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Minh-Quang Duong

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## The Effects of Demographic and Institutional Characteristics on Job Satisfaction of University Faculty in Vietnam

Minh-Quang Duong

Faculty of Education, University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City,  
10-12 Dinh Tien Hoang Road, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
Email: mqduong.uss@yaho.com

### Abstract

In recent years, several studies have examined the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of university faculty in developed countries, little is known about lecturers' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the developing countries like Vietnam. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the relationship between job satisfaction and demographic, institutional characteristics of university academic members in the technology and science fields. The study used a questionnaire to survey with 150 academic members from three public universities was selected as a statistical sample. Three universities were used in pilot study to act as pre-test to the instruments of data collection to ensure their reliability. This study of data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, and regression analysis by statistical package for social science software. The study showed that most respondents were satisfied in their job. There were significant difference in job satisfaction level based on gender, national graduation, and discipline. The present analysis found that job satisfaction of academic members significantly affected by their demographic and institutional factors. Recommendations on the study's findings to the management of university are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Demographic, Institutional Factors, Vietnamese Higher Education, Academic Members.

### Introduction

Job satisfaction of academics play role important for some reasons. Firstly, an understanding of the factors involved in job satisfaction is crucial to improving the happiness of workers (Okpara et al. 2005). Secondly, understanding whether academics are satisfied or dissatisfied towards their work can lead to improvements and innovations in their teaching. Furthermore, job satisfaction has serious implications for relations between the academics and the management of the higher educational organizations they belong to (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009). Therefore, Syed

et al., (2012) recognized that faculty satisfaction is the most significant aspect in higher education and is important for the improvement, efficacy and effectiveness of the upper education system. Thus, most measures of school performance were significantly linked to employee satisfaction with schools with more satisfied teachers being more effective than those with less satisfied ones (Osrtroff, 1992).

Since the late 1950s a number of researchers have theorized about the nature of job satisfaction and developed models which attempt to explain differences of job satisfaction (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005). Although there is no universal definition of the concept (Evans, 1997) most of the definitions that exist in literature have a common theme. The most used definition of job satisfaction in organizational research is that Locke (1976), who described job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences and as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). Job satisfaction is an attitude developed by an individual towards the job and job conditions (Luthans, 1994). Spector (1997) refined the definition of job satisfaction to constitute an attitudinal variable that measures how a person feels about his or her job, including different facets of the job.

As a conceptual framework, this study was theoretically grounded in Vroom's determinants of job satisfaction were supervision, work groups, job content, wages, promotional opportunities, and hours of work (Vroom, 1964) and Herzberg's motivator and hygiene factors included achievement, recognition, work, responsibility, advancement as motivator; while policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relationship, working conditions, salary, status, and security were the hygiene factors (Herzberg 1976)

Several studies of higher education sector are used different factors to measuring job satisfaction of academic members. Oshagbemi (1997) employed eight scales designed to measure satisfaction of university teachers in the United Kingdom, namely teaching; research; administration and management; present pay; promotions; supervision/supervisor behaviour; behavior of co-workers and physical conditions/working conditions. The study of Kusku (2003) measured the job satisfaction of academics in a university in Turkey using the seven determinants general satisfaction, management satisfaction, colleagues, other working group satisfaction, job satisfaction, work environment and salary satisfaction. According to Ssesanga and Garrett (2005), measured the job satisfaction of academics of higher education in Uganda using nine general elements of their work comprising teaching, research, governance, remuneration, opportunities for promotion, supervision, co-worker's behavior, working environment and the job in general. A study of Chen et al., (2006) measured the job satisfaction of teachers in a private university in China using six satisfaction factors, namely organization vision, respect, result feedback and motivation, management system, pay and benefits and work environment.

There is a relationship between job satisfaction and very different variables. They include life satisfaction (Ho & Au, 2008), demographic, job, and personality characteristics (Miller et al., 2009; Telman & Unsal, 2004), performance (Luthans, 1994), organizational characteristics (Glisson & Durick, 1988) leadership, climate and culture of the university (Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; Hagedorn, 2000; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Although Cranny et al., (1992) estimated that over 5,000 articles and dissertations have examined the topic of job satisfaction and it is a continuing topic for research. Most of the

research that has been conducted in the field of job satisfaction has focused on organizational business and industrial setting (Platsidou & Diamantopoulou, 2009). However, in recent years, a clear increase has been observed in the number of studies related to the job satisfaction of academics (Neumann, 1978). Several studies have examined the job satisfaction of academic members in higher education of the developed countries, unfortunately, evidence from developing countries is seriously lacking and is a gap which needs to be filled (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005; Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009; Garrett, 1999; Hean & Garrett, 2001). Furthermore, very little research has focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (Verret, 2012).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of study was to examine factors affecting job satisfaction of academic members of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM). To understand about this study the following research objectives were formulated.

- To describe the level of job satisfaction among academic members in general,
- To determine where a significant difference exist between faculty job satisfaction and demographic characteristics,
- To determine whether a regression between job satisfaction of academic members and background characteristics (gender, age, academic qualification, etc.), work time per week (teaching, research, community service, and private) and institutional characteristics (development aim, leadership style, campus landscape, and administration efficiency).

### **Research Questions of the Study**

The present study was designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the general level of job satisfaction of academic members in Vietnam?
- 2) Do any significant differences exist in the level of job satisfaction with regard to demographic characteristics?
- 3) How are faculty job satisfaction affected by demographic and institutional variables?

### **Studies of Job Satisfaction and Faculty Higher Education**

There are several recent studies that addressed job satisfaction among academic members serving in the higher education context. The study of Oshagbemi (1997) comprised academics from 23 universities in the United Kingdom that teaching, research-related activities, and several miscellaneous dimensions of the jobs contribute significantly to both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of university academics. For job satisfaction among academic staff from thirteen universities in Turkey, Saygi, Tolon, and Tekogul (2010) found that co-workers and promotions were considered more important than the pay. The most important factor in job satisfaction was co-workers, with working as a team and sharing also rated as important. In another study, Springfield-Scott (2000) showed that sex and rank affected faculty job satisfaction; while age, race and tenure did not affect faculty job satisfaction in Piedmont, North Carolina University. In North Cyprus, Eyupoglu and Saner (2009) explored that the job facets advancement, compensation, co-workers, and variety were found to be statistically significant with job satisfaction. Beside, this study also explained that academic in North Cyprus indicate only a

moderate level of overall job satisfaction. In their study with academic members of ten private universities in Bangladesh, Ali and Akhter (2009) recognized that faculty members are overall satisfied with their present condition, except the factors like- training facilities, and some physical facilities and distribution of courses. Further it has been found that there is no significant difference between male and female faculty members regarding job satisfaction.

In Asia – Pacific area, regarding the relationship between faculty job satisfaction and demographic variable of academics in a public higher education in Singapore, Paul and Phua (2011) indicated that satisfaction over interpersonal relationships with students and co-workers, the autonomy and flexibility that the job offered. Conversely, they expressed dissatisfaction over the amount of administrative/non academic work they had to shoulder, heavy workload, salary, presence of ‘red tape’ and other corporate practices and dealing with disruptive students. Age and job position affected the job satisfaction levels of the respondents. However, variables such as gender, academic qualification, length of employment and marital status showed no significant difference. The study of Noordin and Jusoff (2009) comprised two hundred and thirty-seven of academics from a public university in Malaysia that overall the academic staff of the university has a moderate level of job satisfaction. In addition, current status, marital status, age and salary appear to have significant impact on the respondents’ level of job satisfaction. In their research with 173 teaching staff from three private universities in Malaysia, Santhapparaj and Alam (2005) found that pay, promotion, working condition and support of research have positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. On the other hand, benefits and support of teaching have negative effect, and female staff are more satisfied than their counterpart. Regarding the relationship between incentives, rewards and recognition on employee motivation and job satisfaction of two hundred and nineteen of academic member of Hue University in Vietnam, Nguyen et al., (2013) found that significantly positive relationship between reward and recognition, satisfaction with supervision and the job characteristics, with job satisfaction as well as a very positive and significant relationship was also observed between job satisfaction and personal motivation.

In another study, Gautam, Mandal and Dalal (2006) surveyed faculty members of Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu, India that job satisfaction is a multidimensional phenomenon with a number of factors operating simultaneously. The overall job satisfaction of the faculty members is fair and moderate. Moreover, the younger faculty members are more satisfied as compared to those with a longer service period although the relationship is not linear. Again, Sharma and Jyoti’s (2010) comprised one hundred and twenty faculty members of Jammu University in India that professor were more satisfied than lecturers and job satisfaction decline in the middle age. Addition, intrinsic, extrinsic and demographic factors were effecting academic staff’s job satisfaction.

Very few studies have been conducted in the area of job satisfaction in Vietnamese higher education sector. The findings this study will contribute to fill in the literature gap in Vietnam as well as developing countries.

## **Methods**

### **Dependent and Independent Variables**

Job satisfaction has been identified as the dependent variable in this study. It consists of seventeen dimensions of four aspects. The first aspect is equipment, such as research room space and equipment, laboratory space, teaching support equipment, teaching internet, and library. The second aspect is human resources, including quality and quantity of teachers, technical staff, and administration staff. The third aspect is regulations, including in-service teaching training, in-service research training, salary, bonus and welfare, and curriculum reform and evaluation. The fourth aspect is organizational culture, including efficacy of department meetings, teaching load, research pressure, and administration load.

The independent variables of this study include two blocks. The first block is demographic characteristics, including gender, age, marital status, academic qualification, length of employment, discipline, country where highest degree attained. The second is institutional factors, including development aim, leadership style, campus landscape, administration efficiency.

### **Sample**

The population for this study was comprised of academic members from three public universities of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, namely University of Technology, University of Science, and University of Information Technology. A random sample of 175 questionnaires administered to potential subjects selected from the three universities, 150 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 85.7 per cent. According to Dillman (2000); Malaney (2002), acceptable response rates range between 30 per cent and 60 per cent and are acceptable to most researchers for analysis purpose.

### **Data Analysis Method**

Questionnaire survey was used to gather data in this study. The participants are weighted on a 4-point Likert's scale to measure job satisfaction of academic members and institutional factors which impact on job satisfaction (1 = very dissatisfaction, 2 = dissatisfaction, 3 = satisfaction, 4 = very satisfaction).

All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 13.0 software. The statistical methods employed to analyze data are included. Descriptive analysis is computed to examine the general level of job satisfaction of academic members. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is enabled to examine significant difference between the demographic characteristics and the job satisfaction. To study the key factors of demographic and institutional variables which significantly affect job satisfaction, multiple regression analysis is used for this study.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Reliability**

In this study, factor loading and internal consistency analysis (Cronback's alpha) were conducted to assess the reliability of this constructed measurement for job satisfaction of academic members. All four aspects were identified to measure the variable of job satisfaction which is

the dependent variable of this study. The internal consistency analysis yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients 0.816, which is significantly higher than the 0.6 or more principal guideline (Hair et al., 2006; Nunnally, 1978). Hence, based on the validation of construct reliability which is concluded that research construct of job satisfaction is reliable in this study.

### Participants

This study selected data from 150 academic members working in three public universities in Vietnam. Out of the 150 academic members, 21.3% were female and remaining 78.7% of males. The respondents consisted of 66% were from 31 to 40 years old and the mean age of respondents was 34 years. Regarding marital status, 47.3% were single, 52.7% were married. In terms of their academic qualification, 38% had master's degrees, and almost 50% had attained a doctoral degree. The 38% faculty had from 6 to 10 years, and only 8% academic members had from 16 or more years teaching experience. For national graduation, 5.3% of academics graduated in America, 18% were Europe, only 2.7% were Oceania, and almost of 77% were Asia. Regarding academic members' discipline, 50.6% faculty were technology areas, 42.7% were science sectors, 6.7% faculty were field of information technology.

### The level of Job Satisfaction of Academic Members in Vietnam

In terms of Table 1 the results indicate that academic members were generally satisfied in their job ( $M = 2.83, SD = 0.60$ ), mirroring the results of the studies by Castillo & Cano (2004), Eyupoglu and Sanner (2009), Ghazi et al., (2010), Malik (2011), Mehboob et al., (2012), Noordin and Jusoff (2009), and Syed et al., (2012).

Regarding the aspects of job satisfaction of academic members of three universities, academic members had the highest job satisfaction of human resources ( $M = 2.94, SD = 0.68$ ), subsequently followed by job satisfaction of organizational culture ( $M = 2.90, SD = 0.67$ ), job satisfaction of equipments ( $M = 2.85, SD = 0.78$ ). Job satisfaction of regulations had the lowest ( $M = 2.62, SD = 0.75$ ). Thus, university managers should invest more time, budget, facilities, and technologies in enhancing academic members' job satisfaction of regulations in higher education institutions.

**Table 1** Means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) of the job satisfaction level and four aspects of academic members in VNU-HCMC

	The level of job satisfaction	Aspects of job satisfaction			
		Equipments	Human resources	Regulations	Organizational culture
$M$	2.83	2.85	2.94	2.62	2.90
$SD$	0.58	0.78	0.68	0.75	0.67

### The Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Faculty Job Satisfaction

### **Gender**

The findings of Table 2 showed that a significant difference has been found between the level of satisfaction of male and female academics ( $F = 5.801, p = .017$ ), mirroring the results of studies by (Ghafoor, 2012; Malik, 2011; Mehboob et al., 2012; Pearson and Seiler, 1983; Schulze, 2006; Springfield-Scott, 2000). However, male academic members ( $M = 2.89, SD = 0.59$ ) are generally more satisfied with their job than the female academic members ( $M = 2.78, SD = 0.62$ ) in this study, supported by the studies of (Bas and Ardic, 2002; Olorunsola, 2010).

### **Age**

There had no statistically significant difference between job satisfaction of academic members in VNU-HCMC and age ( $F = 0.810, p = 0.421$ ) (see Table 2). This result is supported by the studies of Ghafoor (2012), Malik (2011), Santhapparaj and Alam (2005), Springfield-Scott (2000). However, academic members of under 30 years old group ( $M = 2.92, SD = 0.51$ ) were more satisfied than other age groups ( $M = 2.92, SD = 0.51$ ). Based on the findings of Muchinsky (1978); Paul and Phua (2011); Oshagbemi (1997); Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) found that young lecturers may feel satisfied with their jobs because of the novelty of their situation. These studies also recognized that the rise in job satisfaction at 45 years and above could come from reduced aspirations due to the recognition that there are few alternative jobs available once their careers are established.

### **Marital Status**

From Table 2, no significant statistical difference between single, married and widowed academic member was found for job satisfaction ( $F = 2.049, p = 0.132$ ). This result is supported by the studies of (Paul and Phua, 2011; Saygi et al., 2011; Wong and Heng, 2009). On the other hand, this finding also showed that single ( $M = 2.91, SD = 0.67$ ) were more satisfied than married ( $M = 2.76, SD = 0.48$ ) and academic members widowed faculty, mirroring the results of the study by (Noordin and Jusoff, 2009). Their research also found that female academic members in the single and married reported higher level

### **Academic Qualification**

As shown in Table 2, there had no significant difference between job satisfaction of academic members and academic qualification ( $F = 0.842, p = 0.433$ ). This result is similarly supported by the studies of (Blank, 1993; Kledaras and Joslyn, 1992 -1993; Malik, 2011; Paul and Phua, 2011; Wong and Hung, 2009). In this study, the satisfaction levels of academic members holding bachelor's degree ( $M = 2.98, SD = 0.62$ ) were marginally than those holding masters ( $M = 2.84, SD = 0.40$ ) and doctoral degrees ( $M = 2.78, SD = 0.67$ ). However, Blank (1993); Eyupoglu and Saner (2009); Schroder (2008) reported that academic members in higher education institutions with doctorates displayed significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than their counterparts with a master's or bachelor degree.

### **Length of Employment**

For length of employment, there is no significant differences between job satisfaction of academic members and length of employment ( $F = 0.646, p = 0.631$ ). This result is same as discussed in the studies of (Castillo and Cano, 2004; Paul and Phua, 2011; Schroder, 2008; Wong



and Heng, 2009). However, academic members with 1 to 5 years teaching experience ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) had the highest and academic members with 11 to 15 years teaching experience ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) had lowest job satisfaction.

### **National Graduation**

Regarding the relationship between job satisfaction of academic members and national graduation, this finding of Table 2 shows that there is significant difference between job satisfaction of academic members and national graduation ( $F = 2.006$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ). Furthermore, Table 2 also recognizes that both academic members who attained the highest degrees in Oceania ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ ) and Europe ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) to be more satisfied than those who were Asia ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ). However, unfortunately, there has not yet been much empirical research about the relationship between job satisfaction and national graduation. The results of this study can not be compared to results of others. This study, therefore, contributes to fill in the literature gap of job satisfaction of academic members in higher education institutions and country where highest degrees attained.

### *Discipline*

There were significant difference between job satisfaction of academic member in and discipline ( $F = 6.570$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) mirroring the results of Hemmasi (1992); Neal (1990); Neumann and Finaly (1991); Opp (1992); Sabharwal and Corley (2009); Terpstra and Honoree (2004); Ward and Sloan (2000). Furthermore, the study of Kledaras and Joslyn (1992 -1993) found that academic members from different faculties and institutions may differ significantly in what they consider important for job satisfaction. However, academic members of information technology field had the highest job satisfaction in their job ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ), and academic members of science field had the lowest job satisfaction in their job ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ).

**Table 2** Descriptive analysis and ANOVA results of demographic characteristics on job satisfaction

Characteristics	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender				
Male	2.89	0.59	5.801	.017*
Female	2.61	0.46		
Age (years old)				
Under 30	2.92	0.51	0.870	.421
31 - 40	2.82	0.64		
Over 40	2.71	0.29		
Marital status				
Single	2.91	0.67	2.049	.132
Married	2.76	0.48		
Academic qualification				
Bachelor's degree	2.98	0.62	0.842	.433
Master's degree	2.84	0.40		
Doctoral degree	2.78	0.67		
Length of employment (years)				
Less than 1	2.85	0.54	0.646	.631
1 – 5	2.91	0.61		
6 -10	2.87	0.66		
11 – 15	2.70	0.51		
16 or more	2.78	0.27		
National graduation				
America	2.85	0.24	2.006	.028*
Asia	2.79	0.54		
Europe	2.93	0.81		
Oceania	2.96	0.27		
Discipline				
Technology	2.96	0.64	6.574	.002**
Science	2.64	0.36		
Information Technology	3.01	0.88		

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### The Regression between Faculty Job Satisfaction and Demographic and Institutional Factors

Regression model proposed by this study explained 54.2% ( $R^2 = 0.542$ ) of job satisfaction of academic members from three university of Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam. However, the different regression models had different explanations for faculty job satisfaction across demographic and institutional characteristics. The findings of Table 3 found three models of multiple regression statistics which analyzed the effect of demographic and institutional characteristics on faculty

job satisfaction in VNU-HCMC. Models 1 through 2 presented the separate effect of these factors on faculty job satisfaction, and Model 3 reported the combined effects.

As shown in Table 3, Model 1 suggested that only gender item of demographic characteristics ( $\beta = .137, p < 0.05$ ) was significant factor in affecting on faculty job satisfaction. No other demographic characteristics had significant effect on faculty job satisfaction. Model 2 showed that all four items of institutional variable, namely development aim ( $\beta = -.359, p < 0.001$ ), leadership style ( $\beta = 0.204, p < 0.01$ ), campus landscape ( $\beta = 0.280, p < 0.001$ ), and administration efficiency ( $\beta = 0.652, p < 0.001$ ) had significant effect on job satisfaction of academic members. In the Model 3, the findings of Table 3 indicated that all three items of demographic characteristics had no significantly effect on faculty job satisfaction. The findings of Model 3 also found that most faculty institutional characteristics yielded significant relationships with faculty job satisfaction. However, only development aim factor had significant negative impact on job satisfaction of academics. This results are supported some suggestions by Kelly (1989); Ssesanga & Garrett (2005) that most frequently perceived as responsible for low satisfaction is university policy/aim. Morale is highest when faculty members participate in governance and decision making (Rice & Austin, 1988). The studies of Ali and Akhter (2009); Kyamanywa (1996); and Venter (1998) showed that leadership style significantly affected job satisfaction of academic members in higher education institution. A research conducted by Packard & Kauppi (1999) found that employees with supervisors having democratic management styles experienced higher level of satisfaction than with autocratic leadership style. Furthermore, the important role management can play in the job satisfaction of academics. According to Van Tonder (1993) a manager could modify his/her management style to ensure that staff enjoyed maximum satisfaction and thrived emotionally and professionally. Unfortunately, there is yet no empirical research done about the relationship between job satisfaction and campus landscape and administration efficiency. Further research about the relationship between job satisfaction and campus landscape and administration efficiency will contribute to fill in the literature gap.

**Table 3** Regression analysis results between job satisfaction and institutional factors

Variables	M1	M2	M3
<b>Demographic characteristics</b>			
Gender	.173*		.102
Marital status	-.131		.051
National educated	.073		.050
<b>Institutional characteristics</b>			
Development aim		-.359***	-.326***
Leadership style		.204**	.191**
Campus landscape		.280***	.235**
Administration efficiency		.652***	.671***
R square (R <sup>2</sup> )	0.580	0.527	0.542

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## Conclusion

It is clear that very little research on job satisfaction of academic members has come from developing countries. There is a need for more data to be gathered from developing countries like Vietnam. Thus this study was to explore the relationship between job satisfaction of university academic members and demographic, and institutional characteristics. Through the findings described in this study, academic members from three public universities of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam were generally satisfied with their job. There were significant difference in job satisfaction level based on gender, national graduation, and discipline. The present analysis found that job satisfaction of academic members significantly affected by their institutional factors, namely development aim, leadership style, campus landscape, and administrative efficiency.

Furthermore, the findings of this study show that academic members were found less satisfied in terms of the regulations. University managers could be by refresher courses, seminars, and training workshops must be arranged for university academic faculty to keep them abreast with the contemporary skills and techniques as well as teaching and research. University management should take more interest in leadership style, campus landscape, and administration efficiency than other factors. It is hoped that the barrier to the job satisfaction of academic members are found in this study may be useful for management institutes to develop work environment and culture that would allow higher levels of faculty job satisfaction and can contribute to a great extent to improve the level of academic members in developing countries in general and Vietnamese higher education in particular.

## Limitations

In this study, the data obtained through questionnaires were all self-reports from the participants to determine which aspects of their position are satisfying and dissatisfying, hence, the findings may be subject to response consistency effect. On the other hand, this study can not be generalized to all academic members across Vietnamese universities, the findings of this study are restricted to the three universities which the samples were drawn.

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