

**Skilled staff's job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit in a  
petrochemical company**

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## **FOR THE READER'S ATTENTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Title:** Skilled staff's job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit in a petrochemical company.

**Keywords:** Job characteristics, job satisfaction, intentions to quit, retention, management of employees

Organisations lose a lot of money by not retaining their star performers each year. This is of great concern to top level managers, for it influences the profit of the organisations. The big question that is asked is why do people leave organisation?

Factors like; job satisfaction, working climate, organisational commitment, and job alternatives are important to understand turnover of employees. The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit, that could assist management in retaining the skilled employees in an organisation.

The theoretical research conducted in this study was on job characteristics, job satisfaction and the influence both have on quitting intention of employees to establish a good understanding of why skilled employees stay and why they intend to leave an organisation. The empirical study conducted was on a group of skilled employees of about 300, working for a multi-national petrochemical industry. A questionnaire was distributed throughout a specific group in the organisation to determine how the theoretical and empirical data compare.

The study concluded that there were some variables that might have an effect on an employee's decision to leave this specific multi-national petrochemical company. The variables in this study were; work variety, ambiguities at work, lack of information and extrinsic job satisfaction. Organisations need to focus on talent retention and talent management to establish the needs and to successfully retaining their skilled employees. Recommendations for future studies and to organisations are provided in this study.

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# **CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF STUDY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation is concerned with the relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit of skilled employees in a technology department of a multinational petrochemical industry.

This chapter provides the background and problem statement of this study. The research objectives and the significance of the study are also presented. Finally, the research method is explained, limitations of the study are highlighted and the division of chapters is provided.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Imagine you are a manager in a high powered company getting to work after a relaxing holiday, walking into your office noticing a letter on your desk. While reading the letter, anxiety rushes through you as yet another of your “STAR” performers has resigned. How will you replace him? Why did he resign? Was he unhappy? These are just a few questions that will be running through your mind.

Organisations lose a lot of money by not retaining their star performers each year. This is of great concern to top level managers, for it influences the profit of the organisations. The major question that is asked is why do people leave and why do people stay in an organisation? This can partially be answered by a theoretical study, but needs to be customised for scarce skilled people. Some answers given are: people stay if they are satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organisations; and leave if they aren't. Factors like job satisfaction, working climate, organisational commitment, and job alternatives are important for understanding turnover (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001).

There are two types of people that leave an organisation: those who leave to another organisation in the same country; and those who leave to another

organisation in another country. The latter contributes to the “brain drain” in an organisation and also a country. The term “brain drain” was first used by the British Royal Society in the 1960s to describe the loss of highly skilled scientists and technologists from the UK to the USA and Canada. Today it is often used to describe the emigration of professionals from South Africa (Lundy, 2008).

What makes skilled South Africans emigrate? During the apartheid era political disturbances; the Soweto riots in 1976; and the States of Emergency in the late 1980s were major driving forces behind the mass departure of professionals. More recently, however, research shows that the highly skilled are leaving because of crime; perceptions of a high cost of living and levels of taxation; and the perceived decline in the standard of public services, notably health and education delivery. At the same time, professionals in South Africa are eager to take advantage of the attractive salary packages and career opportunities in the advanced industrialised countries of the world. (Du Preez, 2002).

Migration statistics from 1975 to 2001 indicate that 2,210,120 people migrated from 1975 to 1980, a total of 13% of the population. From 1992 to 1996 11% of the South African population which amounts to 4,288,447 people migrated; and 12% which amounts to 5,541,649 people migrated from 1996 to 2001 (Kok & Collinson, 2006).

Table 1:

*Migration statistics from 1975 – 2001:*

Population group	Number and percentage migrants (having moved during the five-year period concerned)								
	1975–1980			1992–1996			1996–2001		
	1980 Population (based on the 5% sample)	Migrants (1975–1980)	Proportion migrants	1996 Population (full census)	Migrants (1992–1996)	Proportion migrants	2001 Population (full census)	Migrants (1996–2001)	Proportion migrants
Black African*	9 916 560*	894 000*	9%*	31 127 630	2 909 948	9%	35 416 070	3 754 379	11%
Coloured	2 251 480	228 980	10%	3 600 447	331 321	9%	3 994 570	500 460	13%
Indian/Asian	706 600	63 720	9%	1 045 595	125 664	12%	1 115 540	150 087	13%
White	4 041 220	1 023 420	25%	4 434 695	921 514	21%	4 293 597	1 136 722	26%
Total*	16 915 860*	2 210 120*	13%*	40 208 367	4 288 447	11%	44 819 777	5 541 649	12%

\* The 1980 census excluded the (mainly black African) population of the former Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda.

Organisations need to try and develop methods to keep their skilled, talented people engaged and excited about coming to work and performing

at their peak every day, despite the tough challenges they face beyond the boundaries of the organisation. If organisations can keep their STAR performers satisfied, they will see that employees will not leave their organisation regardless of economic ups and downs (Cappelli, 2008).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Job satisfaction consists of an entire set of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions; a set of job characteristics that employees associate with their work environment. When an employee is satisfied in his or her job, the employee is confirming that his or her job needs are being fulfilled or the set of job characteristics is being fulfilled to create a positive job satisfaction. (Gavin & Vinten, 2006). Dissatisfied employees are more likely to quit their jobs or be absent than satisfied employees. Job satisfaction correlates with turnover and absence from work. Job dissatisfaction also appears to be related to other withdrawal behaviours like lateness, unionization, grievances, drug abuse, and decisions to retire earlier than expected (Saari & Judge, 2004).

Organisations usually lose many skilled people to other organisations. This is a general problem across all organisations over the world. Even in a recession period you will see that the intention to leave is still visible in their employees that are dissatisfied in their jobs. Most of the time the urge to leave is coupled with financial gain, job satisfaction to name but a few. Identifying the critical factors to keep your scarce skilled performer and aligning your organisation with it, will affect the bottom line of any organisation positively. Turnover of any personnel is very time consuming and costly (Pienaar, Sieberhagen & Mostert, 2007).

This study will therefore seek to investigate the relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intention to quit; better equipping organisations to keep their skilled staff. This will be done through a theoretical and empirical analysis. The theoretical analysis will consist of a literature study regarding job characteristics, job satisfaction and intention to quit in an organisation. The empirical study will be conducted using a

questionnaire that consists of job characteristics, job satisfaction and also intention to quit measures; which will be given to a group consisting of skilled personnel.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The *primary objective* of this study is to do a theoretical and an empirical investigation into the relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit; that could help management retain the skilled people in an organisation.

In order to realise the primary objective, the following *secondary objectives* must be met:

- determine the relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit;
- determine the impact of job characteristics on job satisfaction of the scarce skilled in an organisation; and
- determine the impact of job characteristics and job satisfaction on the intentions to quit of the skilled in an organisation.

#### **1.5 DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The theoretical research on why people stay or leave an organisation will be the main focus of this study. The empirical study population will be conducted on a group of skilled and non-skilled personnel of about 300 employees with the major focus on the skilled portion of the group of a multinational petrochemical industry.

The theoretical research will be used to establish a good understanding of why people stay and why people leave an organisation. A questionnaire will then be distributed throughout the population to see how the theoretical data and the empirical data compare. A conclusion with recommendations will then be given to help the organisation in aligning with the needs of the scarce skilled employees and how to establish those needs in future.

### **1.5.1 Field of the Study**

The study falls in the field of industrial psychology which is a new branch of psychology that was created in the 1920s, through the work of Hugo Münsterberg and Walter Dill Scott for corporations and organisations that needed more structure. This type of psychology is able to provide structure by evaluating employee behaviour for the good of the company. It is often referred to as organisational psychology because of its emphasis on analysing individuals who work for various organisations. Industrial psychologists thus study the behaviour of employees in a work environment (Britannica online, 2010).

### **1.5.2 Geographical Demarcation**

The study will be conducted within the boundaries of a company's technology department. This company's department is situated in the Northern Free State.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method consists of a literature study and an empirical study.

### **1.6.1 Phase 1: Literature study**

The literature study covers three areas of interest, namely job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit. Job characteristics will be conceptualised from the literature as well as the components that constitute the job characteristics. Thereafter, job satisfaction and intentions to quit will be discussed by focusing on conceptualisation as well as a discussion on their antecedents. The available literature will be in the form of published articles, published presentations, books, magazines and the internet (e-Books, Google scholar, J-tutor, Britannica online, NWU e-library).

### **1.6.2 Phase 2: Empirical study**

The qualitative design will be used in the execution of this research in order to meet the objectives. The research methods used in qualitative research include naturalistic and participant observation, as well as the use of questionnaires (Graziano & Raulin, 2004). This specific design was

designed to capture respondents' views on their current job characteristics, job satisfaction and their intention to quit. The advantages of a questionnaire are that you can reach a larger population than with an interview. The disadvantages are that the integrity of the data might not be so good and the number of respondents might be low. The study population consists of a department in a multinational petrochemical company from where the questionnaire will be sent out to a target group of about 300 employees.

### 1.6.3. Measuring instruments

A questionnaire testing the relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intention to quit will be sent out to the population to be able to get back empirical data for effective statistical analysis. The questionnaire will include the following:

- A **biographical questionnaire** is used to gather information about the demographic characteristics. Information that was gathered included age, gender, tenure, and job title.
- The **Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)** (Weiss et al., 1967) was used to measure employees' job satisfaction. Various job satisfaction characteristics in the organisation were identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The dimensions of the MSQ include: ability utilization, achievement, activity, advancement, authority, company policies and practices, compensation, co-workers, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, responsibility, security, social service, social status, supervision – human relation, supervision – technical, variety and working conditions. Confirmatory factor analysis extracted two factors, namely an extrinsic and an intrinsic factor.

- The ***Job Characteristics Inventory (JCI)*** has been developed for the purpose of this study to measure job demands and job resources for employees. The JCI consists of 48 items. Various demands and resources in the organisation were identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The dimensions of the JCI include: pace and amount of work, mental load, emotional load, work variety, opportunities to learn, work independence, relationships with colleagues, relationship with immediate supervisor, ambiguities at work, information, communications, participation, contact possibilities, future uncertainties, remuneration and career opportunities.
- The ***Intention to Quit Inventory (ItQI)*** has been developed for the purpose of this study to measure employees' intention to leave an organisation. The ItQI consists of 4 items. The intention to leave an organisation was identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### **1.6.4. Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the SPSS programme. Because a non-probability sample was used in this research, effect sizes (rather than inferential statistics) were used. Cronbach alpha coefficients were determined to indicate the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect) (Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (job satisfaction and intentions to quit) that is predicted by the independent variables (job characteristics). The effect size in the case of multiple regressions is given by the following formula (Steyn, 1999):  $f^2 = R^2 / 1 - R^2$ . A cut-off point of 0,35 (large effect) was set for the practical significance of  $f^2$ .



## 1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is based on a single department of a multinational petrochemical company and cannot be compared to other organisations or other areas of the country or overseas. This study covers a small portion of a large organisation that employs over twenty thousand people and cannot be compared to the characteristics of other sized companies.

Unfortunately due to the size of the sample a confirmatory factor analysis could not be done to confirm or establish sub classes. The minimum number of respondents for this should have been 300 and only 109 questionnaires were returned.

## 1.8 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

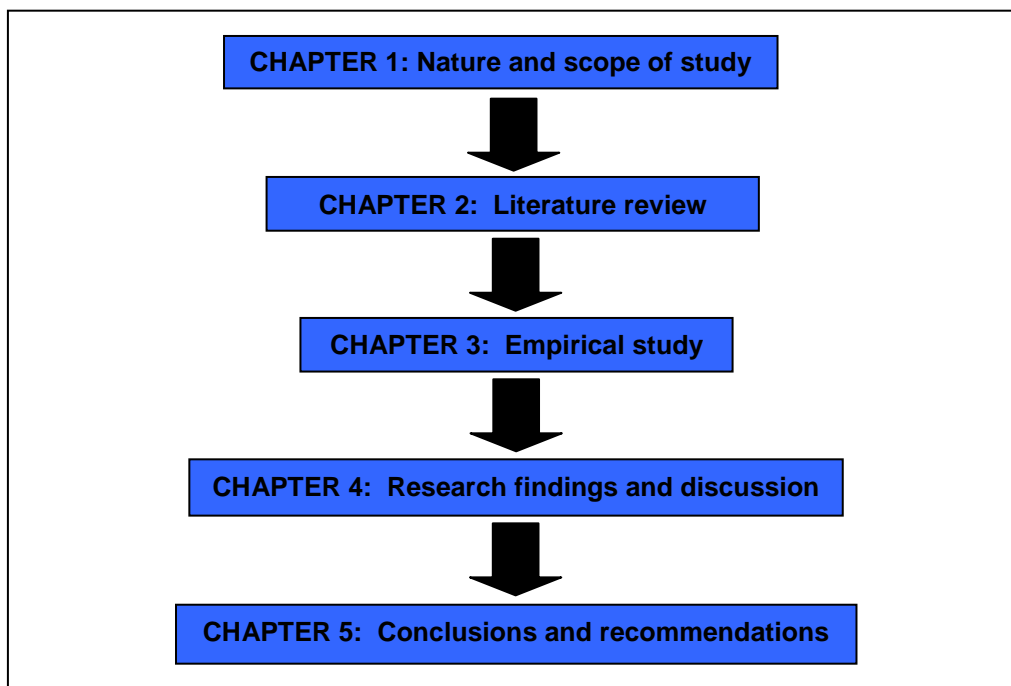


Figure 1: Layout of study

### ▪ CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

This chapter provides an overview of the study and gives an introduction of the study. The problem statement, research objectives, the scope of the study, research methodology, limitations and the layout of the study will further contribute to this chapter.

- **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE STUDY**

The concept of why people leave an organisation and the intentions thereof, job characteristics and job satisfaction will be theoretically researched in this chapter.

- **CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL STUDY**

The research methods and statistical analysis which will be utilised in this study are described in this chapter.

- **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research results from the empirical study will be discussed in this chapter.

- **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter summarises the study for easy reading and gives views on the success of the study, conclusions and possible future study opportunities.

## **1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an overview as well as an introduction to the study. The problem statement, research objectives, the scope of the study, research methodology, limitations and the layout of the study were covered. Chapter 2 will focus on the literature relevant to the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

Job satisfaction consists of an entire set of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions; a set of job characteristics that employees associate with their work environment. When an employee is satisfied in his or her job, the employee is confirming that his or her job needs are being fulfilled or the set of job characteristics is being fulfilled to create positive job satisfaction. Organisations with a high degree of employee job satisfaction will usually have a low turnover, stress and absenteeism where just the opposite will be true for a company with a low degree of employee job satisfaction. It is also evident that those with a high level of job satisfaction also have a good level of organisational commitment (abiding organisation's goals and values) (Gavin & Vinten, 2006).

The replacement of skilled employees is very costly and difficult and their leaving an organisation will result in loss of substantial technical knowledge. Therefore, it is important to understand what factors influence the employee, especially professional and technical staff turnover, and then proper retention policies could be applied (Yang, Xin & Congwei, 2007).

This chapter will focus on the job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit enhancing the ability to attract and retain talent. Job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit will be conceptualised from literature to explore possible relations as well as the impact of work characteristics on job satisfaction and intentions to quit of the highly skilled.

### **2.2. JOB CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **2.2.1 Definition and types of job characteristics**

##### **2.2.1.1. Definition**

Job characteristics can be seen as aspects specific to a job, such as knowledge and skills, mental and physical demands, and working conditions that can be recognised, defined, and assessed (Business Dictionary, 2010).

### **2.2.1.2. Types of job Characteristics**

Job characteristics can be divided into two groups namely job demands and job resources.

Demands are the things that have to be done. Job demands can be referred to as those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Although job demands are not necessarily negative, they may turn into job stressors when meeting those demands requires high effort and is therefore associated with high costs that elicit negative responses such as depression, anxiety or burnout. (Jones & Flecher, 1996)

Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that either/or reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; are functional in achieving work goals; stimulate personal growth, learning and development. Hence, resources are not only necessary to deal with job demands and to get things done, but they are also important in their own right (Hobfoll, 2002).

In the structural model of Maslach and Jackson (1986), they hypothesised that the presence of specific demands and the absence of specific resources predict burnout, which in its turn is expected to lead to various negative outcomes such as physical illness, turnover, absenteeism, and diminished organisational commitment.

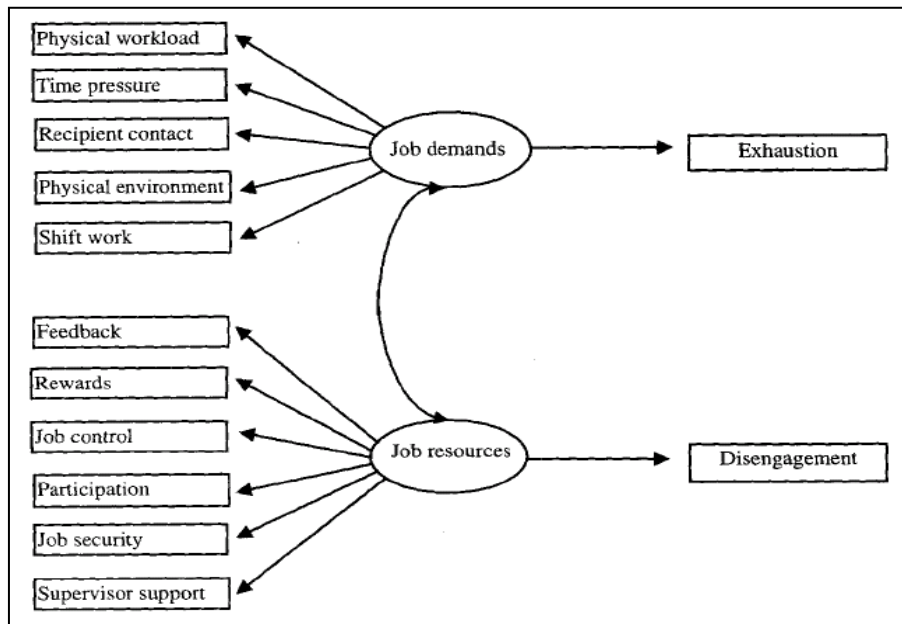


Figure 2: Job demand-resource model of burnout

### 2.2.2. Components of a working climate

According to Saavedra and Kwun (2000), there are five major job characteristics that define the motivating potential of a job and those five factors are: skill variety, task identity, task significance, task autonomy, and task feedback.

- **Skill variety** is the opportunity to use numerous and varied skills in one's personal selection to perform the work.
- **Task identity** is the degree to which the job requires the completion of a whole, recognisable piece of work.
- **Task significance** is the degree to which a job affects the lives of other people.
- **Task autonomy** is the extent to which the job provides individual discretion relating to the work process.
- **Task feedback** is the well-defined opportunity to know how effectively one is performing directly from the job itself.

### 2.2.3 The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldman)

The basis of Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristics theory is that people can be motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction that they find in doing job tasks. When they find their work to be enjoyable and meaningful, people will like their jobs and will be motivated to perform their work well. These five characteristics that can be applied to any job that induce psychological states that in turn lead to job performance, job satisfaction, motivation and turnover.

High motivation is related to experiencing three critical psychological states whilst working:

- **Meaningfulness of work:** Work that you are doing which has meaning to you, something that you can relate to and does not occur just as a set of movements to be repeated. This psychological state is derived from skill variety, task identity and task significance.
- **Responsibility:** Responsibility in the workplace is the opportunity to be a success or failure at your job, because sufficient freedom of action has been given to you. This would include the ability to make changes and incorporate the learning you gain whilst doing the job. This psychological state is derived from autonomy.
- **Knowledge of outcomes:** This is important for two reasons. Firstly to provide the person knowledge on how successful their work has been which in turn enables them to learn from mistakes. The second is to connect them emotionally to the customer of their outputs, thus giving further purpose to the work. This psychological state is derived from feedback.

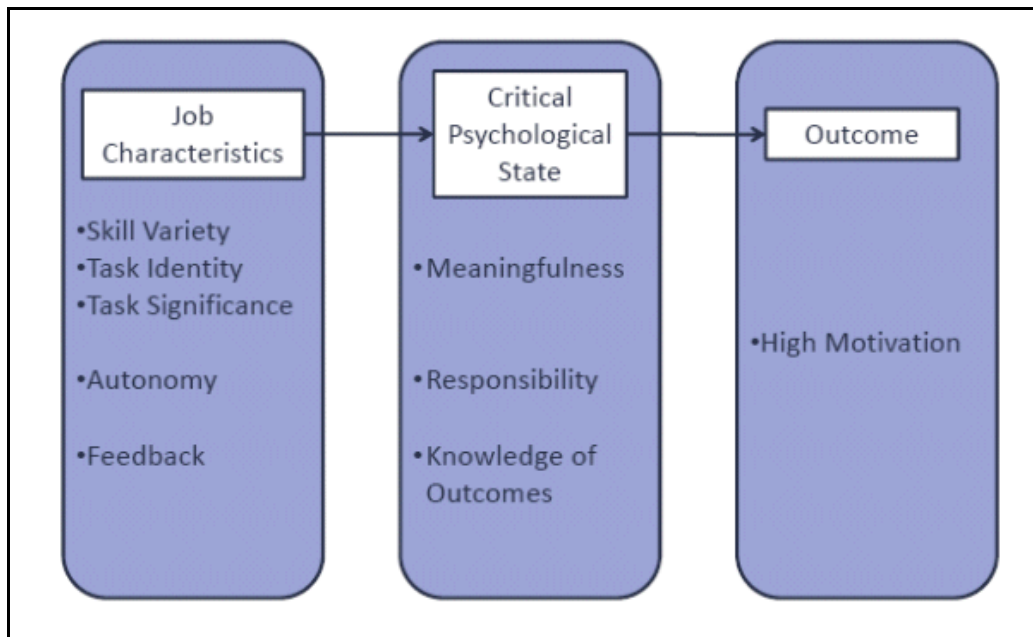


Figure 3: The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldman)

## 2.3. JOB SATISFACTION

### 2.3.1 Definition

Job satisfaction is the extent to which an employee feels about his or her job (Odon, Boxx & Dunn, 1990). Demir (2002) refers to job satisfaction as employees' feel of contentment and discontentment for a job.

### 2.3.2 Antecedents of job characteristics and job satisfaction

#### 2.3.2.1 Background to job satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction was originally proposed by Hoppock in 1953. He defined job satisfaction in his book as: employee' feeling about environment both in psychological and physical and the employee's subjective reaction to the working situation, including the overall satisfaction of individual psychological, physical environment and working environment.

Job satisfaction is in regard to one's feelings or state-of-mind regarding the nature of their work. Cammann (1983) argue that job satisfaction is an employee's subjective response to working in his or her job and organisation. It reflects how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. That is, it is the extent to which people like or dislike

their jobs. Job satisfaction can be influenced by a variety of factors, e.g., perceived organisation, the age of employee, and personality, etc.

Cranny, Smith and Stone (1992) concluded that job satisfaction is a contribution of cognitive and affective reactions to the differential perceptions of what an employee wants to receive compared with what he or she actually receives. Job satisfaction has long been an important concept in the organisational study of the responses employees have to their jobs.

### **2.3.2.2 The Consequences of Job Satisfaction / Job dissatisfaction**

The focus of this section is on the consequences of job satisfaction/job dissatisfaction, because this is the employee attitude that is most often related to organisational outcomes. These results consist of “job satisfaction and job performance”; “job satisfaction and life satisfaction”; and “job satisfaction and withdrawal behaviours”.

#### **Job Satisfaction and Job Performance**

The Hawthorne studies, conducted in the 1930s, are often credited with making researchers aware of the effects of employee attitudes on performance. Most of the earlier reviews of the literature suggested a weak and somewhat inconsistent relationship between job satisfaction and performance (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985).

Organ (1988) suggests that the failure to find a strong relationship between job satisfaction and performance is due to the narrow means often used to define job performance. Organ argued that when performance is defined to include important behaviours not generally reflected in performance appraisals such as organisational citizenship behaviours, its relationship with job satisfaction improves. Research tends to support Organ’s proposition in that job satisfaction correlates with organisational citizenship behaviours (Organ & Ryan, 1995).



The relationship between job satisfaction and performance is higher for complex (e.g. professional) jobs than for less complex jobs. Thus, it does appear that job satisfaction is predictive of performance, and the relationship is even stronger for professional jobs (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001).

### **Job Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction**

An emerging area of study is the relationship between job and life satisfaction. Researchers have speculated that there are three possible forms of the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction: spill over, where job experiences spill over into non-work life and vice versa; segmentation, where job and life experiences are separated and have little to do with one another; and compensation, where an individual seeks to compensate for a dissatisfying job by seeking fulfilment and happiness in his or her non-work life and vice versa. Consistent with the spill over model, a review of the research literature indicated that job and life satisfaction are correlated (Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989).

Since a job is a significant part of one's life, the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction makes sense; one's job experiences spill over into one's life. Research suggests that the relationship between job and life satisfaction is reciprocal; job satisfaction does affect life satisfaction, but life satisfaction also affects job satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1994). Based on this research, one conclusion is that organisations only have so much control over a person's job satisfaction, because for many people, their job satisfaction is a result, in part, of spill over of their life satisfaction.

### **Job Satisfaction and Withdrawal Behaviours**

Numerous studies have shown that dissatisfied employees are more likely to quit their jobs or be absent than satisfied employees (Hackett & Guion, 1985; Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985; Kohler & Mathieu, 1993). Job dissatisfaction also appears to be related to other withdrawal behaviours, including lateness, unionisation, grievances, drug abuse, and decision to retire.

Hulin, Roznowski and Hachiya (1985) have argued that these individual withdrawal behaviours are all manifestations of “job adaptation” and have proposed that these individual behaviours be grouped together. Because the occurrence of most single withdrawal behaviours is quite low, looking at a variety of these behaviours improves the ability for showing the relationship between job attitudes and withdrawal behaviours (Hulin, 1991).

Based on the research that shows job satisfaction predicts withdrawal behaviours like turnover and absenteeism, researchers have been able to statistically measure the financial impact of employee attitudes on organisations (e.g., Cascio, 1986; Mirvis & Lawler, 1977). Using these methods can be a powerful way for practitioners to reveal the costs of low job satisfaction and the value of improved employee attitudes on such outcomes as absenteeism and retention.

## **2.4. INTENTIONS TO QUIT**

### **2.4.1 Introduction to turnover intentions**

Turnover is referred to as individuals’ estimated probability that they will stay with an employing organisation (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Meanwhile Tett and Meyer (1993) defined turnover intentions as conscious wilfulness to seek for other alternatives in another organisation. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, employees have decided in advance to leave the organisation. This is in line with the attitude-behaviour theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) that one’s intention to perform a specific behaviour is the close predictor of that behaviour. Results on the study of the relationship between turnover intentions and actual turnover have given support to and evidence on the significant relationship between these variables (Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001). Therefore Price (2001) suggested the turnover intentions construct as alternative to measuring actual turnover.

Secondly, a cross sectional study is more appropriate than a longitudinal study in investigating employees’ intention to quit. Turnover is not only influenced by certain factors as there are several factors that could predict

turnover intentions. These include attitudinal, behavioural and organisational factors. Literature has also identified work-related factors, personal characteristics and external factors as determinants of employee turnover tendency (Tyagi & Wotruba, 1993). Therefore, the identification of factors that relate to and impact on turnover intentions is considered as important due to some recent evidence that job characteristics and job satisfaction is a more efficacious predictor of turnover intentions than is intention to remain (Kopelman, Ravenon, & Milsap, 1992). This study examined the contribution of job characteristics and job satisfaction in turnover intentions.

## **2.4.2 Antecedents of intentions to quit**

### **2.4.2.1 Factors influencing intention to leave an organisation**

There are five factors influencing employees in the decision to leave an organisation, namely job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job stress, locus of control and stressors.

**Job satisfaction** is the difference between what an employee expects, needs and/or wants in a job and what the job actually delivers. Job satisfaction is very important for personal well-being and organisational effectiveness. Dissatisfaction with a job and/or lack of commitment to the organisation may cause individuals to search for alternative positions. The need for challenge and achievements which are the components of job satisfaction plays significant roles in influencing turnover intentions among skilled employees. Turnover intention of skilled employees can also be explained by job satisfaction and workplace characteristics such as trust in senior management, information sharing, structural fairness and job security. Among them, job satisfaction has the highest impact on behavioural intention to quit a job (Porter, 1962; Wolf, 1970).

**Organisational Commitment** reflects the feelings of employees about shared norms and employees' willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation. Job satisfaction and organisational commitment play very important roles in affecting employees' intention to stay with their

organisation. Although job satisfaction and organisational commitment are related to each other, employees may be dissatisfied with their job, have a low job satisfaction, and at the same time they may still be committed to their organisation. Committed employees are expected to have less motivation to change their job, since they want to stay loyal to their company (Calisir, Gumussoy, & Iskin, 2009).

**Job Stress** may result from work exhaustion and anxiety. Work exhaustion may be defined as the depletion of emotional and mental resources in meeting job demands. Work place characteristics (trust in senior management, information sharing, structural fairness, job security) and job characteristics (feedback, autonomy, skill variety, job significance, task identity) have negative impacts on work exhaustion among skilled employees (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).

When employees feel stress about their jobs, this in turn may lead to dissatisfaction and turnover. It is also found that job stress affects job satisfaction negatively. Anxiety is another job stress factor. An employee may feel unsure and worried or feel regret after having or not having done something. Then, this feeling may turn into anxiety, which may affect job satisfaction negatively at a later time (Jex & Beehr, 1991).

**Locus of Control** is the degree to which an individual believes events in his/her life are determined by his/her own behaviour and effort. Internal locus of control may become an important factor to achieve a feeling of independence among skilled employees. It can be expected that professionals who have adequate control about their work, feel less stress and high satisfaction with their work. Employees with an internal locus of control perceived lower levels of job stress and higher levels of job satisfaction and job performance (O'Brien, 1983; Spector, 1982).

**Stressors** are a range of factors that lead to job-related stress. It can be expected that skilled employees who experienced high level of stressors tend to be uncommitted to their organisation. Employees who have high job

stress have low job satisfaction. Unfavourable job characteristics may also have an impact on job stress and burnout. Stressors can be put into three categories: (Calisir, Gumussoy, & Iskin, 2009)

- **Role ambiguity and conflict:** This is a sense of uncertainty about what is expected, how to achieve expectations or the consequence of job performance. Inadequate information of job functions, vague expectations of peers and superiors and uncertainty of performance evaluation may lead to role ambiguity. As a result of insufficient information to perform the job adequately and unclear expectations of peers, employees may be less satisfied with their jobs and less committed to their organisation. It is found that role ambiguity has the strongest significant effect on job satisfaction together with work exhaustion (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).
- **Work-life conflict:** This is the general interference of work-life on employees' personal life. Work-life conflict may come from intrusion of work into family time, leisure activities or a general inability to leave the work behind when physically moving from work. Although work-life conflict may be a problem for every occupational area, work-life conflict may be an often encountered problem in a skilled professional occupation due to long working hours, unrealistic deadlines for extensive projects and heavy workloads (Thomas & Ganster, 1995).
- **Work overload:** This is usually the result of heavy workloads and tight deadlines in skilled employees' work. Increasing demands in client requirements, advances in technology, and the growing use of technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of organisational activities may cause job stress among skilled employees (Jex & Beehr, 1991).

#### **2.4.2.2 The consequences to organisations due to employee turnover**

The consequences to organisations of employee turnover can be divided into two groups, **external** and **internal** (Gavin & Vinten, 2006).

**External** refers to the customer base of the organisation may suffer because of the existing employee's customer base that will follow him/her because of the type of service that he or she rendered to the clients. Customers may end up following that specific employee, which will harm the organisation financially.

**Internal** refers to the employees that leave may influence productivity of the organisation and the morale of fellow employees. Financially the organisation will have to cover the financial costs of recruiting, selecting, and training new employees to try and get them up to the same level as the existing employees. New employees may not measure up to individuals who recently left the organisation, so there might still be some potential for production loss.

#### **2.4.2.3. The 7 hidden reasons why employees leave an organisation**

Backed by information gathered from more than 19 000 interviews with departing and current employees, Branham (2005) examined what drives people to leave; what makes some employees "disengage" and sleepwalk through work; and how employers can fight the flight with specific practices. Reasons like (1) the job or workplace was not as expected; (2) there's a mismatch between the person and the job; (3) there's not enough feedback or coaching; (4) there are too few growth and advancement opportunities; (5) employees feel devalued and unrecognised; (6) employees suffer stress from overwork and work-life imbalance; and (7) there's a loss of trust in top leaders, were the seven major reasons why people leave an organisation. These reasons can be confirmed by previous studies by Carstens and Spector (1987) and also Gerhard (1990).

## **2.5. JOB CHARACTERISTICS, JOB SATISFACTION AND INTENTIONS TO QUIT**

Cranny et al. (1992) concluded that job satisfaction is a contribution of cognitive and affective reactions to the differential perceptions of what an employee wants to receive compared with what he or she actually receives. Job satisfaction has long been an important concept in the organisational study of the responses employees have to their jobs. Studies have consistently reported that job satisfaction is one of the factors or reasons for employees' intentions to leave the organisation (Price, 2001).

Research has revealed that workload pressure (ex. intensive time pressure, unrealistic productivity demand, etc.) had minimal impact on creativity, but has been identified as a source of job satisfaction and turnover rates (Fisher, 2000).

Sager and Johnston (1989) suggested that job satisfaction and job characteristics (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Morrow, 1983; Gregersen & Black, 1982) exert a significant effect on employee turnover intention. Despite several empirical studies among organisational scholars, however, previous empirical findings are still less encouraging and have been inconclusive. This is especially in terms of the nature of the relationships and contributions of job satisfaction and job characteristics on turnover intentions (Sager & Johnston, 1989), hence the need for this study.

## **2.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter consisted of four sections; job characteristics; job satisfaction; turnover intentions; and the effect that job characteristics and job satisfaction have on turnover intentions.

## **CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL STUDY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The empirical study is discussed in this chapter by focusing on the research design and method, study population, the different measuring instruments used, statistical analysis and research hypotheses.

### **3.1 RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1.1 Research design**

A survey design was used to reach the research objectives. The specific design is the cross-sectional design, whereby information is collected from a sample at one time. This design is ideally suited to the descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlation research. However, there are serious limitations to using the results of this type of research to understand causal relationships (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

#### **3.1.2 Preliminary arrangements**

Before the research started, permission had to be requested from the head office of the involved institutions. Meetings were held with department managers to get the buy-in, co-operation and permission to use their employees in the study.

#### **3.1.3 Ethical aspects**

After the necessary permission was granted, a letter along with the questionnaire was sent to all the persons that indicated that they would like to participate in the research. The nature and goal of the research were explained, the different constructs were explained and put in relation to the value it held for the person and organisation. The fact that all questionnaires were to be conducted anonymously was emphasised and the total time and arrangements were explained to candidates. Candidates that participated in the study did so voluntarily.



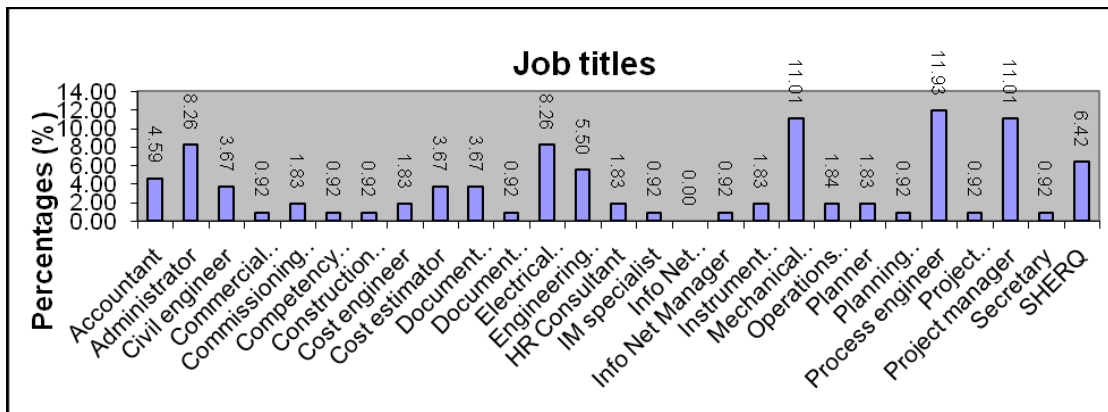
### 3.2 STUDY POPULATION

The study population included 300 employees of a large multinational petrochemical company in South Africa of which the sample size of this study was 109 (N = 109) participants. The questionnaire was completed by mid August 2010. The sample of people comprised a wide range of skilled employees, of which 57.8% was in engineering functions.

Table 2:

*Sample job title indications:*

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Accountant	4.59
Administrator	8.26
Civil engineer	3.67
Commercial officer	0.92
Commissioning engineer	1.83
Competency Development Practitioner	0.92
Construction Management	0.92
Cost engineer	1.83
Cost estimator	3.67
Document controller	3.67
Document Management	0.92
Electrical engineer	8.26
Engineering Manager	5.50
HR Consultant	1.83
IM specialist	0.92
Info Net Consultant	2,75
Info Net Manager	0.92
Instrument engineer	1.83
Mechanical engineer	11.01
Operations Researcher	1.84
Planner	1.83
Planning Management	0.92
Process engineer	11.93
Project governance & compliance	0.92
Project manager	11.01
Secretary	0.92
SHERQ	6.42



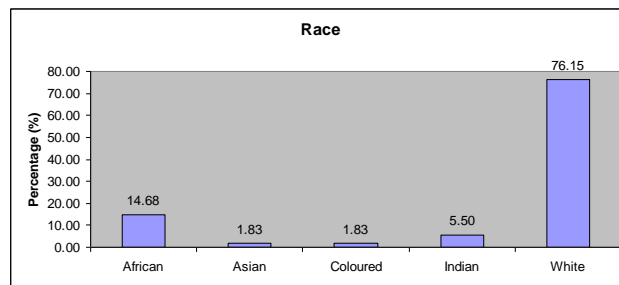
Graph 1: Sample job title indications

A total of 76.15% of the sample indicated their race as white, with African the second largest at 14.68%. Asian, Colored and Indian races respectively accounted for 1.83%, 1.83% and 5.5%.

Table 3:

Sample race indications:

Race	Percent (%)
African	14.7
Asian	1.8
Coloured	1.8
Indian	5.5
White	76.1



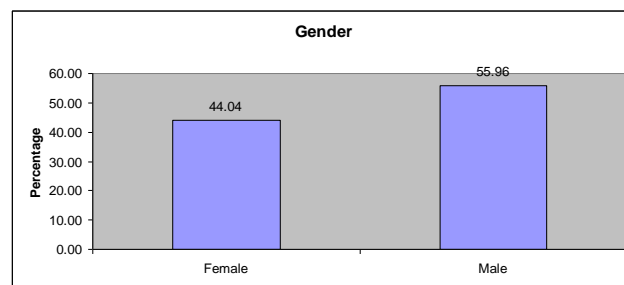
Graph 2: Sample race indications

The percentage of male respondents was 55.96% and female 44.04%.

Table 4:

Sample gender indications:

Gender	Percent (%)
Female	44.0
Male	56.0



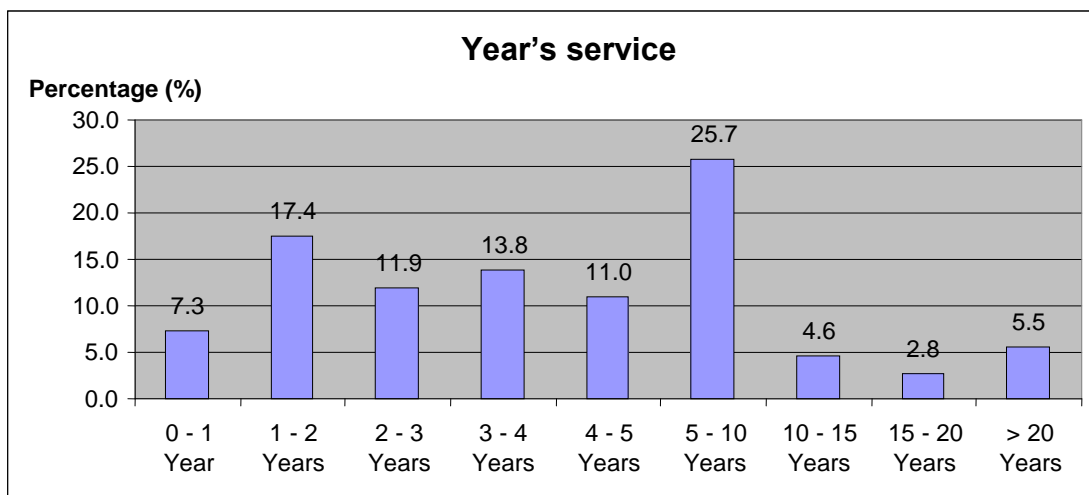
Graph 3: Sample gender indications

The number of years experience was from 0 years up to more than 20 years with the largest (25.69%) group of respondents with 5-10 years service.

Table 5:

*Sample year's service indications:*

<b>Years service</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
0 - 1 Year	7.3
1 - 2 Years	17.4
2 - 3 Years	11.9
3 - 4 Years	13.8
4 - 5 Years	11.0
5 - 10 Years	25.7
10 - 15 Years	4.6
15 - 20 Years	2.8
> 20 Years	5.5



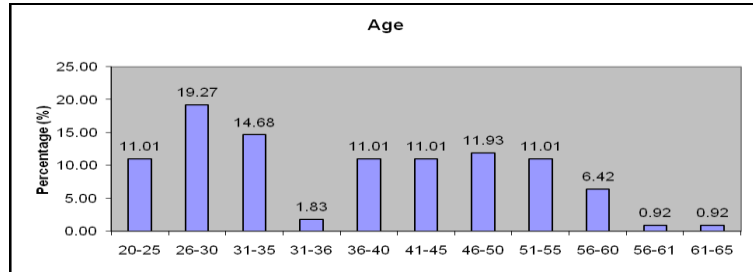
*Graph 4: Sample year's service indications*

The age of the participants varied between 20 and 65 years with the largest (19.27%) respondent age group between 26 and 30 years.

Table 6:

Sample age indications:

Age	Percent (%)
20-25	11.0
26-30	19.3
31-35	14.7
31-36	1.8
36-40	11.0
41-45	11.0
46-50	11.9
51-55	11.0
56-60	6.4
56-61	0.9
61-65	0.9



Graph 5: Sample age indications

### 3.3 MEASURING BATTERY

#### 3.3.1 Instruments administered

The **Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)** (Weiss et al., 1967) was used to measure employees' job satisfaction. Various job satisfaction characteristics in the organisation were identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The dimensions of the MSQ include: ability utilization, achievement, activity, advancement, authority, company policies and practices, compensation, co-workers, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, responsibility, security, social service, social status, supervision – human relation, supervision – technical, variety and working conditions. Confirmatory factor analysis extracted two factors, namely extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Test-retest reliabilities of 0,70 and 0,80 were found over a span of a week and a year respectively (Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr et al., 1981).

The **Job Characteristics Inventory (JCI)** has been developed for the purpose of this study to measure job demands and job resources for employees. The JCI consists of 48 items. Various demands and resources in the organisation were identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The dimensions of the JCI

include pace and amount of work; mental load; emotional load; work variety; opportunities to learn; work independence; relationships with colleagues; relationship with immediate supervisor; ambiguities at work; information; communications; participation; contact possibilities; uncertainty about future; remuneration; and career opportunities. Tested reliabilities of between 0,70 and 0,90 were found (Jackson, & Rothman, 2003).

The *Intention to Quit Inventory (ItQI)* has been developed for the purpose of this study to measure employees' intention to leave an organisation. The ItQI consists of 4 items. The intention to leave an organisation was identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reliabilities will be computed in this study.

### **3.3.2 Administration of the measuring instruments**

The questionnaire distributed to the study population via e-mail and was designed to be returned automatically, via the e-mail, by the press of a button. The respondents had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire at home or at work. They had approximately 2 weeks to complete and return the questionnaire to me.

### **3.3.3 Data capturing**

After the completed questionnaires had been submitted, the data was captured in an MS Excel spread sheet, statistically processed and conclusions were drawn.

## **3.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the SAS-program (SAS Institute, 2000). Because a non-probability sample was used in this research, effect sizes (rather than inferential statistics) were used. Cronbach alpha coefficients were determined to indicate the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect) was set for the practical significance of correlation

coefficients (Cohen, 1988). A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (job satisfaction) that is predicted by the independent variables (job characteristics). A second stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (quitting intention) that is predicted by the independent variables (job characteristics and job satisfaction). To increase our probability, a modified cut-off point of 0,25 was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients for the intentions to quit dependant variable. The effect size in the case of multiple regressions is given by the following formula (Steyn, 1999):  $f^2 = R^2 / 1 - R^2$ . The following parameters were used: 0.01 (small effect), 0,1 (medium effect) and 0,35 (large effect) were set for the practical significance of  $f^2$  (Steyn, 1999).

### **3.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The following research hypotheses are formulated for the purposes of this study:

H1: A significant relationship exists between job characteristics, job satisfaction and intentions to quit

H2: Job characteristics are a significant predictor of job satisfaction, and turnover intentions.

H3: Job satisfaction is a significant predictor of turnover intentions.

H4: Job characteristics and job satisfaction are significant predictors of turnover.

### **3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The empirical study procedure that was followed in this study was discussed in this chapter by focusing on the study population; the different measuring batteries that were used; the research method; and the research hypotheses and statistical analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### INTRODUCTION

The research findings of this study are discussed in this chapter by focusing on; the descriptive statistics and internal consistency of the measuring instruments; the correlation between the measuring instruments and; the regression between job characteristics, job satisfaction and the intention to quit.

### 4.1 RESULTS

The descriptive statistics and the internal consistency of the measuring instruments included in this study are reported in Table 7.

Table 7:  
*Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-item Correlation Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments:*

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Inter-item correlation mean	Cronbach Alpha	No of items
Pace and amount of work	2.25	0.74	0.45	0.70	3
Mental load	1.79	0.50	0.37	0.64	3
Emotional load	2.44	0.78	0.55	0.78	3
Work variety	3.29	0.76	0.40	0.66	3
Opportunities to learn	3.80	0.84	0.65	0.79	2
Work independence	3.80	0.59	0.41	0.74	4
Relationship: colleagues	3.95	0.65	0.57	0.80	3
Relationship: immediate supervisor	3.92	0.81	0.72	0.88	3
Ambiguities at work	3.72	0.67	0.49	0.74	3
Information	3.64	0.72	0.57	0.79	3
Communication	3.46	0.62	0.37	0.71	4
Contact possibilities	3.88	0.54	0.41	0.66	3
Uncertainty about future	2.92	1.03	0.79	0.92	3
Remuneration	3.21	0.82	0.45	0.71	3
Career opportunities	3.68	0.77	0.50	0.75	3
Intrinsic factors	3.79	0.47	0.26	0.80	12
Extrinsic factors	3.46	0.64	0.37	0.78	6
General satisfaction	3.69	0.47	0.26	0.87	20
Quitting intention	3.68	0.99	0.52	0.81	4

Inspection of Table 7 shows that acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for most of the scales compared to the guideline of  $\alpha > 0,70$ , except for two which were mental load (0,65) and contact possibilities (0.66) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Furthermore, the inter-item correlations are considered acceptable compared to the guideline of  $0,15 < r < 0,50$  (Clark & Watson, 1995), thus indicate the internal consistency of all the measuring instruments used in this study.

This study was also conducted to determine the relationships between the variables covered in this study. The product-moment correlation coefficients between the measuring instruments are reported in Table 8. Correlations were computed for all the sub-scales of the measuring instruments.



Table 8:  
Correlation Coefficients between the Measuring Instruments:

	Pace and amount of work	Mental load	Emotional load	Work variety	Opportunities to learn	Work independence	Relationships with colleagues	Relationship with immediate supervisor	Ambiguities at work	Information	Communication	Contact possibilities	Uncertainty about future	Remuneration	Career opportunities	Intrinsic factors	Extrinsic factors	General satisfaction
Pace and amount of work	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mental load	0.53**#	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional load	0.22	0.29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work variety	-0.15	-0.18	-0.11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Opportunities to learn	-0.14	-0.30*&	-0.15	0.62**#	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work independence	-0.12	-0.19	-0.12	0.31*&	0.56**#	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Relationships with colleagues	-0.06	-0.04	0.06	0.24	0.31*&	0.37*&	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Relationship with supervisor	0.02	-0.06	0.09	0.19	0.30*&	0.39*&	0.47*&	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ambiguities at work	-0.25	-0.26	-0.08	0.28	0.39*&	0.45*&	0.30*&	0.44*&	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Information	-0.17	-0.24	-0.02	0.42*&	0.48*&	0.48*&	0.24	0.50**#	0.66**#	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Communication	-0.04	-0.15	0.08	0.22	0.30*&	0.28	0.26	0.46*&	0.39*&	0.42*&	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contact possibilities	-0.04	-0.05	-0.18	0.35*&	0.46*&	0.34*&	0.36*&	0.29	0.42*&	0.38*&	0.26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uncertainty about future	0.07	0.03	0.17	0.06	0.21	0.25	0.25	0.22	-0.04	0.08	0.30*&	0.10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Remuneration	0.19	0.07	-0.03	0.10	0.24	0.11	0.02	0.14	-0.03	0.16	0.24	0.17	0.25	-	-	-	-	-
Career opportunities	0.09	-0.05	-0.06	0.29	0.52**#	0.38*&	0.44*&	0.43*&	0.30*&	0.36*&	0.33*&	0.35*&	0.40*&	0.48*&	-	-	-	-
Intrinsic factors	-0.21	-0.38*&	-0.13	0.34*&	0.42*&	0.50**#	0.10	0.27	0.35*&	0.53**#	0.35*&	0.29	0.11	0.20	0.34*&	-	-	-
Extrinsic factors	0.04	-0.14	0.19	0.17	0.28	0.37*&	0.14	0.40*&	0.26	0.42*&	0.29	0.19	0.19	0.31*&	0.42*&	0.57**#	-	-
General satisfaction	-0.12	-0.33*	0.01	0.28	0.38*&	0.49*&	0.14	0.37*&	0.36*&	0.54**#	0.39*&	0.24	0.17	0.29	0.43*&	0.91**#	0.83**#	-
Quitting intention	0.12	0.09	0.20	0.26	0.22	0.13	-0.01	0.12	0.28	0.30*&	0.14	0.19	-0.07	0.10	0.11	0.16	0.28	0.28

\*\* = correlation significant at 0.01 level

\* = correlation significant at 0.05 level

& = practically significant correlation (medium effect):  $r > 0,30$

# = practically significant correlation (large effect):  $r > 0,50$

Table 8 indicates a statistically significant correlation coefficient between job characteristics, job satisfaction and quitting intentions of employees. The following was found:

Results of the study indicate that a statistical significant correlation with a large effect size between intrinsic job factor and information as well as a statistical significant correlation with a medium effect size between intrinsic job factor and mental load, work variety, opportunities to learn, ambiguities at work communication and career opportunities.

Results of the study also showed a statistical significant correlation with a large effect size between extrinsic job factor and career opportunities as well as a statistical significant correlation with a medium effect size between extrinsic job factor, work independence, relationship with immediate supervisor, information and remuneration.

Findings of this study also seem to suggest a statistical significant correlation with a large effect size between general job satisfaction and relationship with immediate supervisor, communication and career opportunities as well as a statistical significant correlation with a medium effect size between general job factor, mental load, opportunities to learn, work independence, ambiguities at work and information.

Results also showed a statistical significant correlation with a medium effect size between quitting intentions and work variety, ambiguities at work, information, extrinsic and general satisfaction.

### ***Regression analyses***

The next step was to determine the impact of the all the relevant correlations, given in Table 8. Job characteristics and job satisfaction predictors, with a correlation coefficient above 0.30, were used for this study and were all entered as context variables, with intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors and general satisfaction as the dependent variables. Job characteristics and job satisfaction predictors with a correlation coefficient

above 0.25 were used for this study and were all entered as context variables, with intention to quit as the dependent variables.

The results of the regression analyses appear in Table 9.

Table 9:

*Regression between Job Characteristics, Job Satisfaction and Quitting Intentions:*

	Intrinsic Factors		Extrinsic Factors		General Satisfaction		Quitting Intention	
	$\beta$	t-value	B	t-value	$\beta$	t-value	B	t-value
Mental load	-0.33*	-4.43	A	A	-0.23*	-3.19	A	A
Work variety	0.05	0.86	A	A	A	A	0.27*	2.09
Opportunities to learn	-0.05	-0.73	A	A	-0.06	-1.05	A	A
Work independence	0.22*	2.94	0.15	1.50	0.20*	2.66	A	A
Relationship with immediate supervision	A	A	0.16*	2.07	0.02	0.38	A	A
Ambiguities at work	-0.10	-1.45	A	A	-0.12	-1.74	0.37*	2.05
Information	0.17*	2.38	0.11	1.36	0.19*	2.71	-0.01	-0.08
Communication	0.11	1.74	A	A	0.11	1.73	A	A
Remuneration	A	A	0.13	1.82	A	A	A	A
Career opportunities	0.10	1.85	0.19*	2.17	0.20*	3.40	A	A
Intrinsic Factors	B	B	B	B	B	B	-0.37	-1.50
Extrinsic Factors	B	B	B	B	B	B	0.52*	3.09
<b>R</b>	0.68		0.59		0.69		0.45	
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.47		0.34		0.47		0.20	
<b>f<sup>2</sup> (Effect size)</b>	0.89		0.52		0.89		0.25	
(Practical significance)	(large)		(large)		(large)		(medium)	

\* = significant at 5%

A = low correlation between variable and predictor

B = dependent variable same as predictor

Closer inspection of Table 9 indicated that 47% of the variance of *intrinsic job satisfaction* was explained by job characteristics with mental load ( $\beta = -0.33$ ;  $t = -4.43$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ), work independence ( $\beta = 0.22$ ;  $t = 2.94$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ) and information ( $\beta = 0.17$ ;  $t = 2.38$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ) negative acts being the only significant predictors.

Table 9 also revealed a statistically significant effect, with job characteristics explaining 34% of the variance of *extrinsic job satisfaction* with relationship with immediate supervisor ( $\beta = 0.16$ ;  $t = 2.07$ ;  $p = 0.04$ ) and career opportunities ( $\beta = 0.19$ ;  $t = 2.17$ ;  $p = 0.03$ ) being the only statistically significant predictors.

It can also be seen in Table 9, that a statistically significant effect consists, explaining 47% of the variance of *general job satisfaction*, with mental load ( $\beta = -0.23$ ;  $t = -3.19$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ), work independence ( $\beta = 0.2$ ;  $t = 2.66$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ), information ( $\beta = 0.19$ ;  $t = 2.71$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ) and career opportunities ( $\beta = 0.20$ ;  $t = 3.40$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ) being the only statistically significant predictors.

Work variety ( $\beta = 0.27$ ;  $t = 2.09$ ;  $p = 0.04$ ), ambiguities at work ( $\beta = 0.37$ ;  $t = 2.05$ ;  $p = 0.04$ ) and extrinsic job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.52$ ;  $t = 3.09$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ) were the only statistically significant predictors of *quitting intentions*, explaining 23% of the variance.

## 4.2 DISCUSSION

We set out in this study to examine the role that job characteristics and job satisfaction play on the intention to leave of employees in a multinational petrochemical company. We found that the indicators of job characteristics, job satisfaction and quitting intentions show negative interrelations and could be predicted.

Intrinsic job satisfaction showed a statistical significant correlation with a large effect size between intrinsic job factors and information. Extrinsic job satisfaction showed a statistical significant correlation with a large effect size between extrinsic job factors and career opportunities. General job satisfaction showed a statistical significant correlation with a large effect size between general job factors and relationship with immediate supervisor, communication and career opportunities. Quitting intentions showed a statistical significant correlation with a medium effect size

between quitting intentions, work variety, ambiguities at work, information, extrinsic factors and general satisfaction.

Dawis (1992), Roberts and Roseanne (1998), indicated that employees would experience job satisfaction if they feel that their individual capacities, experience and values can be utilised in their work environment and that the work environment offers them opportunities and rewards, thus confirming that work independence and career opportunities play an important role in job satisfaction. O'Connor, Peters, Rudolf and Pooyan (1982) reported that supervision likely reflects that supervisors are the biggest constraints as seen by their subordinates, which confirms that a relationship with a supervisor can play a major role in personal job satisfaction.

Results of this study also indicate that job characteristics have a large effect on job satisfaction (intrinsic, extrinsic, and general) where job characteristics and job satisfaction had a medium effect on quitting intentions. While this study only indicates that job satisfaction and its facets have a medium effect on turnover, previous studies have shown that there is definitely a correlation between job satisfaction and turnover (Crampton & Wagner, 1994; Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985)

There were some variables that might have a medium effect on an employee's decision to leave an organisation such as work variety, ambiguities at work, information and extrinsic job satisfaction factors. Steel and Rentsch (1995) found that job satisfaction correlated with absenteeism and employee turnover. It is found that role conflict and role ambiguities are both related to job satisfaction or some degree of job satisfaction consequences, one of which is turnover intention. There are also studies that point out that role conflict and role ambiguities are directly related to turnover intentions of employees (Hammingway & Smith, 1999; Singh, 1998). This confirms that ambiguities at work and job satisfaction play a role in turnover intentions.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study was conducted to establish why skilled employees intend to leave this in specific multinational petrochemical organisation by using job characteristics and job satisfaction as the predictors of intentions to quit.

This chapter will cover conclusions with regard to the literature review and empirical study. Recommendations regarding the limitations and future studies will help future students to conduct surveys in such a manner as to improve the current study. There will also be recommendations made to management to help them in retaining their skilled personnel at the company.

### **5.2 CONCLUSION**

#### **5.2.1 Conclusions with regard to the literature review**

Job characteristics can be seen as features or qualities specific to a job, such as knowledge and skills required, mental and physical demands, and working conditions that can be recognized, defined, and assessed.

Job satisfaction is the extent to which an employee feels about his or her job. Job satisfaction is divided into two sections named; intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are those characteristics that influence the employee on a personal level and extrinsic factors are characteristics that influence an employee's work environment.

Turnover intentions can be seen as conscious wilfulness to seek for other alternatives in another organisation. Turnover intentions are influenced by certain factors like; attitudinal, behavioural and organisational factors. Work-related factors, personal characteristics and external factors can be seen as determinants of employee turnover. The literature indicates that job characteristics and job satisfaction is more influential predictors of turnover intentions.

### **5.2.2 Conclusions with regard to the empirical study**

The empirical study shows that acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for most of the scales compared to the guideline of  $\alpha > 0,70$ , thus indicating an internal consistency of all the measuring instruments used in this study.

The regression showed that job characteristic like work variety, ambiguities at work, information, and extrinsic job satisfaction factors might play a role in the turnover of skilled employees in this specific multinational petrochemical organisation. This is partially confirmed by previous studies where intention to leave is one of job satisfaction's consequences and that role conflict and role ambiguities also plays a role in an employees intention to leave an organisation (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

For the organisation to be successful in retaining its skilled personnel, it needs to ensure that it tends to all their needs. Talent management or talent retention plays a huge role these days, because if you cannot provide for your employees, they will go to someone that will give them what they want.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is based on a single department of a multinational petrochemical company and cannot be compared to other organisations or other areas of the country or overseas. This study covers a small portion of a large organisation that employs over twenty thousand people and cannot be compared to the characteristics of other sized companies.

Unfortunately due to the size of the sample, a confirmatory factor analysis could not be done to confirm or establish sub classes. The minimum number of respondents for this should have been 300 and only 109 questionnaires were returned.

## **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section focuses on recommendations for future research in this area as well as provides advice on the results of the study to management of the organisation where the study was conducted.

### **5.4.1. Recommendations for future research in the area of job characteristics, job satisfaction and quitting intentions**

The following should be considered future research efforts on these issues:

- Instead of a study that is based on a single department of a multinational petrochemical company, one can broaden the survey to get inputs from multiple departments in the organisation. One can broaden it further to different organisations to ensure more accurate results.
- This study covers a small portion of a large organisation that employs over twenty thousand people and cannot be compared to the characteristics of other sized companies.
- Future studies should ensure a larger sample size of at least 300 to be able to do a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm or establish sub classes.
- This study only looks at the job characteristics, job satisfaction and turnover intentions; demographic variables need to be added to the mix of variables in order to enlarge the study.

### **5.4.2 Recommendations for management in terms of the research results**

According to the research, factors like work variety, ambiguities at work, information, and extrinsic job satisfaction factors might play a role in the turnover of skilled employees in this specific multinational petrochemical organisation.



The following should be considered by this organisation in an effort to reduce intentions to quit:

- For the organisation to be successful in retaining its skilled personnel, it needs to ensure that it tends to all their needs. To be able to keep your skilled personnel in a company, you need to know what their needs are. This can be done by conducting interviews or by disseminating surveys.
- To manage talent retention appropriately, it is often necessary to take a holistic view of an organisation and the impact it has on its employees. Organisations often fall into the trap of throwing money at people to keep them in an organisation. Employee retention and motivation can however be achieved more elegantly and effectively by focusing on a broader set of retention/motivation elements.
- Organisations should be kept reliable when appointing employees and making promises that might not be realistic. They should also see if the person employed is in actual fact the correct person for the job by putting him or her on a probation period and establish the type of workload the employee can take on.
- Every employee should have a coach or buddy that he can go to in order to establish if the work was done efficiently. Constant feedback from the coaches is also essential in order for needs to be addressed.
- Employers should provide employees with career management tools, assessments and workshops to enable the employee to define career goals and aspirations. Job requirements should be made available to further help the employee to determine his goals and how to get there. Job postings should be fair and efficient.
- Managers should try and gain the trust of their employees by means of an open door policy. This will help sort out misunderstandings that might make some of the employees leave an organisation. This will also help

in understanding the psychological circumstances in which an employee might find him or herself at work.

- Managers should also embark on proper activities on individual level factors which could eventually assist in decreasing turnover intention which is mediated by job satisfaction and organisational commitment. These activities may include providing competitive compensation, properly designed job specifications, and planning career opportunities for subordinates.

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