

Determinants of Instructors' Intention to Stay in First Generation Public Universities in Ethiopia: Management and PRs Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Organisational turnover intention (TI) is a serious problem among academic staff in Ethiopian universities. For universities to stay competent and attain their vision, retaining qualified and talented academic staff is paramount. The study examines variables determining intention to stay (IS) in First Generation Universities (FGUs). The study involved a cross-sectional correlational study. From three randomly selected FGUs—Jimma University, Hawassa University, and the University of Gonder—the study selected 600 instructors using stratified random sampling. The study used a structured questionnaire to gather information; descriptive statistics and parametric tests served as means of data analyses. As the statistical analysis indicated, being female significantly influenced IS in FGUs. The stepwise regression identified the perceived internal University image (UI) of FGUs, job satisfaction (JS), communication source satisfaction (CS), and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) uniquely determining IS in FGUs. The four variables collectively explained 38.8% (Adjusted R² = 38.4%) of the variation in IS. The study recommends strengthening these retention mechanisms and identifying other factors determining IS in FGUs.

Keywords: Communication source satisfaction, Ethiopia, first-generation universities, intention to stay, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour

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INTRODUCTION

Employees are expected to stay longer, work committedly, communicate effectively, and perceive their organisation positively. Retaining experienced, committed, communicative, and optimistic university academic staff is paramount

in achieving organisational vision. It enhances organisational productivity, builds organisational image, and saves resources, time, and energy from employing and training new academic staff. Yunita et al. (2018) read: “Human resources who perform well not only affect the organization’s performance but also will support its sustainability” (p. 451).

FGUs, whose core functions involve teaching, research, and community services, cannot come into the picture without research and publications. To publish a large number of scientific findings in nationally and internationally accredited journals, to win research projects, and to develop curriculum and postgraduate programs, the presence of experienced researchers and professors is crucial. Beram et al. (2023) conclude: “The quality of education is heavily influenced by the professionalism of teachers and the effectiveness of educational leadership” (p. 1363). Hence, in this competitive world, for FGUs, retaining academic staff, especially with assistant professors and above, is essential. But, the problem is the high turnover of these instructors and researchers. At Gonder University, one of the FGUs, the academic staff’s TI was high (Dachew et al., 2016). According to Hailu et al. (2013), about two-thirds (66.6%) of the academic staff who left the College of Health Sciences at Addis Ababa University (AAU) were Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors.

One of the contributing factors for intent to leave (IL) or stay is the salary system. Not considering work experience

in salary increment triggers intention to leave. Dachew et al. (2016) warn: “Because the current salary system for the academic staff in Ethiopia considers only academic rank rather than service, it may demotivate the more experienced staff” (p. 4). Such a turnover has a negative effect on universities. Hailu et al. (2013) forewarn: “Turnover of faculty and researchers is increasing alarmingly and costing the universities and the country at large” (p.1). If organisations cannot retain employees for a needed time, their chance of rendering quality services that enable them to remain competent is less likely (Hagedorn, 2002). Other researchers suggest: “Such employees [are] worth to retain if organisations want to thrive in the harsh business environment. Getting the best out of the human resources and retaining them is certainly a crucial task faced by management” (Yunita et al., 2018, p. 451).

Some other contributing factors for the IL or IS include but are not limited to socio-demographic factors, OCB, CS, perceptions of internal UI, and JS. With regards to the socio-demographic factors, studies revealed that being male, being married, place of work, work environment, having teaching experience of more than 10 years, being an assistant professorship and above, and being from the Institute of Health significantly related to intention to leave universities (Dachew et al., 2016). A study conducted at Debre Berhan University found that academic staff’s working environment and ethnicity significantly affected their turnover intention (Kebede & Fikire, 2022).

On the contrary, another study found that “being between the ages of 40 to 49, being married, and having a bachelor’s degree were predictors of intent to stay in the nursing profession” (Engeda et al., 2014, p. 1). Nevertheless, as reported by Ferede et al. (2018), demographic factors like “age, marital status, religion, educational status, [work] experience... having children... having an alternative source of income...” (p. 5) did not correlate to leaving intention. Hence, founded on these studies, the current research proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Work experience has a significant influence on academic staff’s IS in FGUs.

JS magnitude is the other variable that impacts workers’ TI or IS. Findings about the interaction of JS with IS and TI are different. A study conducted in India reported that JS positively impacts the IS (Thakur & Arora, 2022). Conversely, some studies conducted in higher institutes in the Middle East and Africa revealed that JS interacted negatively with TI. Serin et al.’s (2022) investigation, which was administered by the academic staff of Tishk International University in Iraq, and the study by Otache and Inekwe (2021), which was conducted on lecturers with Ph.D. at Nigerian Polytechnic, both uncovered that JS and TI interacted reversely. The finding by Amani and Komba (2016) reads: “There was a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention among the [Tanzanian

public universities] lecturers, whereby those who were highly satisfied were less likely to have the intention to leave their job” (p. 1). Similar findings are reported by studies conducted in Ethiopian higher institutes (Dachew et al., 2016; Guyo, 2023). According to the finding of Guyo (2023), “excessive job satisfaction has a lesser tendency in the direction of absenteeism and resignation” (p. 38) among faculty members in Ethiopian higher education institutes (HEIs).

Looking at the problem deeply, as revealed by many studies, dissatisfaction with “pay and benefit, with autonomy, and professional opportunities” (Dachew et al., 2016, p. 1), “remuneration, cash incentives, work-life balance, supervisor support and employee recognition” (Mendis, 2017, p. 67) significantly influence intent to leave an organisation. According to Dachew et al. (2016), in Ethiopia, most academic employees are less content with their university’s payment and gains, making them look for another job. Suppose academicians recognise that the amount of remuneration they obtain is not fairly related to their work. In that case, they intend to look for another job so that they can satisfy their needs. These researchers reported: “Teachers who were not satisfied on pay and benefit subscale of job satisfaction were nearly two times more likely to leave their job when compared with those who were satisfied” (p. 6). Another local study conducted in three selected public universities found that 45.8 % of academic staff were dissatisfied with their job and confirmed a significant relationship

between job dissatisfaction and leaving intention (Mulie & Sime, 2018). More than ever, the cost of living is rising alarmingly, which could force the academic staff to look for additional jobs or organisations that pay them better.

On the other hand, “satisfaction with autonomy and professional opportunities, scheduling, and pay and benefits...were the significant predictors of intent to stay in the nursing occupation” (Engeda et al., 2014, p. 1). Compared to workers who reported dissatisfaction, workers who felt satisfied with the job’s nature preferred to stay (Ferede et al., 2018; George et al., 2013). The former seek alternative work (Dalimunthe et al., 2017). Hence, JS significantly affects TI and IS. Public relations studies (Hong & Yang, 2009) and marketing studies (Brown et al., 2005) found that customer satisfaction influences positive intentions toward the organisation. JS’s correlation with TI has been investigated extensively earlier. However, comparatively, a body of research investigating JS’s influence on IS in organisations in general and in FGUs in particular is lacking. Hence, the study speculates:

H2: JS strongly relates to the intention to stay in FGUs.

The other contributing factor to staying in or leaving an organisation is CS, a variable emphasised in the study of PRs. In our study, CS refers to overall communication source satisfaction (communication with colleagues and supervisors). Effective communication

motivates workers to be engaged in work and stay in the organisation. Sadia et al. (2017), acknowledging Worldwide (2010), write: “...companies who invest in effective communication strategies have higher engagement and organisational performance” (p. 176). These authors also write that an organisation’s success depends on satisfactory communication. A study among Selcuk University research assistants revealed that overall, CS interacts with JS, and both contribute to employee retention (Gülнар, 2007). Referring to different studies, Alshuaibi et al. (2020) emphasise the influence effective communication has on IS: “As communication plays such an important role in organisational life, effective communication may be related to... low intentions to quit” (p. 1506).

Conversely, ineffective or inadequate communication could have a reversed effect. “If organisational communication is inadequate (employee communication satisfaction is supposed as low), it results... [in] greater employee turnover” (Gülнар, 2007, p. 191). Mohamad (2008), who studied hotel communication, reported that overall communication satisfaction [dissatisfaction] predicts workers’ intention to leave. The study’s participants, whose overall CS was below average, preferred to leave their organisation compared to their counterparts with above-average overall CS. Outcomes from other studies also show that workers who were dissatisfied with managers’ communication had planned not to stay (Greene, 2012; Michael, 2014, as cited in Dalgıç & Akgündüz, 2019).

Another study conducted on critical care nurses reported that all dimensions of CS moderately interacted with TI (Vermeir et al., 2018). According to one tourism-based communication study (Abdien, 2019), “communication climate, supervisory communication, co-worker communication, organisational integration, personal feedback, and media quality” (p. 28) significantly influence employee TI. Mohamad (2008), from Malaysia, concluded that critical communication problems could lead to employee turnover. Alshuaibi et al. (2020) found that the two sub-constructs of CS, “supervisory communication and corporate communication” (p. 1505), influenced TI through organisational commitment. Though many studies support overall CS in predicting TI, studies regarding the degree to which CS influences IS in FGUs are lacking in different settings. Thus, based on these studies, the researchers propose the following hypothesis:

H3: CS strongly influences academic staff's IS in FGUs.

The other intent-determining variable is OCB, which is given due attention in management and PR studies (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Committed and well-behaved workers characterise stronger OCB. When injustice prevails in organisations, OCB is negatively affected, and this, in turn, triggers TI. In this regard, an unhealthy organisational culture, which includes, but is not limited to, recruiting and seeking the wrong employees—demotivated and less

committed employees—are underlying factors that cause fast turnover in many organisations (Hailu et al., 2013). Such bad practices increase turnover, and higher turnover of employees affects the firmness of the employing institution by eradicating talented and committed professionals from the organisation (Woltmann et al., 2008), and losing well-mannered and talented employees with extra commitment is a PR crisis. The study of Nadiri and Tanova (2010) found a negative association between TI and OCB.

“...High continuance commitment and high normative commitment [sub constructs of OCB] were the significant predictors of intent to stay in the nursing profession” (Engeda et al., 2014, p. 1). Conversely, Alshuaibi et al. (2020) reported that organisational commitment inversely correlates to TI. From the three sub-constructs of OCB, low normative commitments were reported as a significant predictor of academic staff's TI. Ferede et al. (2018) note: “Professionals with a low level of normative commitment, who do not feel they have the obligation to remain and serve their organisation, may reveal the desire to leave out than staying” (p. 6). Conversely, Shanker (2018) found that OCB positively influences employees' IS. A PR study by Kang (2014) concluded that affective commitment, which is a manifestation of OCB, impacts supportive behavioural intention toward an organisation. Thus, this study hypothesises:

H4: OCB strongly influences academic staff's IS in FGUs.

Finally, another factor that determines IS or TI is the perceived image of an organisation, a variable that is given significant attention in PR studies. If employees have a positive perception of their organisation, they prefer staying there to leaving. One mechanism of creating a positive image of an organisation is giving the required support to its employees. When employees get the necessary support from their organisation, it is more likely that the stress they experience from work is minimised. The study of Yunita et al. (2018) hypothesised: "perceived organisational support will have a significant and negative effect on turnover intention and stress"; however, the findings from their study did not back up the hypothesis of turnover intention but stress. They conclude: "Higher occupational stress will lead to the increasing turnover intention" (p. 454). According to Rho et al. (2015), organisational image positively correlates to identification, where the latter significantly influences absenteeism. The study of Brown et al. (2005) found a positive relationship between corporate reputation and behavioural intention toward the organisation. The relationship between internal organisational image and IS is also less examined than external image in different situations, especially from the perspective of PRs.

Most notably, scholars and practitioners have recognised the importance of managing organisational image in crisis

situations from the perspective of public relations or reputation management. Compared with the scholarly and practical attention paid to managing the perceptions of outside constituents, little is known about how these images can influence organisations inside members' everyday work (Rho, 2015, p. 428).

Particular to FGUs, a dearth of studies measure the internal organisational image's interaction with IS. Thus, the study hypothesis:

H5: Perceived favourable internal image strongly influences academic staff's IS in FGUs.

As these studies show, the magnitude (high vs low) of planning to stay in universities will forecast their staying behaviour. Hence, to minimise the level of TI, it is important to examine variables that determine the IS in FGUs. That is to say, FGUs need to identify what influences the instructors and researchers to stay in the universities.

The study of behavioural intention as a dependent variable is not new in PRs, marketing, journalism and communication studies but is limited. A PR study by Ki and Hon (2007) found that perception of satisfaction, commitment and trust (manifestations of OCB) influenced behavioural intention toward the organisation through a positive attitude. Other prior research in public relations (Hong & Yang, 2009) and marketing (Brown

et al., 2005) shows that customer satisfaction and corporate reputation are positively associated with behavioural intention toward the organisation. Social media communication and customer satisfaction predict behavioural intention (Fazal et al., 2021). Yet, as shown earlier, most reviewed studies were conducted with TI. However, studies considering important variables (JS, OCB, UI, and CS) that determine intent to stay in the FGUs in Ethiopia, especially in PR research, lack, and even the existing ones (reviewed in this paper) incline to health, hotel, and tourism industries.

Nevertheless, the findings are in conflict. On top of that, PR studies that consider theories/models (Social Exchange Theory; Social Intelligence Construct) that have been applied to frame the current study are rare in the context of FGUs. Thus, the finding from this study not only narrows the existing research gap but also enables FGU's management and PRs directorate to examine their internal situation about whether this intention is present and to hold or reduce the loss of instructors and researchers accordingly. "If the ultimate goal of public relations is to build mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its public, then measuring the outcomes of those relationships provides an important indicator of public relations effectiveness" (Ki & Hon, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, the study aims to examine variables that determine IS in FGUs. The study answers the following research questions:

1. Which demographic characteristics significantly relate to IS in the FGUs?

2. Which variables (CS, JS, OCB, UI) strongly predict IS in FGUs?

REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

This part briefly reviews two leadership theories, the Social Exchange Theory and the Social Intelligence Construct (Model, Theory), as they are assumed to fit the current study.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET is an appropriate theory for studies that examine intention (Eketu & Ogbu, 2015). According to them, SET was first proposed by Thibault and Kelley in 1959. The theory states that partners or stakeholders assess the balance between what they give and get in exchange. In an organisational context, employees expect to be reciprocated for their contribution. According to SET, in relation to the current study, when employees are reciprocated for their contribution by the employing organisation, they will display OCB—give their best, perform extra, feel connected to the organisation, and be more motivated and satisfied (JS); perceive their organisation positively (organisational image), and intend to stay more rather than looking for another job (Bunderson, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000, as cited in Mustapha et al., 2010). Eketu and Ogbu (2015), who framed their study by SET, referring to Mossholder et al. (2005), propose: "individuals who felt that they had received benefits from others would later feel an obligation and then compensate through effort and loyalty" (p. 30). Conversely, if the employees are not

reciprocated for their contribution, they will become demotivated, dissatisfied, discouraged, and reluctant, which in turn leads to turnover intention. A study reads: “From a social exchange perspective when parties privy to the relationship are mutually satisfied with exchanges, they will continue and vice versa” (Gutierrez et al., 2012, as cited in Kakar et al., 2019, p. 77).

Chew (2004) also applied SET in her PhD thesis to retain core employees in SMEs in Australia. Her study concluded that different variables, including organisational commitment, could influence the intention to stay. Other studies (Snape & Redman, 2003; Somers, 2009) also concluded that employees who had a high level of affective attachment to an organisation and a favourable perception of the employing organisation were less likely to withdraw.

Relating it to the current study, according to SET, the academic staff does its best in teaching, research, and community services. It intends to stay more in the university when s/he gets the reciprocated benefits from FGUs. To know whether such a reciprocal relationship exists in FGUS and to take an informed decision-making process, examining the relationship between the predictor variables OCB, JS, CS, IUI, and the outcome variable IS is important. Therefore, this study attempts to explain the extent of the relationship using SET. Eketu and Ogbu (2015) also suggest applying SET for intention investigating: “Intention to stay has its base on social exchange theory” (p. 30).

Social Intelligence Construct

Social Intelligence is one of the theories of leadership originally coined by American psychologist Thorndike (1920, as referred to in Eketu & Ogbu, 2015). According to Koch (1997), “Social intelligence is a personality trait that refers to an individual’s ability to interpret correctly their [his/her] environment and [to] take the appropriate action” (p. vii). A simple definition of social intelligence is “the ability to get along well with others” (Moss & Hunt, 1927, as cited in Eketu & Ogbu, 2015, p. 28). It also refers to the ability to understand and manage people, which is demonstrated in interpersonal relationships (Albrecht, 2009). It is characterised by integrated skills such as effective listening, conversation, speaking, management, understanding people, and knowledge of social interaction and rules.

In the context of an organisation, the theory argues that leaders with social intelligence traits are in a better position to solve social and organisational problems through an informed decision-making process. Empirical studies also support this claim. For example, Alemdar et al. (2023) concluded that social intelligence significantly predicts leadership effectiveness across multiple situations. One of these situations is leader-employee interaction. As stated in the introduction of the current study, understanding-based communication and interacting effectively “may be related to... low intentions to quit” (Alshuaibi et al., 2020, p. 1506). The current study will apply this construct to explain how communication satisfaction

(level of interaction between academic staff and the management at different levels, including PR managers) influences intention to stay in FGUs.

The focus and setting of the sources reviewed here differ from the current study. For example, Eketu and Ogbu (2015) focused on assessing the relationship between social intelligence and employee intention to stay in selected hotels in Nigeria. Chew (2004) focused on examining “the influence of human resource management practices on retention of score employees of Australian Organizations”. However, the current study examines the determinants of intention to stay in FGUs in Ethiopia. The study hypothesises that CS, JS, OCB, and internal UI collectively influence IS.

METHODS

Research Setting

Data were collected from Jimma University, the University of Gonder, and Hawassa University. Jimma University is about 352 km southwest of Addis Ababa's capital. The University of Gondar is located about 653 km North of Addis Ababa. Hawassa University is 288 km away from Addis Ababa, towards the South. The quantitative data were collected from November 2021 to June 2022.

The Research Design

A cross-sectional correlational design was employed to determine the determinants of IS in FGUs. In other words, the study attempted to determine whether the predictor

variables strongly interact with IS in the context of FGUs.

Participants of the Study and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling strategy was applied to select the participants of the study. Academic staff (from technical assistants to full Professor) of eight first-generation universities, Jimma University, AAU, the University of Gonder, BahrDar University, Adama Sciences and Technology University, Aramaya University, Mekele University, and Hawassa University were considered the population of the study. Among these, 50% or four universities: Jimma University, from Oromia, the University of Gonder (from Amhara), Mekele University (from Tigray), and Hawassa University (from South Nations and Nationalities People/SNNPR) were randomly selected using rolled lots. Further, from each sample university while two colleges—Colleges of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) and College of Natural Sciences (CNS)—were selected using a lottery method, Institute of Technology (IT), where large number of the academic staff clustered, was selected purposefully.

In studies involving things like attitude scales, personality measures, and so forth, the rules of thumb recommend a sample size of 400+ as great for a 95% confidence interval. Further, where the questionnaire return rate is expected to be lower, taking into account 40 to 50% of contingency is important (Fetene, 2009; Gregory et al., 2008, as cited in Bujang et al., 2017). Hence, 600 (400 plus 50% X 400 = 400+200) is

the sample size. Their proportion for each college, CSSH ($n = 55$), CNS ($n = 53$), and IT ($n = 92$), was determined based on proportional stratified random.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Survey participants from the CSSH, the CNS, and the IT (from three universities: Jimma, Gonder, and Hawassa) were included in the study. However, survey participants from Mekele University were not included in this study for various reasons, although they had been part of the plan. The first reason is that, though an official letter of collaboration was produced, the IT was not willing to give the researcher [data collector] the list of instructors (sampling frame) associating the study with politics (security of its academic staff). At the same time, the CSSH and the CNS willingly provided the list of the instructors. Secondly, the number of participants who filled out and returned the questionnaire from these two colleges was very small. Thirdly, because of the unfavourable situation (war between the Tigray Defence Force (TDF) and the government of Ethiopia), the researchers could not go to the area for further attempts. However, they gathered the qualitative data, which is not part of this manuscript, before the outbreak of the war.

Data Gathering Instruments

A structured questionnaire was constructed adapting from different standardised questionnaires (Downs & Hazen, 1977; Organ & Konovsky, 1989; Wang et al., 2012). The content of the questionnaire

entails perceived internal UI, IS, JS, CS, OCB, and demographic characteristics. From the distributed 600 questionnaires (200 for each college), 590 were returned, but only 587 were correctly filed. In this study, consent was obtained from the study participants and the colleges.

The internal reliability of the questionnaire has been checked. Consequently, IS (2 questions, Cronbach's alpha .700) and the independent factors—OCB (14 questions, Cronbach's alpha .858), JS (19 questions, Cronbach's alpha .917), CS (5 questions, Cronbach's alpha .892), and UI (14 questions, Cronbach's alpha .858), were confirmed. The measurement applied a five-point (agree, disagree) scale, which was converted to continuous data during analysis. Experts in the area also checked the internal and face validities. All the constructs were factor analysed using principal component analysis (Varimax Rotation Method), and a cross-loading score of $\geq .50$ was considered; hence, construct validity was established.

Procedures

First, the questionnaire was piloted on 25 instructors selected from three departments belonging to the CNS (during the main study, these departments were excluded from filling out the questionnaire). The survey questionnaire was distributed to the selected participants from Jimma University, Hawassa University, and the University of Gonder, in that order, by trained data collectors. During the first round of questionnaire distribution, the

return rate was low. To undo the problem, a second round of distribution was made. Data cleansing was done as soon as the researchers received the returned questionnaires.

Analysis

The study considered descriptive statistics to calculate mean, median, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. Pearson Correlation was applied to measure the magnitude of interaction among variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was considered to identify factors that distinctively influence the outcome variable (at $P < 0.05$). The parametric test assumptions (Normality, Linearity, and Multicollinearity) were satisfied. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was applied.

RESULTS

Background Characteristics of Participants

The participants' average age was 34. Gender-wise, they reported as Male ($n = 480, 81.8\%$) and Female ($n = 84, 14.3\%$). Regarding marital status, 382 (65.15%), 191 (32.5%), and 7 (1.2%) were married, unmarried, and divorced, in that order. However, 7 (1.2%) participants did not report their marital status.

Concerning universities, they were from Jimma University, 187 (31.9%), the University of Gondar, 200 (34.1%), and Hawassa University, 200 (34.1%). As far as their college/institute is concerned, they come from the CNS ($n = 176, 30\%$), the CSSH ($n = 158, 26.9\%$), and the IT ($n = 253,$

43.1%). Regarding the region, they were from Oromiyaa ($n = 166, 28.3\%$), Amhara ($n = 229, 39.0\%$), Tigray ($n = 16, 2.7\%$), SNNPR ($n = 72, 12.3\%$), and somewhere else (Others) ($n = 65, 11.1\%$). Closely related to this, by ethnicity, 143 (24.4%), 259 (44.1%), 18 (3.1%), and 114 (19.4%) marked that they are Oromo, Amhara, Tigre, and Others, respectively.

Regarding the academic rank of the participants, 16 (2.7%), 64 (10.9%), and 337 (57.4%) are Technical Assistants, Assistant Lecturers, and Lecturers; in that order, 140 (23.9%) and 26 (4.4%) are Assistant Professor and Associate Professor respectively. Participants' work experience also comes in different proportions. They taught from 1 to 5 years ($n = 198, 33.7\%$), 6 to 10 years ($n = 186, 31.7\%$), 11 to 15 years ($n = 124, 21.1\%$), 16 to 20 years ($n = 39, 6.6\%$), and above 20 years ($n = 29, 4.9\%$). Respondents belonged to different religions like Orthodox Christianity ($n = 341, 58.1\%$), Protestant Christianity ($n = 141, 24.0\%$), Islam ($n = 41, 7\%$), Catholic (17, 2.9%), and Other ($n = 28, 4.8\%$).

One-way ANOVA and T-test were conducted to determine which demographic characteristics influence the dependent variable. However, except for gender, none of them significantly related to the dependent variable. Hence, the analysis is purposefully omitted to save space, except for gender (Table 1).

An independent-sample T-test was conducted to detect if males and females differ in their intention to stay in FGUs (Table 1), considering the unequal variance

Table 1
Gender intention relationships

Group		n	M	SD	t(562)	p
Gender	Male	480	3.37	0.92	-2.495	.014
	Female	84	3.62	0.84		

Note. Correlation is significant at a .05 level

Source: Authors' work

assumption because of the sample size difference. The result indicates there were statistically significant mean differences between males ($\bar{x} = 3.37, SD = 0.92$) and females ($\bar{x} = 3.62, SD = 0.84$), $t(562) = -2.495, p = .014, CI = [-.45182, -.05205]$. Consequently, we can conclude that female academic staff intended to stay longer in FGUs than their male counterparts.

Table 2 presents the unique/strong variables that determine IS. To examine the change each predictor factor adds to the model, the predictor factors are entered into the regression model in descending direction (most strong to least strong), with respect to their correlation degree with IS (Zero order correlation) (Table 2). First, UI ($r = .573, p < .01$), second JS ($r = .542, p < .01$), third CS

Table 2
Summary of regression results by regressing IS in FGU on UI, JS, CS, and OCB

	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		95%CV for B	
	Beta	SE	B	t	LB	UB
Step 1						
Constant	.493	.176		2.807	.148	.838
UI	.849	.050	.573***	16.912	.750	.947
Step 2						
Constant	.201	.177		1.136	-.147	.549
UI	.562	.068	.379***	8.281	.428	.695
JS	.387	.064	.279***	6.085	.262	.511
Step 3						
Constant	.294	.182		1.612	-.064	.652
UI	.522	.070	.352***	7.430	.384	.660
JS	.314	.072	.226***	4.341	.172	.456
CS	.099	.047	.100*	2.081	.006	.192
Step 4						
Constant	-.467	.270		-1.730	-.997	.063
UI	.446	.072	.301***	6.171	.304	.588
JS	.266	.073	.192***	3.658	.123	.408
CS	.114	.047	.116*	2.427	.022	.206
OCB	.285	.075	.141***	3.782	.137	.433

Note. ***Correlation is significant at the .001; *Correlation is significant at .05, Durbin-Watson = 1.918

Source: Authors' work

($r = .482, p < .01$), last OCB ($r = .395, p < .01$) were entered into the regression model. The zero-order correlation also revealed that Multicollinearity is not a concern.

As depicted by the first model of the regression, around 32.85% of the difference in IS in FGUs can be significantly elucidated by perceived UI, $F(1, 585) = 286.014, p < .001$. Next, when JS was added into the second regression model, R^2 increased by 4% (from .328 to .368), $F(2, 584) = 170.325, p < .001$. On top of that, R^3 increased by .5 % (from .368 to .373), $F(3, 583) = 115.642, p < .001$, when CS was inserted into the third regression model. Finally, R^4 increased by 1.5 % (from .373 to .388) when the study added OCB to the last regression model, and the complete regression model stayed statistically significant, $F(4, 582) = 92.286, p < .001$. The four variables collectively explained 38.8% (Adjusted $R^2 = 38.4\%$) of the disparity on IS (Table 2). In social sciences, if a model explains 10% and above variation in the dependent variable, the model is acceptable (Cohen, 1988; Ozili, 2023).

In addition, as the same table shows, CS (Beta = 0.114, $p < .05$), JS (Beta = 0.266, $p < .001$), OCB (Beta = .285, $p < .001$), and perceived UI (Beta = .446, $p < .001$) could uniquely/individually explain variance in IS in a university. The strongest variable that explains the dependent variable is perceived UI. That is to say, when CS, JS, OCB, and perceived UI each increase by one unit, IS in FGUs increases by 0.114 (11.4%), 0.266 (26.6%), 0.285 (28.5%), and 0.446 (44.6%) units, in that order, when the effects of

the other three are held constant. We can conclude that perceived UI significantly contributes ($p < .001$) to predicting IS.

Though significant, the beta value for CS is the least significant predictor of IS, as contrasted to the rest of the determining variables revealed by this study. A separate analysis revealed that most study participants (46.2%) disagree with the idea that the top management of the FGUs communicate effectively and promptly to its employees about potentially threatening issues. Likewise, 47.2% of the study participants disagreed that management uses the employees' feedback for continual growth and development. Further, 33.7% of the respondents did not feel that they were communicated with dignity and respect by the management. More than 25% of the respondents in each item/case replied: "Undecided".

The analysis revealed that gender (being female) is linked to the intention to stay in FGUs based on demographic characteristics. Further, as the regression analysis detected, perceived internal UI, OCB, JS, and CS are found to be strong determinants of IS. Figure 1 presents the unique determinants of IS.

DISCUSSION

The study intended to examine variables that determine IS in FGUs. The current study identified only the female gender as an influencer of IS in FGUs. Our finding conflicts with Mulie and Simes' finding (2018), which confirmed that the turnover tendency of female academic staff is 1.492 times more likely than male respondents.

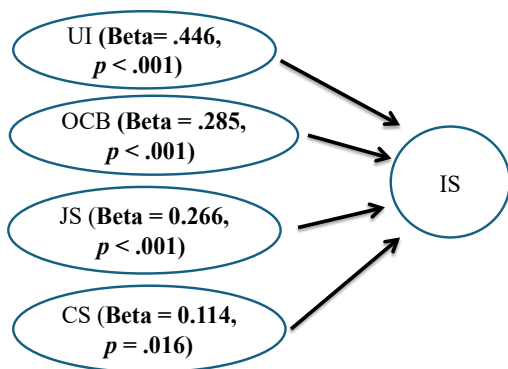


Figure 1. Determinants of intention to stay in FGUs
Source: Authors' work

Another conflicting finding reads: "...it has been found that female employees are more likely to leave their organisations when they perceive lack of career opportunities within their organisations" (Parker & Skitmore, 2003, as cited in Mulie & Simes, 2018, p. 20). According to some local studies (Dachew et al., 2016; Ferede, 2018; Woldekiros et al., 2022), the male gender was found to influence the TI.

In the current study, the reason why females intend to stay in FGUS could be that there is a better chance for females to win office positions, scholarships, and staff research (they are favoured with a research budget allocated only for female academic staff) as they are given priority, that is suitable working environment. For this demographic characteristic, the finding is consistent with the Social Exchange Theory, which states that, employees prefer to stay longer in the employing organisation when they receive reciprocating incentives. In the study of Mulie and Sime (2018), which reported high turnover intention for 70% of the respondents, the universities' working

environment was not conducive. The finding implies that FGUs should retain the female academic staff and create a conducive environment for male academic staff.

Our study hypothesised that work experience influences IS. However, the finding does not support our hypothesis. Our finding does not support the study of Mulie and Sime (2018) and Dilara et al. (2015), as cited by Demlie and Endris (2021), which confirmed that more experienced academic staff are less likely to turnover compared to less experienced ones. While Ferede et al. (2018) found an insignificant relationship between work experience and TI, Dachew et al. (2016) reported a significant relationship between the experience of working beyond ten years and TI. The setting and the focus of the study could be contributing factors. The findings of Ferede (2018) and Dachew et al. (2016) took place at the Institute of Health and focused on TI. The finding implies further investigation.

Perceived internal UI is the strongest variable that influences the IS in FGUs. The finding supports the researcher's alternative hypothesis, which speculated that perceived favourable internal image uniquely influences academic staff' IS, implying IS increases with an increase in perception of internal UI. Support for the finding comes from Chhabra and Sharma (2014), who said that positively perceived employer organisational image [external image] is the strongest influencer of the intention to apply. The finding of Turban and Greening (1997), as cited in Chhabra and Sharma (2014), also agrees with the current

finding; it reads: "One of the major factors that influence applicant to the organisation is its image as an employer" (p. 50). To some extent, support for this result (our finding) comes from Yunita et al. (2018), who found that perceived organisational support did not negatively influence TI. According to them, organisational support minimises stress and contributes to a favourable organisational image.

The finding is also incongruent with Prateek et al. (2011), as cited in Eketu and Ogbu (2015), who found that workers who get fair compensation and have a strong attachment to an organisation intend to stay. Compared to the second and third-generation universities, the FGUs are in a better position to support their academic staff with benefits such as housing, though not for all. For those who cannot get houses, universities allocate some amount of money for rent. However, some instructors could leave universities because of rises in house rent prices and goods. And this affects universities negatively.

An interesting finding of this study was that perceived internal UI is the strongest variable that explained the IS in FGUs, implying that perceived UI makes the most significant contribution ($p < .001$) to predicting IS. However, many studies (Ki & Hon, 2007) reported that perception of satisfaction was the best predictor of intention. Though perceived internal image and job satisfaction uniquely (individually) predict IS, as revealed in this study, the perception of internal UI explains IS 1.68 times more likely than JS does (44.6% vs.

26.6%). Hence, the role of internal image is critical in explaining IS. It implies that what contributes more to the intent to stay in FGUs is to be identified as an employee of FGUs (organisational identity, reputation) than job satisfaction. This finding is within the framework of SET, which posits that employees with a favourable attachment to an organisation intend to remain instead of looking for another job. Thus, we argue that if instructors perceive that FGUs are the best universities among existing public universities in Ethiopia, they will prefer to stay longer.

The study identified OCB as the next strongest variable influencing the IS in FGUs. Hence, the hypothesis "OCB uniquely influences academic staff' IS in FGUs" has been retained. The finding mostly agrees with Engeda et al. (2014), who found: "... high continuance commitment and high normative commitment were the significant predictors of intent to stay in the nursing profession" (p. 1). Support for the finding from this study also comes from Snape and Redman (2003), who found a positive relationship between affective commitment to occupation and "employees" intention to participate in professional activities and negatively related to occupational withdrawal intentions. Another support to the finding comes from Shanker (2018), who reported that OCB influenced employees' IS. Further support for our study comes from a PR study by Kang (2014), which reported that engagement, which is a manifestation of OCB, positively affects supportive behavioural intention toward

the organisation. A similar finding was emphasised by Brown et al. (2015). The finding implies that dedicated instructors with extra accomplishments are more likely to stay in FGUs. This could be attributed to their significant investment in the organisation, such as research projects, journals, innovations, and university demands, as well as their self-perception of being citizens of the FGUs. The finding also signifies that FGUs have dedicated and experienced high-calibre academic staff, which cannot be surprising as second-, third- and fourth-generation universities, where the turnover seems high, have young and less experienced academic staff. Our finding is within the framework of SET, which states that employees with OCB do not look for a new job elsewhere as they feel obliged to stay and contribute more to their organisation.

JS also strongly influenced IS in the FGUs. The finding supports our assumption that JS uniquely relates to the intention to stay in FGUs. Our finding is congruent with a public relations study (Kang, 2014), which found a significant relationship between satisfaction and supportive behavioural intention. This study's outcomes also support those findings from Thakur and Arora (2022) and Amani and Komba (2016), who reported that JS positively impacts IS. The outcome is also in accord with Serin et al. (2022), Otache and Inekwe (2021), and Guyo (2023), who found that JS interacted inversely with TI. Put another way, according to Otache and Inekwe's findings, their turnover intention decreases

when the job satisfaction of lecturers with PhD increases. According to the finding of Guyo (2023), "excessive job satisfaction has a lesser tendency in the direction of absenteeism and resignation" (p. 83) among faculty members in Ethiopian HEIs. A study conducted at Tishk International University in Iraq found a robust, reversed association between JS and TI (Serin et al., 2022).

Ferede et al.'s (2018) and George et al.'s (2013) findings also support the findings from the present research, saying that employees who had been contented with the "work nature" preferred to stay as compared to their counterparts who were dissatisfied. The result further agrees with Dachew et al. (2016), who noted that teachers who were contented in the "pay and benefit subscale of job satisfaction were nearly "less likely to leave their job" when compared with those who were not satisfied. The result is also in harmony with Engeda et al. (2014), who found: "satisfaction with autonomy and professional opportunities, scheduling and pay and benefits... were the significant predictors of intent to stay in the nursing profession" (p. 1). Our finding is in line with the framework of SET, which recommends reciprocating good performances.

However, it is important to note that IS in the FGUs does not necessarily mean that the instructors have been contented, especially when considering the country's current failing economy and instability; the staying could be attributed to a lack of alternative jobs. "The personnel who are committed to the organisation and believe that they cannot find any other job because

of bad general economy prefer to stay in the organisation” (Alshuaibi et al., 2020, p. 1511).

Finally, the study hypothesised that CS strongly influences academic staff's IS in FGUs. The finding has supported the hypothesis accordingly. Support for the finding comes from Mohamad (2008), who found that “overall communication satisfaction... reduce... turnover intention” (p.45). The findings from Ballard and Seibold (2006) and Kim and Lee (2014), as cited in Alshuaibi et al. (2020), support this finding, saying that effective communication may be related to low TI. The finding implies that instructors/researchers who feel satisfied with organisational communication or overall communication prefer staying in the FGUs rather than intending to leave. This implication is reinforced by Mutuku and Mathooko (2014), who say: “If employees feel that communication from management is effective, it can lead to feelings of job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation and increase trust in the workplace”(p. 30). It has been underscored in the literature that institutes that endorse impactful or worthy communication cannot only support their workers to effectively discharge their responsibilities, create an agreeable working atmosphere, and augment JS but also reduce the TI (Ballard & Seibold, 2006). The finding also supports the Social Intelligence model, which states that the ability of social interaction skills contributes to effective communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study intended to identify whether academic staff's intention to stay in FGUS exists and, if so, what influences this intention. Accordingly, the study established that academic staff's intention to stay in FGUS exists. It found that JS, OCB, CS, and perceived internal UI collectively explained 38.8% of the variance on IS. Previous studies have not investigated the collective influence perceived internal UI, JS, CS, and OCB (variables emphasised in public relations and management studies) have on IS in FGUs; even if there are, only scanty public relations and management studies (Thakur & Arora, 2022) have studied individual or a few variables relationships with intention.

Further, studies investigating the relationship between internal UI perception and IS in FGUs lack (studies inclined to the external organisational image); public administration and public relations researchers who investigated factors (for example, job satisfaction, external image) that influence intention ignored the importance of the perception of internal university image, but this study filled that gap. Accordingly, exceptionally different from many studies that found JS as the strongest predictor of intention, this study identified perception of internal UI as the strongest factor to determine IS. The findings from this study have narrowed the research gap related to the determinants of IS in FGUs.

Documenting the linkages between intention to stay and communication

satisfaction, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and perception of internal university image is essential to minimise problems related to the turnover intention of experienced instructors in FGUs. This study provides important insights for the management and communication managers to understand and reach the due process of informed decision-making related to maximising academic staff's IS. Thus, the finding has contributed to the body of knowledge and practice by filling the research gap.

Implication of the Study

The findings can have theoretical and managerial implications. Based on our analysis and interpretation of the data, we have forwarded the following implications.

Theoretical Implications

Many studies (Ki & Hon, 2007; Thakur & Arora, 2022) found JS as the strongest predictor of dependent variables, including intention; however, this study identified perception of internal UI as the strongest factor to determine IS. The finding helps us to enhance our understanding of the role organisational image plays in studying intention and to consider it in extending the constructs of models applied in the study of intention. In another way, the finding implies the importance of developing or improving holistic model (s) that integrate the internal organisational image construct. Further, the hybrid model developed from this study explains above 10% of the variation (38.8%) in the dependent variable, implying that it

is a good alternative prediction model for studying IS in an organisational context. Also, it may provide insights into the importance of investigating more variables that can be considered in the study of intention in an organisational context. On top of that, the findings strengthen the appropriateness of applying the Social Exchange Theory and the Social Intelligence model in studies that examine intention.

Practical Implications

It is important to maximise the retention intention of senior and talented staff to achieve the organisational vision and mission in this competitive and complex environment. In this regard, the roles of managers/supervisors and communication managers are matchless.

The results of the current study offer practical implications so that they can discharge their responsibilities. The overall finding enables managers to develop strategies that maximise the level of intention to stay in FGUs. The profound implications of these findings for the management and communication managers should be obvious given their struggle to manage FGUs, continuously measure the impacts of the predictor variables identified by this study, and act accordingly beyond attempting to retain the academic staff. However, this may not mean that managers should approach these measures in a piecemeal/fragmented manner. Rather, they should follow a holistic intervention approach that integrates the four important predictors of IS. Understanding and addressing

holistically the factors that influence IS, with due priority, may help managers with the resources and communication managers to retain experienced academic staff.

Accordingly, building, auditing, and sustaining a positive internal image of FGUs should be the management's primary focus to enhance IS. Put differently, managers with resources can maximise instructors' IS in FGUs by working on/investing in resources and activities that build the internal image, most importantly. It may include offering high-quality education and scholarships, recruiting quality staff and management, providing the newest and most advanced technologies for its staff, treating fairly talented employees, considering comments given by the staff in the decision-making process, prevailing justice in the universities, and transforming the physical environment and organisational culture.

Moreover, the finding enables the managers to examine the extent to which they support, value, recognise, reward, encourage, and create a suitable working environment for dedicated instructors with extra accomplishments (OCB), as receiving support from the managers or supervisors could be a contributing factor in enhancing IS in FGUs. On top of that, the finding implies that FGU managers, in consultation with policymakers or the Ministry of Education, devise a better incentive system such as allocating houses, increasing payment for house rental, arranging transport services, and allocating enough research budget. When the management is supportive, the instructors reciprocally

offer loyalty, commitment, and long years of service.

For the communication managers, it helps them to examine to what extent they are discharging their responsibilities with regards to improving the internal image of FGUs; for example, the emphasis they give in creating enough awareness to the instructors about the accomplishments of the universities in teaching, research, and community services, what the university possesses, its vision and mission, the social responsibilities it discharges, the qualities of services it offers, whether they arrange effective communication training for the supervisors at different levels, and carry out research that enables the management to reach the due process of informed decision-making.

As these factors improve, instructors prefer to be identified as employees of FGUs and to stay in these universities instead of looking for another organisation or job. Hence, the FGU's management and communication managers should assess how much they can improve these factors and take the necessary measures to maximise instructors' stay in universities.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

One of the drawbacks of this study is that its findings do not promise a causal association between the predictor variables and IS in the FGUs. Besides, the findings cannot be generalised to all higher education institutions in Ethiopia, as the data were collected only from three FGUs.

This study has only considered the four unique determinants of IS in FGUs. These four variables collectively explained only 38.8% of the variance on IS. It indicates that about 61.2% of the difference in IS can be explained by other factors, which calls the attention of future studies. This study used only a quantitative approach (cross-sectional correlational design) to examine the determinants of IS in FGUs, which implies the importance of a mixed-approach study. Hence, the researchers recommend further study using qualitative methods or a mixed approach with large sample size and casual experimental studies where possible. They also recommend similar studies on non-first-generation universities, private universities, or a combination of government and non-government universities, as well as on administrative staff. One of the functions of the Office of PRs is carrying out research to help the management reach informed decisions and achieve organisational vision.

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