

# **Factors Related to Job Satisfaction and Intent to Turnover for Part-Time Student Employees in University Dining Services**

Woo-Sik Choi, MS<sup>1</sup> and Jeannie Sneed, PhD, RD, SFNS, CFSP<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Former Graduate Student and <sup>2</sup>Professor

Iowa State University

Foodservice & Lodging Management Program

Iowa State University

Jeannie Sneed, PhD, RD, SFNS, CFSP

Professor, Hotel, Restaurant, and Institution Management

Iowa State University

## **Abstract**

Job satisfaction in the hospitality industry is important for retaining employees. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between work-related factors and job satisfaction, and between job satisfaction and intent to turnover for part-time student employees in university dining services.

A written questionnaire was developed to determine perceptions related to work-related characteristics (orientation and training, supervision, and feedback), job satisfaction, intent to turnover, and demographic characteristics. The questionnaire was administered to part-time student employees at three universities in a Midwestern state.

A regression model was used to determine relationships among variables. These results suggest that there is a significant relationship between work-related factors and demographic variables and job satisfaction, and between job satisfaction and intent to turnover. The regression model showed that two work-related factors (supervision quality and orientation and training) were related to job satisfaction. Two demographic variables (gender and nationality) were related to job satisfaction. Female students were more satisfied than males; U.S. students were more satisfied than international students. Job satisfaction was shown to be inversely related to intent to turnover. Improved supervision and well-developed training and orientation programs are necessary to overcome labor shortages and high turnover.

Keywords: job satisfaction, turnover, employee retention, supervision, training

## **Factors Related to Job Satisfaction and Intent to Turnover for Part-Time Student Employees in University Dining Services**

### **Introduction**

Labor shortages have been accepted as a general phenomenon in the U.S. hospitality industry since 1992 when the present level of economic prosperity began. The number of available jobs in the U.S. is projected to increase by 22 million by 2010. However, the labor force is anticipated to increase by only 17 million. The U.S. hospitality industry is expected to increase by 2.1 million jobs between 2002 and 2012 (17.8%), representing a faster increase than the 14.8% job growth for all industries (Coy, 2006). The foodservice industry employs 10.2 million people, representing 8% of the total workforce. It is projected that by 2014 the restaurant business alone will need an additional 1.8 million more workers including 45,000 foodservice managers and 112,000 front-line supervisors (Berta, 2004). In this situation, many restaurant operators have been struggling to solve the labor shortage problem, for example, by focusing on training to improve employee retention (Martin, 1998).

Decreasing employee turnover can be a solution to alleviate the severity of the labor shortage. Tenure and job satisfaction have been shown to be positively related for university foodservice employees (Duke & Sneed, 1989a).

Because job satisfaction is one factor affecting the tenure of employees (Fernsten & Brenner, 1987), consideration of employee job satisfaction is important in establishing an employee retention plan. From that point of view, job satisfaction must be considered important in managing student part-time employees in college and university dining services. Therefore, the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover needs to be determined for that employee group.

There are several definitions of job satisfaction. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction in terms of a discrepancy between the actual needs and wants of employees and how they are fulfilled. If there is a gap between an employee's needs and wants, and the employee's perceived levels of job satisfaction, dissatisfaction results. If there is not, satisfaction results. Lawler and Suttle (1973) proposed that the level of job satisfaction is based on an employee's comparison of 'what is believed to be received' (input) and 'what actually is received' (output). Based on the difference between input and output, job satisfaction or dissatisfaction can occur. Landy (1985) defined job satisfaction as a "human mind to keep the neutral state" (Berry, 1998, p.273). At first, an employee has instant emotional reactions to his or her job. Secondly, a counter emotional reaction occurs after the employee has had many emotional responses to the job. When it is considered that employee job satisfaction is based on employee job perceptions, job satisfaction is defined as a job attitude or morale. An attitude can be defined as a cognitive and emotional process that results in an intention and a specific pattern of behavior. Morale also can be defined as an emotional outcome to produce a certain pattern of behavior (Bagozzi, 1992). Consequently, employee job satisfaction can be defined as an affective and emotional state that can result in a particular pattern of behavior depending on the employee's job situation.

Most studies done in college and university dining services have focused on the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction. Previous studies found that job characteristics and age were positively related to employee job satisfaction and negatively related to employee intention of turnover (Jaffe', Almanza, & Chen, 1994). Gray, Niehoff, and Miller (2000) found a positive relationship between student employee job characteristics and job satisfaction. In another study of student employee job satisfaction and job characteristics, feedback, which is one of the job characteristics, was shown to be related to job satisfaction (Bartlett, Propper, & Scerbo, 1999). However, all of these studies were limited to the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction and intent to turnover. In a study of the relationship of job characteristics and organizational commitment with job satisfaction, it was shown that organizational commitment is positively related to employee job satisfaction (Sneed & Herman, 1990). Specifically, age has a positive relationship with employees' organizational commitment. Considering the relationship of age with employee job satisfaction, demographic factors need to be evaluated in this study.

One study measured the relationship between job satisfaction and intent to turnover. Gray et al. (2000) showed that student employee job satisfaction has a negative relationship with intent to turnover. Jaffe' et al. (1994) found that entry-level employees are the least satisfied of all employees and higher-paid employees are more satisfied than those earning lower pay. Student employee jobs exhibit both of these characteristics (entry-level and low pay).

Employee job satisfaction may be affected by many factors, and there are numerous consequences of employee job satisfaction. Factors related to job satisfaction can be divided into work-related characteristics and demographic variables. Supervision quality, orientation and training, job characteristics, and demographic variables are factors that have been shown to be related to employee job satisfaction in some job settings (Blank & Slipp, 1994; Duke & Sneed, 1989b; Eberhardt & Shani, 1984; Fernsten & Brenner, 1987; Roehl & Swerdlow, 1999; Sims, Szilagyi, & Keller, 1976; Tayeb, 1996). Employee job performance (Vroom, 1964), customer orientation (Hawkins & Lee, 1991; Hoffman & Ingram, 1992), customer perception of service quality (Schneider & Bowen, 1985), employee attitude (Schmit & Allscheid, 1995), and intent to turnover (Porter & Steer, 1973; Vroom, 1964) have been shown to be affected by job satisfaction. This study will focus on intent to turnover.

In this study, work-related characteristics (supervision quality, orientation and training, and feedback) and demographic variables (gender, age, nationality, student status, and length of work) were proposed antecedents to job satisfaction. Employee intention to turnover was proposed as a consequence of job satisfaction because of this study's focus on the labor shortage issue. The purpose of this study was to determine the job satisfaction of part-time student employees in dining services and to examine the relationship between supervision quality, orientation and training, feedback, and demographic variables and job satisfaction. In addition, the relationship between job satisfaction and intent to turnover was examined.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Sample**

The research sample consisted of part-time student employees working in dining services in three universities in Iowa: Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, and the University of Northern Iowa. Questionnaires were distributed to part-time student employees currently working in dining services, including student managers and all student workers. At Iowa State University, a total of 182 student employees in two dining venues were given questionnaires. At the University of Iowa, which had 190 student employees, 190 questionnaires were distributed. At the University of Northern Iowa, which employed about 300 students, 285 questionnaires were distributed.

### **Research Instrument**

The research instrument, developed to collect data related to five variables, was developed based on previous research. Work-related variables were measured: orientation and training, supervision, and feedback. Orientation was composed of one item adopted from a study conducted by Puckett (1982) and training was measured using three items. A 10-item supervision quality scale was used. Questions for the training and supervision quality scales were adapted from the research of Roehl and Swerdlow (1999). The feedback scale consisted of the 3-item feedback subscale from the Job Characteristics Inventory (JCI) (Sims, Szilagyi, & Keller, 1976). Job satisfaction was measured using six items adapted from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969). The employee intent to turnover was composed of four questions adapted from Lee (1990). Respondents answered all questions on a 5-point scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Demographic items (gender, age, student status, nationality, length of work, and job category) were included. The research protocol and questionnaire were approved by the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. They were approved prior to data collection.

### **Pilot Test**

The questionnaire was pilot tested at Iowa State University by six graduate students in Hotel, Restaurant, and Institution Management. Two were employed at dining services and three others had worked previously for dining services. Four of the six were international students. Comments about the questionnaire were used to modify and improve the clarity of each item and determine the time required to complete the questionnaire.

### **Data Collection**

Personal telephone calls were made and e-mails were sent to the three dining service directors to request their participation in the study and obtain permission to distribute questionnaires. A request also was made to obtain the number of part-time student employees currently working in their university dining services. Before distribution of questionnaires, each unit's dining service manager was informed about the survey. Each dining service manager was contacted by e-mail

to schedule a day for questionnaire distribution.

A questionnaire packet was composed of a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. The 4-page questionnaire was printed on 11x17" paper and folded in half. Three different colors were used to differentiate the universities. No code numbers were used on individual questionnaires to ensure anonymity of responses. The cover letter, printed on university letterhead, explained the purpose of the study, ensured participants' anonymity, and offered to all participants a chance to be included in a drawing for \$50 to encourage participation. A questionnaire packet was attached to each student employee's time card.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 9.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics (means  $\pm$  standard deviation) were calculated for job satisfaction and intent to turnover. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of all scales. Multiple regression models were used to determine relationships between work-related characteristics and demographic variables and job satisfaction, and between job satisfaction and intent to turnover. A probability level of  $p \leq 0.05$  was used for all tests of significance.

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic Profile of Sample

A total of 657 questionnaires was distributed to part-time student employees in dining services at three universities in Iowa. The total response rate was 20% (133 of 657). Response rates were 16.4% from Iowa State University, 15.8% from the University of Iowa, and 25.6% from the University of Northern Iowa. The low response rate may be related to the fact that the researcher did not contact each respondent individually, but rather surveys were distributed by managers at each cafeteria. No follow up was used due to procedural difficulty for anonymity, which also could contribute to low response rates. Table 1 summarizes demographic characteristics of the study respondents.

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the study sample (N=133)**

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	43	32.3
Female	90	67.7
<b>Student Status</b>		
Undergraduate	125	94.0
Graduate	6	4.5
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 20	56	42.1
20-29	76	57.1
30 or older	1	.8

<b>Nationality</b>		
U.S.	115	86.5
International	18	13.5
<b>Country Location</b>		
Asia	7	5.3
Europe	3	2.3
Africa	2	1.5
Americas <sup>b</sup>	119	89.5
Other	2	1.5
<b>Job Category<sup>c</sup></b>		
Preparation	41	22.9
Dish Room	44	24.6
Office Work	2	1.1
Service	70	39.1
Student Manager	22	12.3
<b>Hourly Pay</b>		
\$5.15-6.25	10	7.5
\$6.26-7.50	106	79.7
\$7.51 or higher	17	12.8
<b>Length of Work</b>		
Less than 1 month	2	1.5
1 month- 6 months	33	24.8
7-12 months	47	35.3
13-24 months	23	17.3
More than 24 months	28	21.1

<sup>a</sup> The percentage may not be 100% due to missing data.

<sup>b</sup> Four students were from South America.

<sup>c</sup> Total is 179 due to multiple responses.

### **Job Satisfaction and Intent to Turnover**

The Cronbach's alpha for the 6-item job satisfaction scale was 0.80. Item-total statistics indicated that all items should remain in the scale. A 4-item scale was used for intent to turnover. The Cronbach's alpha for the intent to turnover scale was 0.88. Student ratings for items related to job satisfaction and intent to turnover are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Student employees' ratings of job satisfaction and intent to turnover (N=133)**

Items	Mean $\pm$ SD <sup>a</sup>
<b>Job Satisfaction<sup>b</sup> (n=133; <math>\alpha</math> = 0.80)</b>	
I like the people that I work with.	4.4 $\pm$ 0.8
Dining service is a good place to work because it offers flexibility in work scheduling.	4.3 $\pm$ 0.8
I am satisfied with the supervision I receive on my job.	4.1 $\pm$ 0.8
I am satisfied that I can be promoted to a student manager.	3.8 $\pm$ 0.9
I feel that I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.	3.8 $\pm$ 0.9
I enjoy the work that I do.	3.6 $\pm$ 1.0
<b>Intent to Turnover<sup>b</sup> (n=116; <math>\alpha</math> = 0.88)<sup>c</sup></b>	
If I had my preference, I would work for dining service again next semester.	3.6 $\pm$ 1.2
I plan to work for dining service again next semester.	3.4 $\pm$ 1.3
If I had my preference, I would leave dining service and find another job for next semester	2.9 $\pm$ 1.3
I plan to leave dining service and find another job next semester.	2.7 $\pm$ 1.3

<sup>a</sup> Standard deviation

<sup>b</sup> A five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was used.

<sup>c</sup> Student employees scheduled to graduate at the end of semester were excluded.

### **Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Intent to Turnover**

There were two conditions in implementing the regression model. First, the reverse set was applied to “If I had my preference, I would work for dining service again next semester” and “I plan to work for dining service again next semester” to measure the intention to turnover. Second, students who marked “yes” for the question of “Will you graduate this semester?” were excluded from the analysis because they could not be student employees during the next semester. Multiple regression analysis showed that job satisfaction was related to employee turnover intention. Table 3 shows the model with the individual job satisfaction dimensions. The results were significant and the  $R^2=0.41$ , indicating that 41% of the variance in intent to turnover was explained by dimensions of job satisfaction ( $F=12.64$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). Among the dimensions of

job satisfaction, satisfaction with supervision ( $p \leq 0.032$ ) and the work itself ( $p < 0.000$ ) were the significant predictors of student employee intent to turnover.

**Table 3. Relationship between job satisfaction and intent to turnover (n=116)**

DV <sup>a</sup>	IV <sup>b</sup>	F	$\beta$	p
IT <sup>c</sup>	<b>Job Satisfaction<sup>d</sup></b>	12.635		0.000
	I am satisfied with the supervision I receive on my job.		-0.203	0.032*
	I like the people I work with.		0.095	0.367
	I enjoy the work that I do.		-0.530	0.000*
	I am satisfied that I can be promoted to a student manager.		-0.062	0.540
	I feel that I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.		0.097	0.267
	Dining service is a good place to work because it offers flexibility in work schedule.		-0.092	0.328

<sup>a</sup> DV= Dependent Variable

<sup>b</sup> IV= Independent Variable

<sup>c</sup> IT= Intent to turnover

<sup>d</sup>  $R^2 = 0.41$

\*Variables showing significance,  $p \leq 0.05$

Significant job satisfaction dimensions were shown to be negatively related to student employee intent to turnover. Specifically, satisfaction with the work itself ( $\beta = -0.530$ ) was more negatively related to intent to turnover than supervision ( $\beta = -0.203$ ). Consequently, supervisors in university dining services need to be concerned about the satisfaction of work itself in managing student employees.

### **Relationship of Work-Related Characteristics and Demographic Variables to Job Satisfaction**



A multiple linear regression model was applied to determine the relationship of work-related characteristics (supervision quality, orientation and training, and feedback) and demographic variables (gender, student status, age, nationality, pay, and length of work) to job satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scales measuring work-related characteristics. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scales were as follows: 0.90 for supervision quality, 0.86 for orientation and training, and 0.79 for feedback. Mean scores for each item in the four scales are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Mean ratings of student dining services employees for items in the supervision quality, orientation and training, and feedback scales<sup>a</sup> (n=116)**

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Mean ± SD<sup>b</sup></b>
<b>Supervision Quality (<math>\alpha = 0.90</math>)</b>	<b>3.8 ± 0.7</b>
The managers, including student managers, in dining service treat me fairly.	4.2 ± 0.8
My supervisor is able to solve problems efficiently.	4.1 ± 0.8
My supervisor is able to make good decisions.	4.1 ± 0.8
The managers in our dining service treat me and other workers fairly.	4.0 ± 1.0
My supervisor allows me to respond to appraisals of me.	3.9 ± 0.9
My supervisor tells me when I do a good job.	3.8 ± 1.0
I feel that I can bring complaints about working conditions to my dining service manager.	3.7 ± 1.1
Managers in my dining service are interested in the working conditions of student employees.	3.7 ± 0.9
Managers of the dining service that I work for tell me when I need to improve my performance.	3.6 ± 0.9
I am well informed about the dining service that I work for and changes that take place.	3.5 ± 1.1
<b>Orientation and Training (<math>\alpha = 0.86</math>)</b>	<b>3.7 ± 0.9</b>
I am confident in performing my job responsibility because of the training I received.	3.9 ± 1.0
I feel that I received thorough training after I was hired in dining service.	3.7 ± 1.0
I feel I received a thorough review of any policies or procedures related to my job during the first week.	3.6 ± 1.1
I feel that I received a thorough orientation when I was hired.	3.5 ± 1.2

<b>Feedback (<math>\alpha = 0.79</math>)</b>	<b>3.4 ± 0.9</b>
I can find how well I am performing as I work.	3.6 ± 0.9
I perceive that I receive feedback regularly about my performance.	3.3 ± 1.1
I receive the feedback about my work from the individuals other than my supervisors.	3.3 ± 1.0

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<sup>a</sup> A five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was used.

<sup>b</sup> Standard Deviation

Work-related characteristics and demographic variables were shown to be significant predictors of student employee job satisfaction. Table 5 shows the relationship between work-related characteristics and demographic variables, and job satisfaction. The results were significant with an  $R^2=0.62$ , indicating that 62% of the variance in job satisfaction was explained by work-related characteristics and demographic variables ( $F=13.702, p < 0.000$ ).

Among work-related characteristics, supervision quality ( $p < 0.001$ ) and orientation and training ( $p \leq 0.002$ ) were significant. Among demographic variables, gender ( $p \leq 0.001$ ) and nationality ( $p \leq 0.002$ ) were shown to be related to student employee job satisfaction. Supervision quality was shown to be more related to job satisfaction than other variables ( $\beta = 0.377$ ). Orientation and training ( $\beta = 0.262$ ) and gender ( $\beta = 0.209$ ) were shown to be positively related to job satisfaction. Nationality was shown to be negatively related to job satisfaction ( $B= -0.193$ ), meaning that international students were less satisfied than U.S. student employees. Female students were more satisfied than male student employees.

### **Pearson correlation**

In the test of the relationships among work-related characteristics, it was shown that all variables were significantly related to each other. Table 6 shows the relationship among work-related characteristics. Specifically, supervision quality was shown to be more positively related to orientation and training (0.642) and feedback (0.626) than the relationship between training and orientation and feedback (0.429). Though, feedback was not significant in the multiple regression model, feedback may be important as a variable affecting student employee job satisfaction because of the relationship with supervision quality and orientation and training. Consequently, supervision quality is important for student employee orientation and training and for feedback.

**Table 5. Relationship between work-related characteristics and demographic variables and**

**job satisfaction (n=125)**

<b>DV<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>IV<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>JS<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>Work-related characteristics<sup>d</sup> and demographic variables</b>		13.702	0.000
	Supervision Quality		0.377	0.000*
	Orientation and Training		0.262	0.002*
	Feedback		0.096	0.231
	Gender		0.209	0.001*
	Student Status		0.083	0.240
	Age		0.049	0.482
	Nationality		-0.193	0.002*
	Pay		0.099	0.123
	Length of Work		0.053	0.465

<sup>a</sup> DV= Dependent Variable

<sup>b</sup> IV= Independent Variables

<sup>c</sup> JS= Job Satisfaction

<sup>d</sup> R<sup>2</sup>=0.62

\*Significant Variables

**Table 6. Relationship among work-related characteristics (n=130)**

<b>Work-related characteristics</b>	<b>SQ<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>O&amp;T<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>FB<sup>c</sup></b>
<b>SQ<sup>a</sup></b>			
<b>O&amp;T<sup>b</sup></b>	0.642		
<b>FB<sup>c</sup></b>	0.626	0.429	

\*All correlations are significant at 0.01 level.

<sup>a</sup>SQ= Supervision Quality

<sup>b</sup>O&T= Orientation and Training

<sup>c</sup>FB= Feedback

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Several conclusions and recommendations can be made based on findings of this research:

- Student employees were less satisfied with work, promotion opportunities, and pay than with supervision, people with whom they work, and flexible schedule. Supervisors may want to examine the work of student employees to determine if there are strategies to make the work more interesting (such as job rotation). Supervisors should consider developing opportunities for promotion, which could lead to pay increases. Providing incentives for student employees based on their performance also may increase their satisfaction.
- Work-related characteristics such as supervision quality and orientation and training were significant in the regression model and are significantly related to job satisfaction. Top-level managers need to consider implementing a supervisor training program in an effort to improve the quality of supervision given to employees. Further, they should establish and implement well-structured orientation and training programs.
- Gender and nationality were significant in the regression model and are significantly related to job satisfaction. Females have higher levels of job satisfaction, as do domestic students. Supervisors should be aware that these differences exist. Research is needed to determine why these differences exist and strategies for improving job satisfaction of males and international employees.
- Job satisfaction was shown to be a predictor of student employees' intent to turnover. Work itself and supervision were the significant individual job satisfaction attributes most useful for predicting intent to turnover. Thus, improvements in job assignments for student employees and quality of supervision may reduce turnover, which could reduce training costs and improve customer service

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