, p. 24) reported that these items have an alpha coefficient of 0,77 when averaged across four measurements. Qualitative role overload was measured by four items. A typical item was 'My work contains elements that are too demanding' A high score represented

more difficult and demanding tasks. Sieberhagen (2006) reported the reliability to be 0,77.

The job satisfaction scale comprised three items of which a typical example was 'I am satisfied with my job' (Hellgren et al., 1997). The higher the score, the greater the satisfaction with the job. The alpha coefficient has been reported to be 0,86 (Hellgren et al., 1997).

Locus of control was measured by 8 items taken from the work of Levenson (1981). Typical examples were 'When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky' and 'When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it' (Levenson, 1981). High scores reflect an internal locus of control. Levenson's (1981) measure has not been used in South African research but the scale has presented with sufficient reliability in longitudinal analysis with Swedish samples (alpha coefficient: 0,69 – 0,67 and 0,72 – 0,74 between Times 1 and 2; Näswall, Baraldi, Richter, Hellgren, & Sverke, 2006).

Three items measured turnover intention. A typical example was 'I feel that I want to leave this job' (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). A high score was indicative of a strong intention to leave the job. The authors report a reliability coefficient of 0,83 for the three items.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The following statistical techniques were used in order to obtain answers to the research questions. Descriptive statistics provided information on means, skewness and kurtosis. Correlations were calculated in order to determine the relationships between variables. These calculations were done by making use of the SPSS programme (SPSS, 2007).

A mediator, namely locus of control, was used in this research to act as a quantitative variable which intervened between a stimulus (the independent variables, which were job satisfaction and role overload) and response (turnover intention, which was a dependent variable) (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

To test for the various mediating effects, procedures as described in Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed. Mediation was illustrated by regressing the mediator on the independent variables and showing it to have an effect, then by showing the dependent variable to have an effect on the independent variables in a second regression, and finally by regressing the dependent variable on both the proposed mediator and the independent variables, and finding that the mediator affects the dependent variable (see Baron & Kenny, 1986).

## RESULTS

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients for all of the constructs which were measured.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments*

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
Quantitative role overload	9,80	2,80	-0,24	-0,47	0,62
Qualitative role overload	10,50	2,90	0,02	-0,61	0,71
Job Satisfaction	10,30	3,04	-0,47	-0,16	0,82
Turnover Intention	8,70	3,50	0,06	-0,93	0,78
Locus of Control	3,83	0,51	-0,06	0,29	0,62

Inspection of Table 2 shows that the Cronbach alpha coefficients for qualitative role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention are all acceptable according to Huysamen (1996a, in Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005), who states that a reliability coefficient of 0,65 or higher is an acceptable one on which to base decisions about groups. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for quantitative role overload and locus of control were, however, just below the recommended cut-off point. Since the quantitative and qualitative distinction in role overload is rather new, the scale was, however, retained. Also, Levenson's (1981) locus of control scale has seemingly not previously been used in South Africa, and the scale was retained for subsequent analyses. The scale actually presented with a poorer alpha coefficient, but after removing one item ("When I get what I want, it is usually because I am lucky"), the

coefficient improved to that indicated in the table above. All scales presented with normal distribution, as indicated by skewness and kurtosis spread between +1 and -1.

The correlation coefficients between qualitative and quantitative role overload, job satisfaction, turnover intention and locus of control are reported in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Correlation Coefficients between Role Overload, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention and Locus of Control*

	1	2	3	4
1. Quantitative role overload				
2. Qualitative role overload	0,44 <sup>+++</sup>			
3. Job satisfaction	-0,16 <sup>*</sup>	-0,22 <sup>**</sup>		
4. Turnover intention	0,21 <sup>**</sup>	0,23 <sup>**</sup>	-0,55 <sup>+++</sup>	
5. Locus of control	0,13	-0,09	0,24 <sup>**</sup>	-0,11

\*\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,01$

\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,05$

+ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,30$  (medium effect)

++ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,50$  (large effect)

Table 3 demonstrates that there is a positive correlation of practical significance and medium effect between quantitative and qualitative role overload. There is a negative, statistically significant correlation of small effect between quantitative role overload and job satisfaction. Quantitative role overload and turnover intention have a statistically significant positive correlation. There is a small positive correlation between quantitative role overload and locus of control. Qualitative role overload and job satisfaction show a negative correlation while qualitative role overload shows a statistically significant positive correlation with turnover intention. Locus of control has a small negative correlation to qualitative role overload. There is a strong negative correlation between job satisfaction and turnover intention; this relationship is practically significant with a large effect. Job satisfaction and locus of control show a small positive correlation while turnover intention and locus of control have a small negative correlation.

Next, the mediating effect of locus of control between quantitative and qualitative role overload and job satisfaction and turnover intention was investigated. According to

Baron and Kenny (1986), this mediating effect can be illustrated first by regressing quantitative and qualitative role overload and job satisfaction on locus of control, secondly by showing quantitative and qualitative role overload and job satisfaction to have an effect in predicting turnover intention, and thirdly by showing that turnover intention is affected by locus of control, job satisfaction and quantitative and qualitative role overload. Results of these regression analyses are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4  
*Regression Analyses estimating the Mediating effect of Locus of Control for Quantitative and Qualitative Role Overload and Job Satisfaction in Predicting Turnover Intention*

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
<b>Dependent Variable: Locus of Control</b>							
1	(Constant)	3.23	0.24		13.35	0.00	5.44
	Role Overload – Quantitative	0.04	0.02	0.16	2.09	0.04*	
	Role Overload – Qualitative	-0.12	0.01	-0.10	-1.24	0.22	
	Job Satisfaction	0.03	0.01	0.21	2.86	0.01*	
<b>Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention</b>							
2	(Constant)	12.18	1.34		9.12	0.00	32.98
	Role Overload – Quantitative	0.19	0.11	0.11	1.78	0.08*	
	Role Overload – Qualitative	0.08	0.08	0.07	1.10	0.26	
	Job Satisfaction	-0.62	0.07	-0.55	-9.08	0.00*	
3	(Constant)	11.97	1.96		6.12	0.00	23.59
	Role Overload – Quantitative	0.21	0.11	0.12	1.86	0.06	
	Role Overload – Qualitative	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.96	0.34	
	Job Satisfaction	-0.62	0.07	-0.55	-8.70	0.00*	
	Locus of Control	0.05	0.42	0.01	0.12	0.91	

Table 4 indicates that locus of control can be predicted by quantitative role overload and job satisfaction. When examining turnover intention as the dependent variable, it can be seen that quantitative role overload and job satisfaction are again statistically

significant predictors. However, when locus of control is considered as an additional predictor, it can be seen (Step 3) that it does not contribute to predicting turnover intention. This analysis thus shows that participants' locus of control does not mediate the effect of their experiences of role overload and job satisfaction on their turnover intention.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationships between the experiences of role overload, job satisfaction and turnover intention for a sample of employees from a higher education institution. Additionally, the possibility of a mediating effect for participants' locus of control between role overload and job satisfaction and turnover intention was considered.

The research found that the psychometric properties of all the scales were acceptable; however, those for quantitative role overload and locus of control fell slightly below the cut-off point. The qualitative/quantitative distinction in terms of role overload has only recently emerged in the literature (i.e. Sverke et al., 1999), and the fact that only a few items were used to investigate this dimension of work could have acted negatively on the reliability of the scale. The locus of control scale has seemingly not been used in previous South African research, and this validation thus presents a unique contribution. It was shown that by removal of one item ("When I get what I want, it's usually because I am lucky"), the scale presented with ample reliability. It is possible that the reference to 'lucky' was not clearly understood in the South African context. The way in which the sentence was formulated may have led to confusion between being lucky and being happy, or the connection between being lucky and getting what one wants might not be perceived as relevant or causal.

The reliabilities (as indicated by Cronbach Alpha) for job satisfaction and turnover intention confirm previous research conducted by Hellgren, Sjöberg and Sverke (1997) and Sjöberg and Sverke (2000) respectively, in indicating that the scales are reliable representations of the constructs. The reliability coefficients for quantitative and qualitative role overload differed slightly from those found in previous international (Sverke et al., 1999) and South African research (Sieberhagen, 2006); in that they were lower in this sample.

It was found that quantitative and qualitative role overload were strongly related. This could be due to role overload being classified as a role stressor; in some research the constructs are seen as similar and no differentiation is made between them (Ngo et al., 2005; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). The relationship found in this research also indicates that the more an employee experiences that he/she has too much to do in the time available, the more he/she is likely to feel that he/she does not have the skills to perform the required tasks. Thus, employees who do not possess the skills to complete the required tasks are likely to experience that they have too much to do in the time available for completion.

Job satisfaction was found to have a slight negative correlation with both quantitative and qualitative role overload. This indicates that the more employees feel that they have too much to do in the given time and that they do not have the skills with which to complete the task, the more dissatisfied they become with their jobs. Other research supports this finding, and a common consequence of role overload has been identified as decreased job satisfaction (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Tytherleigh, 2003; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004).

Both dimensions of role overload were also positively related to participants' turnover intention. This suggests that when an employee has the experience of having too much to do or not having the skills to perform a task, he/she thinks about leaving the institution. Bolino and Turnley (2005) and Ngo et al. (2005) confirm that role overload relates positively to turnover intention.

A large negative relationship was found between job satisfaction and turnover intention. This shows that the more satisfied an employee is with his/her job; the less likely it will be that he/she will have thoughts of leaving their employment. Previous research has also shown that low levels of job satisfaction are associated with an increased intention to leave the organisation (Ladebo & Oloruntoba, 2005; Ngo et al., 2005; Singh & Surujlal, 2006; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004).

Locus of control had only minimal correlations with quantitative and qualitative role overload, which indicates that in this case, participants' evaluation of the time or skills available to complete required tasks is independent of their locus of control.

Locus of control had a statistically significant relationship with job satisfaction, which is also confirmed by previous research (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Cunningham, 2006; Pretorius & Rothmann, 2001; Selart, 2005), where an internal locus of control related positively to job satisfaction. However, unlike previous research, the measure used for this study does not have scales which differentiate between internal and external locus of control, but rather places participants on a continuum from an external to an internal locus of control (with a high score indicating an internal locus). A minimal negative relation was also found between locus of control and turnover intention. This probably suggests that those with an internal locus of control would leave an unfavourable job situation, while those with an external locus would stay, as they feel that there is nothing they can do about the situation. However, previous research indicates that it is unclear how those with an internal and external locus of control would behave. Some research points to those with an internal locus as being willing to leave an unpleasant job situation (Keller, 1984), while other research indicates that those with an external locus are more likely to leave (Adeyemi-Bello, 2004; Afolabi, 2005).

Job satisfaction was found to be the strongest predictor of turnover intention. Quantitative role overload also contributed to the prediction of turnover intention, but it was seen that qualitative role overload made no contribution. Locus of control, however, was found to be a poor predictor of turnover intention, and also did not mediate the relationship of overload and satisfaction to turnover intention. This could be explained by the dispositions of those with an internal and external locus of control. The argument by Robbins et al. (2003), could account for the fact that locus of control is not a strong mediator: these authors stated that it is difficult to predict turnover of individuals with an internal locus of control, as they could decide either to take action and leave or to stay and take steps to become more successful and satisfied. Those with an external locus could remain with an organisation despite heavy role overload and job dissatisfaction, due their belief that they do not control what happens to them.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research design used was a cross-sectional one; therefore no cause-and-effect relationships could be determined. However, the results do provide some direction for future research in the field of higher education institutions. The questionnaires used were of the self-report variety which creates another limitation of the research as such questionnaires have a number of disadvantages (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005). Firstly, the language gap between the English language questionnaire and the vast majority of the study population, whose mother tongue is either Afrikaans or an African language, could have caused the questions to be misunderstood. Secondly, the questionnaire was long and time-consuming to complete and this could have resulted in participants giving the most convenient answers without putting much thought into them. In future South African research with the locus of control scale (Levenson, 1981), it could be advisable to eliminate the item which states: "When I get what I want, it's usually because I am lucky". Ideally, however, studies of construct equivalence in the multi-lingual South African context should take place.

The higher education institution might find it helpful to increase their employees' level of job satisfaction as this research indicates that this is associated with decreased turnover intention. With regard to role overload, the institution should examine time frames and skills levels to ensure that these do not have an adverse impact on each other. The level of role overload should also be investigated, as a reduction in workload could decrease the employees' thoughts of leaving the institution.

There is a call from this research and that done by other researchers for future studies to focus on using longitudinal designs (Chiu et al., 2005; Chiu & Chen, 2005; Ngo et al., 2005; Samad, 2006). Longitudinal research will be able to determine and validate causality, and enable relationships between the constructs to be studied over time.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter includes the conclusions of the study according to the general and specific objectives that were set. The limitations of the research are also discussed and recommendations for the organisation and future research are given.

#### **3.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The psychometric properties of all the scales were acceptable, except those for locus of control and quantitative role overload, which fell below the cut-off point (as recommended by Huysamen, 1996a in Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Reasons for this could be that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative role overload is relatively new (Sverke, Hellgren, & Öhrming, 1999), and that the locus of control scale used here has seemingly not been used in previous South African research. One item (“When I get what I want, it’s usually because I am lucky”) had to be removed from the locus of control scale to improve its reliability. The reliabilities for job satisfaction and turnover intention confirm what previous research has found (Hellgren, Sjöberg, & Sverke, 1997; Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000) and those for quantitative and qualitative role overload differed only slightly from previous research (Sverke et al., 1999; Sieberhagen, 2006).

Quantitative and qualitative role overload were strongly related, which means that the more employees experience that they have too much to do, the more likely they are to feel that they may lack the skills to complete the task. It was also found that if employees feel that they have too much to do in the time available, and that they do not have the necessary skills, they are more likely to be less satisfied with their jobs. This finding again substantiates previous research (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Tytherleigh, 2003; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004).

Both dimensions of role overload contributed to participants’ turnover intention. Another conclusion was that the more satisfied an employee was with his/her job, the

less likely he/she would be to think of leaving the institution. These findings are also in line with previous research linking role overload (Reed, Kratchman, & Strawser, 1994; Udo, Guimãrães, & Igbaria, 1997), and job satisfaction (Chen, Chang, & Yeh, 2004; Chui & Francesco, 2003) to turnover intention.

Locus of control had minimal relationships with quantitative and qualitative role overload, as well as with turnover intention; however, it was related to job satisfaction. In line with previous research (Keller, 1984), it is also concluded here that those with an internal locus of control would be more likely to leave the institution.

Job satisfaction turned out to be the strongest predictor of turnover intention, in line with Chen et al. (2004) and Chiu and Francesco (2003). Locus of control was a poor predictor and did not mediate the relationship of overload and satisfaction to turnover intention.

### **3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

The following limitations of the present study have to be noted.

Firstly, the research design used was of a cross-sectional nature, which did not allow cause-and-effect relationships to be determined. The sampling strategy used was also considered to be weak as it involved using those participants near at hand and could lead to sampling error and bias (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit, & Strasheim, 1994).

Secondly, the questionnaires used were of the self-report variety, which creates another limitation of the research as these have a number of disadvantages (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005). The language gap between the English-language questionnaire and the home languages of the vast majority of the study population, who speak either Afrikaans or an indigenous language, could have caused the questions to be misunderstood. Looking at the content of the item that had to be removed from the locus of control scale seems to confirm this assertion. In addition, the questionnaire was long and time-consuming to complete and this could have resulted in participants giving the most convenient answers without putting much

thought into them. Also, relatively few items were employed to measure the constructs of interest, in line with international research.

### **3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite these limitations, the research findings have important implications for the organisation concerned and for future research.

#### **3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation**

Apart from selection procedures which promote person-environment fit, proper orientation programmes, support and open communication between supervisors and employees and exit interviews to determine problem areas, the following recommendations pertaining to the constructs examined in this study are made.

With regard to role overload, better organisational and job designs, clear and formal written job descriptions and working guidelines, as well as stress and time management training, can help to alleviate the feeling of having too much to do in the time available (Bunnel, 2006; Ngo, Foley, & Loi, 2005). Helping employees to prioritise tasks, schedule activities and reduce general administrative tasks can help to decrease role overload (Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005; Bunnel, 2006). Other suggestions include recruiting additional staff to reduce the workload and spreading the workload more evenly (Janssen, de Jonge, & Bakker, 1999; Ladebo, 2005). A final recommendation for this construct would be to provide training or run workshops in order to add to and maintain employees' skills levels.

To promote job satisfaction, the institution should ensure that job stress is minimised by providing job enrichment initiatives which focus on stimulation, variety, flexibility and responsibility; balancing qualifications with remuneration; holding workshops to enhance existing skills; improving the work environment and allowing participative decision-making (Moodley & Coopoo, 2006; Näswall, Sverke, & Hellgren, 2005; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004). Mentally challenging work and supportive working conditions are also recommended (Robbins, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2003). Employees should be asked what it is that they really want. Of vital importance are career-

development programmes which should meet a variety of needs and expectations (Chen et al., 2004). The organisation also needs to show tangible commitment to its employees (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005). Flexible work practices, job rotation, counselling and opportunities for growth should be instated for employees to feel satisfied (Elloy & Smith, 2003; Janssen et al., 1999).

Although locus of control was not found to be a strong predictor of turnover intention, its beneficial effects in the world of work have been noted (Adeyemi-Bello, 2004; Cunningham, 2006; Spector & O'Connell, 1994). In order to increase employees' sense of internality, they should be given a feeling of control by increasing their participation in decision-making, emphasising autonomy and empowerment, unlearning externality and including selection techniques that consider aspects such as locus of control (Näswall et al., 2005; Naudé, 1999; Perrewé et al., 2005; Spector, Cooper, Sanchez, O'Driscoll, & Sparks, 2002).

The factors that influence turnover intention in this higher education institution need to be identified. Many of the features used to create job satisfaction can be used to reduce turnover intention. Aspects such as challenging work, career-development opportunities and rewards based on individual performance are propositions which should be used to decrease turnover intention (Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004). Other suggestions include creating a high positive affectivity, improving the physical environment and enhancing organisational communication (Chiu & Francesco, 2003).

### **3.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

For future research, the following points should be taken into consideration:

A South African standardisation of the measures should be considered, as this might reduce any language difficulties participants may have experienced. Greater differentiation between internal and external locus of control should also be made in the questionnaire. Although the scales used in this research have all been thoroughly utilised in international research, not much work with it has taken place in South Africa. It may be indicated that more items are needed in the South African context to

measure the same constructs, owing to differences in language, culture and general levels of education.

The research design and sampling strategy should be improved on. A longitudinal design will provide data on the relationships between the constructs over time (Chiu, Chien, Lin, & Hsiao, 2005; Chiu & Chen, 2005; Ngo et al., 2005; Samad, 2006). A sampling strategy other than an availability sample could help to increase the response rate. Other sampling strategies such as stratified or cluster sampling should be used according to departments, faculties or campuses.

With regard to the constructs, it would be beneficial to study why employees stay with an organisation: this could lead to important findings about job satisfaction, role overload, locus of control and factors leading to turnover intention. Further studies should focus on examining quantitative and qualitative role overload and their individual effects on the other constructs.

Future research should confirm the findings with longitudinal studies involving actual turnover, as suggested by Van Dick et al. (2004).

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