



Research Article

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE NATURE OF ACADEMIC STAFF TURNOVER
(THE CASE OF MADAWALABU UNIVERSITY)**

Hussa Allo Abdulahi*

Punjabi University, Patiala, International Hostel Wing

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ABSTRACT

The issue of employee turnover is among the basic managerial decision area, as employees constitute the cornerstone of an organization. Thus, the theme of this research is to investigate the nature and extent of employee turnover in case of academic staff of Mada Walabu University, considering the department, professional rank, gender, and seniority of an employee. To collect data for the study, questionnaire was designed and distributed to department heads, and secondary data source for the period covering 2014-2017 was reviewed, and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result indicates that in Mada Walabu University, academic staff with a rank of lecturers and female academic staff left the university more frequently during the past five years. Thus the responsible body may find these findings worthwhile for corrective action.

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INTRODUCTION

Employees of an organization are the cornerstones of it, upon which its existence depends. In most cases, the significance of workers is underestimated and other resources like financial and non-financial are given due consideration. But in today's changing technology and working environment it is highly advisable for any organization to audit for its human resource, because an employee may voluntarily or involuntarily leave or enter in to an organization, attributing to the concept known as employee turnover.

Human capital theory suggests that because the knowledge, skills and abilities that people bring to organizations have enormous economic value to the organization; they need to be managed in the same strategic manner that other economic assets (e.g. land, financial capital) are managed (Lee Hsu and Lien 2006 : 2)

During the last five years Mada Walabu University has launched many graduate programs increasing its student's enrolment, and has set a strategic commitment for itself to make itself a centre of excellence. And yet anecdotal information indicates that the University is experiencing academic staff shortage which is seriously limiting its growth. The same information indicates that the University is neither attracting new academic staff nor retaining its staff. This study shades some light on the academic staff retention capacity of the University by studying the academic staff turnover.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study descriptive survey research method was employed to conduct the study. This is because it involves systematic collection and presentation of data and justifies current nature and magnitude of the nature of academic turn over (Best and Kahn, 1998).

Research Design

According to Y.K Singh (2006), research design is essentially a statement of the object of the inquiry and the strategies for collecting the evidences, analyzing the evidences and reporting the findings. From Mada Walabu university over in 6 collages, 1 institute, 3 schools (medicine, health science and law) in which medicine and health sciences are under Goba referral hospital of Mada Walabu university. Samples are selected by using simple random sampling and purposive sampling method by assuming representativeness all other employees. Therefore, to make this practical both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to approach the study subjects.

Source of Data

Both Primary and secondary sources of data were used for this study.

Primary Data

In order to investigate academic staff turnover, in the case of Mada Walabu University as a source of data, both primary and secondary sources were used. The primary data was collected from academic department heads by distributing a questionnaire that asks about the staff turnover.

*Corresponding author: **Hussa Allo Abdulahi**
Punjabi University, Patiala, International Hostel Wing

Secondary Data

The secondary data was collected from the central administration. Even though data of last five years (2014-2017) was proposed to be utilized, only data of four years was obtained (2014-2017) from the central administration.

Sampling and sampling techniques

Participating units are academic departments i.e. department heads. There are about 55 different Departments 1 institute, 7 collages, 1 schools in Madda Walabu university robe campus are considered as a target population but health and Medicine schools (goba compass) are not included in this project because of the difficulty of access . In order to obtain data from this target population, those faculties in Madda Walabu were covered. 55 questionnaires were designed, and distributed of which 38 were returned from these units. Secondary data sources of 4 years (2014-2017 EC) are accessed, collected and analyzed from the central administration. In collecting the secondary data of health and Medicine schools (goba compass) faculty’s information was obtained and included in the unit of analysis Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency distributions and percentage) are used to summarize responses of heads of departments on academic staff turnover.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

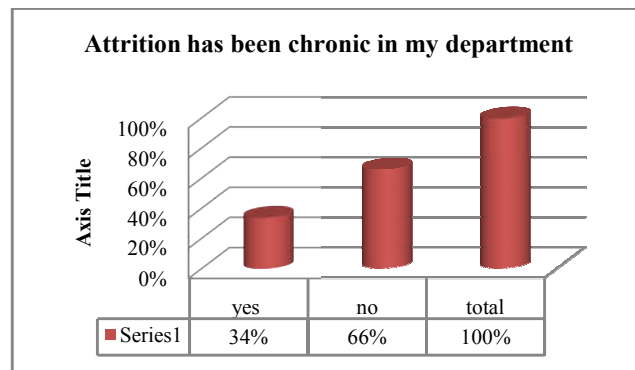
This part deals with the presentation of data, and its analysis. To collect the data and extract findings, questionnaire was prepared and distributed to heads of different department at all compass of the university, except the school of Medicine and health science (Goba Campus) which was not included because of the difficulty of access. Out of the total of 55 departments visited at madda Walbu university, 7 were unwilling to accept, thus a total of 48 questionnaire was distributed to different department heads, and a total of 38 (80%) was returned and used for this project, while 10 (20%) remained uncollectible. In addition, a document consisting of employees issue on turnover was also reviewed.

The next section presents the data gathered from heads of departments and the document reviewed. Whether attrition is a chronic problem or not was asked in order to see the level to which the heads of departments recognize and understand that it is a problem in their respective unit and their response is summarized in the following table.

Table 1 Department responses on severity of turnover problem- sample department

Attrition has been a chronic problem in my department		
yes	No	Total
13 (34%)	25 (66%)	38 (100%)

Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)



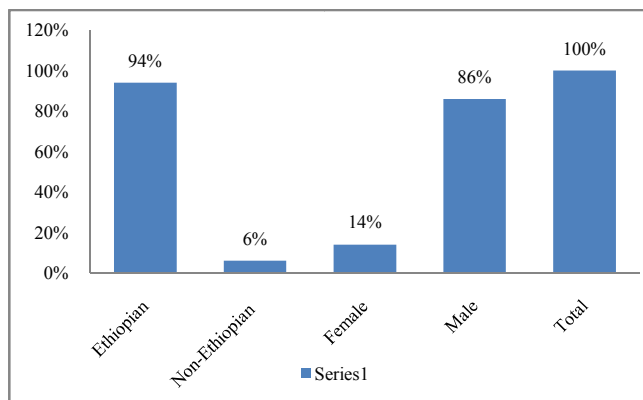
Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)

As indicated on the above table, 13 or 34% responded that turnover is a chronic problem while the majority, i.e., 25 or 66% responded that it is not a chronic problem in their department.

The following table summarizes the total number of academic staff that is currently engaging on their activity, being categorized based on their nationality, and gender.

Table 2 Academic staff by nationality and gender -- sample department

Nationality		Gender		Total
Ethiopian	Non-Ethiopian	Female	Male	799
753 (94%)	46 (6%)	111 (14%)	688 (86%)	(100%)



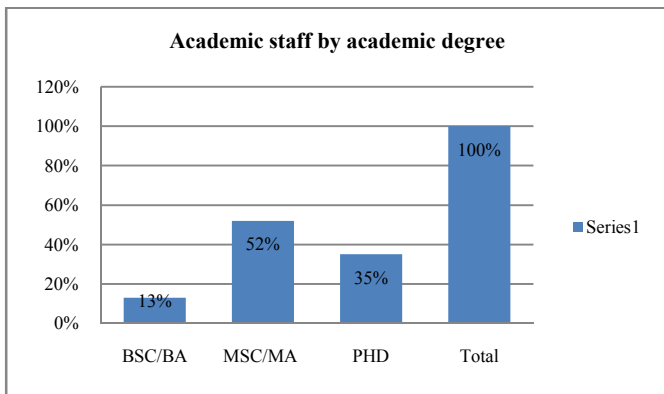
Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)

Of the total 799 academic staff in 38 departments, 753 or 94% are Ethiopian, whereas 46(6%), are foreigners (non-Ethiopian). Out of the total the number of female staff is 111(14%) and that of male workers is 688 (86%)

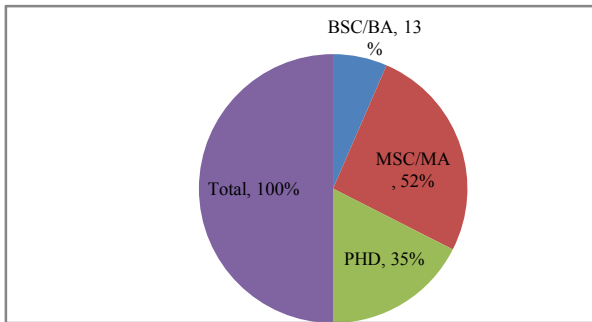
Table 3 Academic staff by academic degree- sample department

Academic Degree	Total number	Percentage
BSC/BA	101	13%
MSC/MA	418	52%
PHD	280	35%
Total	799	100%

Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)



Academic staff by academic degree- sample department



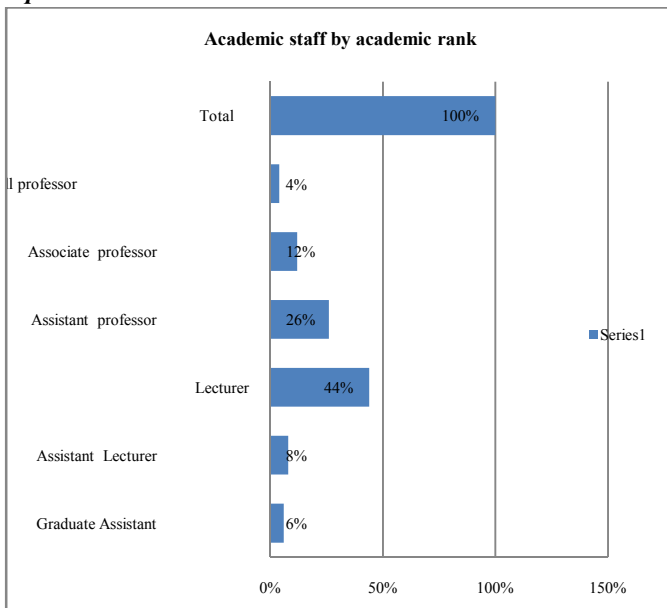
But when one observes the academic degree of these employees, the majority, i.e. 418(52%) are MSC/MA holders, while PHD holders, and BSC/BA degree holders constitute 280 (35%), and 101 (13%) respectively. This is clearly indicated in the following table.

Table 4 Academic staff by academic rank departments - sample department

Academic	Number	Percentage
Graduate Assistant	47	6%
Assistant Lecturer	65	8%
Lecturer	352	44%
Assistant professor	210	26%
Associate professor	92	12%
A/professor	33	4%
Total	799	100%

Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)

Academic staff by academic rank departments - sample department



When looking in to the academic rank of these employees, the figure is indicated in the following graph, the majorities are lecturers, i.e. 352(44%), Assistant professor 210(26%), where as the remaining constitutes, Graduate assistant 47(6%), Assistant lecturer 65 (8%), Associate professor 92(12%), and Full professors account for 33(4%) The next section presents Academic staff (including Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian) who left the University from the 38 departments during the last five years.

According to the response of head of different departments, during the last five years a total of 137 academic staff left the University, of which Ethiopian academic staff constitute 89(65%),and the remaining 48(35%) are Non- Ethiopian.

The overall turnover for the 38 departments during the last five years, which include Ethiopian and foreigners, the primary data, indicates an absolute figure of 137, but the rate of turnover is 17.12%

Total number of academic staff who left from 38 departments during the last five years

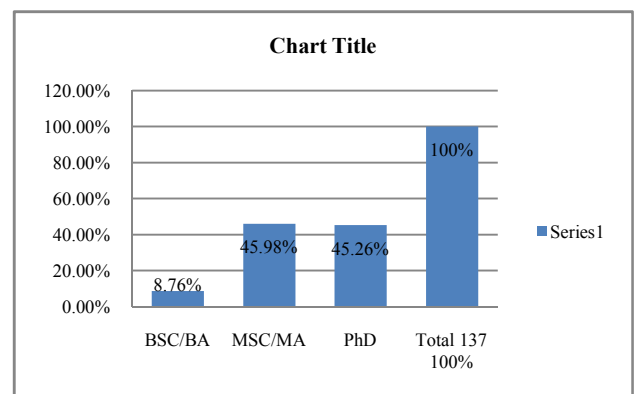
Currently working academic staff in these 38 departments $(137/799) \times 100\% = 17.12\%$

Out of this the rate of turnover for Ethiopian academic staff is found to be $(89/753) \times 100\%$ which is 11.82%

Regarding the proportion of the components of those who left these 38 departments from different dimensions, like gender, academic degree, and academic rank of the staff the following result is obtained. Comparing the gender of staff that leaves the University, it is found that males leave more than female, this is in terms of an absolute figure. Of the total 137, 20(11.6%) are female, and the remaining 117(85.4%) are male staff. The next table summarizes the proportion and composition of academic staff who left the 38 departments based on their academic degree.

Table 5 Academic staff turnover by academic degree -- sample department

Academic Degree	Number of staff who left from the University	Percentage
BSC/BA	12	8.76%
MSC/MA	63	45.98%
PhD	62	45.26%
Total 137	137	100%



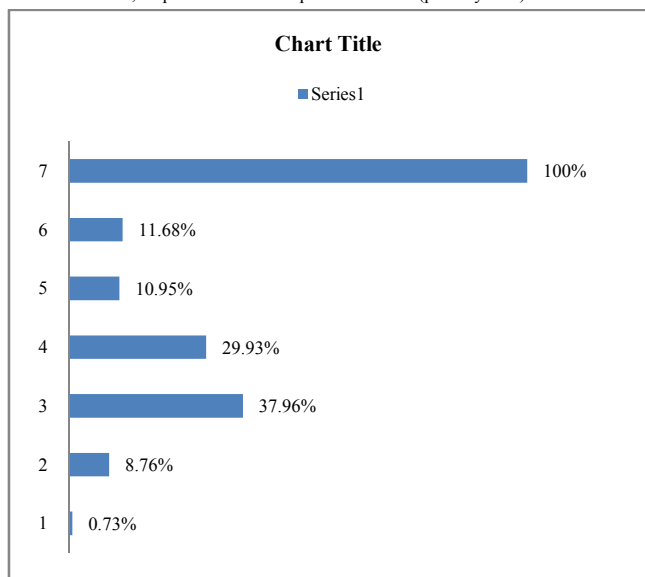
Of those who left the University MSC/MA holders have the largest share is 63(45.98%), while BSC/BA, and PHD degree holder's are 12, and 62, respectively.

The following table shows the rate of turnover of academic staff from the point of their academic rank.

Table 6 Academic staff turnover by academic rank-- sample department sample department

Academic	Number	Percentage
Graduate Assistant	1	0.73%
Assistant Lecturer	12	8.76%
Lecturer	52	37.96%
Assistant professor	41	29.93%
Associate professor	15	10.95%
Full professor	16	11.68%
Total	137	100%

Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)



As indicated on the above table 52(37.96%) of those who left the University during the last five years are lecturers, 41 (29.93%) are assistant professors, 16 (11.68%) are full professors, 15(10.95%) are associate professors, 12 (8.76%) are assistant lecturers, and 1(0.73%) is a graduate assistant.

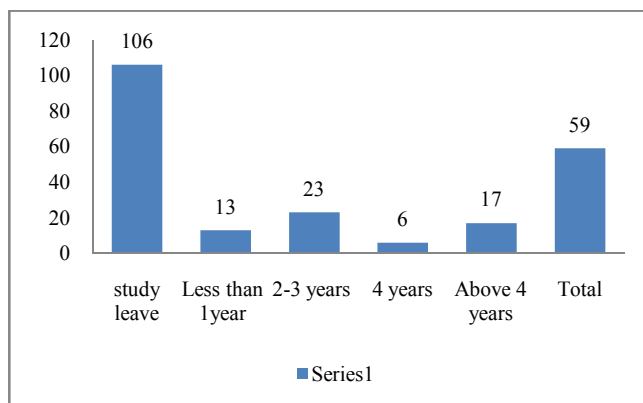
Academic staff on study leaves, and those who did not return from their study are presented below. Totally there are about 106 academic staff who are on study leave, out of this, 17(16%) are females, whereas 89(84%) are male staff, of these, a total of 34(32%) are expected to get their MSC/MA, while the remaining 72(68%) are expected to earn their PHD degree.

Academic staff who did not return from study leave are presented by the following table

Table 7 Academic staff who did not return from overseas study

Overdue period	Total number of staff who did not return
Less than 1 year	13
2-3 years	23
4 years	6
Above 4 years	17
Total	59

Source; response of the 38 department heads (primary data)



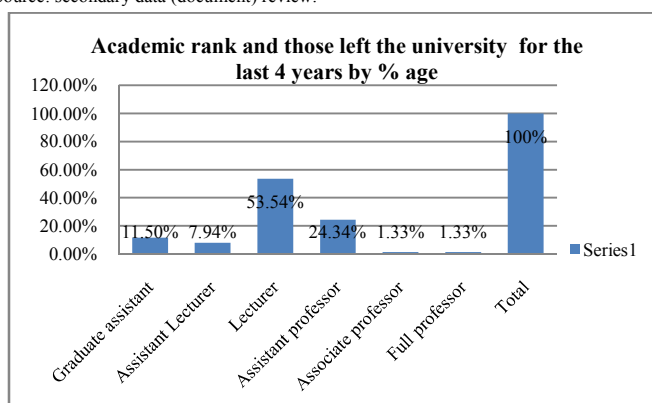
Among those who went for study 106, 13(22%) are late by less than one year, 23(39%) are late by more than 2 years but less or equal to 3 years, 6(10%) are late by more than 3 years but less than 4 years. And 17(29%) are late by more than 4 years.

On the other hand according to the documentary reviews of academic staff turnover of the whole department for Ethiopian staff during the years 2013-2016 a total of 226 Ethiopian staff left the University during the past four years.

Table 8 Ethiopian academic staff who left the University during the last four years (2013-2016)

Academic Rank of staff who left the University during the last four years	(2013)	(2014)	(2015)	(2016)	Total	percentage
Graduate assistant	5	6	5	10	26	(11.50%)
Assistant Lecturer	7	3	6	2	18	(7.94%)
Lecturer	30	30	44	17	121	(53.54%)
Assistant professor	11	9	27	8	55	(24.34%)
Associate professor	0	1	0	2	3	(1.33%)
Full professor	0	0	2	1	3	(1.33%)
Total	53	49	84	40	226	(100%)

Source: secondary data (document) review.



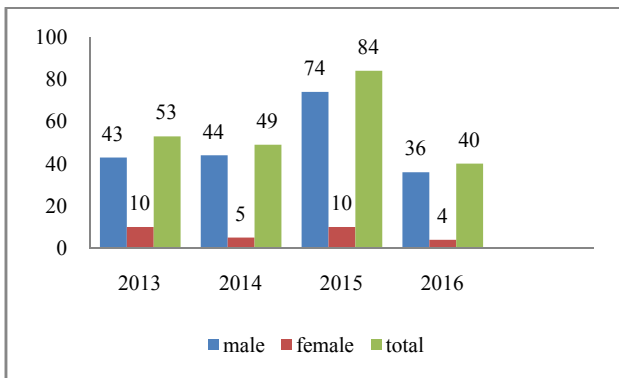
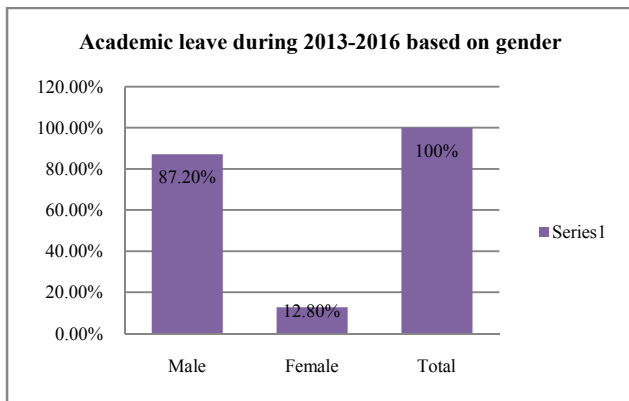


Table 8 indicates that in the year 1998EC large number of academic staff left the University relative to the other years. But when calculating the overall turnover rate of Ethiopian academic staff of the University over these four years, it is found to be 14.5%. According to their academic rank, of those who left the University during the indicated years, the majority are lecturers, constituting 121(53.54%), while assistant professors 55(24.34%), Graduate assistant 26(11.5%), Assistant Lecturer 18(7.94%), Associate professor and full professors both are equal having both 3 (1.33%) shares.

Table 3--9: Ethiopian academic staff who left the University during the years 2013 -2016 E.C classified based on gender

Gender	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Male	43	44	74	36	197(87.2%)
Female	10	5	10	4	29(12.8%)
Total	53	49	84	40	226(100%)

Source: secondary data (document) review.



Document review reveals that as the above table indicates over the last four years the trend of turnover with regard to gender of academic staff, during the years 2013-2016 G.C, the total number of male Ethiopian staff is 197(87.2%), while that of female is 19 (12.7%) In addition the documentary review indicates that the academic staff members left the University for Different Reasons like personal reasons, disciplinary reasons, change of organization, unknown reasons, not returned from study leave, others not returned from sabbatical leave and remain there, this is summarized using the following table.

Table 3 10 reasons for leaving the University

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Personal reasons	144	63.7%
Not returned from sabbatical leave	14	6.2%
Not returned from study leave.	23	10.2%
Unknown reasons	39	17.3%
Change of organization	2	0.9%
Disciplinary reasons	4	1.8%
Total	226	100%

Source: secondary data (document) review.

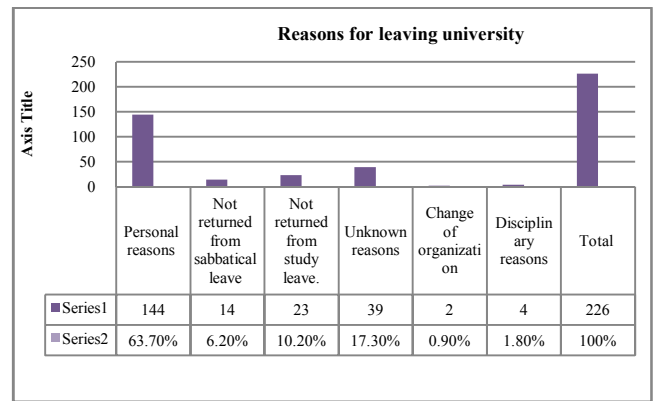
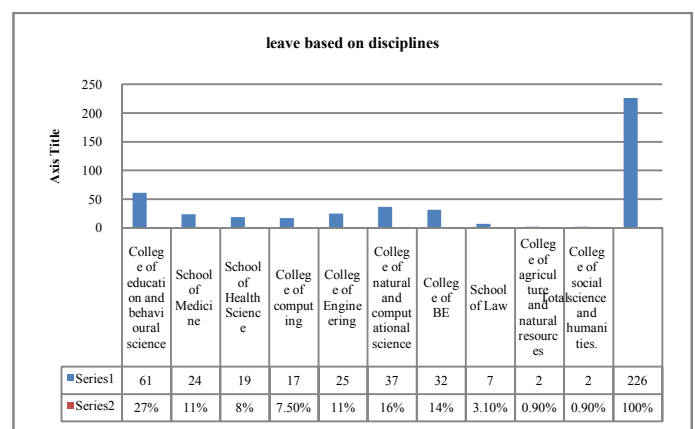


Table 3 .11 Ethiopian academic staff who left the University during the last four years, across disciplines (faculties).

College /School	Total number	percentage
College of education and behavioural science	61	27%
School of Medicine	24	11%
School of Health Science	19	8%
College of computing	17	7.5%
College of Engineering	25	11%
College of natural and computational science	37	16 %
College of BE	32	14 %
School of Law	7	3.1%
College of agriculture and natural resources	2	0.9%
College of social science and humanities.	2	0.9%
Total	226	100%

Source: secondary data (document) review.



Across different disciplines (faculties/school/collage), College of education and behavioural science constitute the highest percent 61(27%) followed by College of natural and computational science 37(16%), collage of BE 32(14 %), collage of engineering 25(11), school of medicine 24(11%), science 37(16.4%), law 7(3.1%), College of agriculture and natural resources and College of social science and humanities 2(0.9%) respectively.

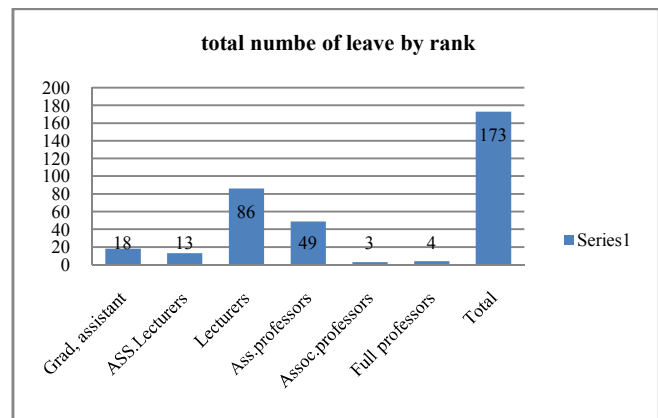
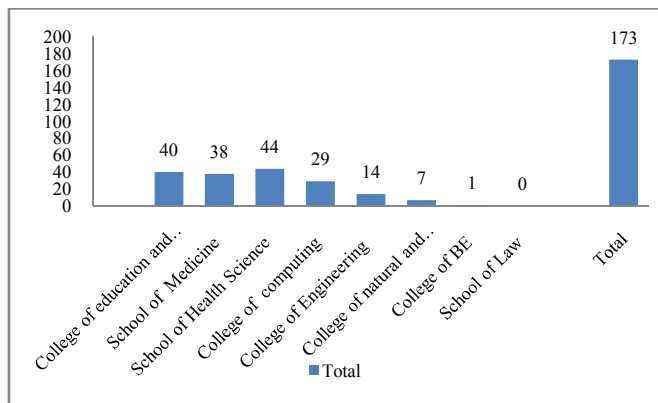
Table 3--12 distribution of turnover across professional rank and facility of academic staff who left the university (2015 - 2016 G.C)

Faculty	Professional rank of staff who left the university (2015-2016)						Total
	Grad. Assistant lecturers	Ass. Professors	Lecturers	Ass. Professors	Assoc professors	Full professors	
College of education and behavioural science	2	3	32	10	-	-	40
School of Medicine	-	1	14	19	1	3	38

School of Health Science	14	3	19	6	2	-	44
College of computing	1	2	18	7	-	1	29
College of Engineering	1	3	7	3	-	-	14
College of natural and computational science	-	1	3	3	-	-	7
College of BE	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
School of Law	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
College of agriculture and natural resources	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	18	13	86	49	3	4	173

Source: secondary data (document review)

The above table indicates that lecturers (86) left more than other groups of academic staff during the year 2013 to 2016EC. It is also indicated that technology faculty was affected (44) more, followed by social science and education faculties.



DISCUSSION

The focus of this project is the voluntary employee turnover because it is found that in voluntary turnover is beyond the control of an employee, in addition, for decades, voluntary employee turnover has received considerable attention in not only organizational researches but also managerial practices because of its association with many kinds of financial cost and latent negative outcomes. In recent years, with the new economy and information age booming, human resource with knowledge, technology and skills has been adding value to the organization and become one key element of core competency. Professional and technical staff is more costly to replace and their quitting will result in loss of substantial technical knowledge, (Yang, *et al* 2007; 4474)

No one recognizes the cost and problem of turnover. Table 4-1, presented in the result part indicates, most department heads responded that turnover is not a chronic problem in their

relative section. They do recognize as if turnover is not a problem in their department, this emanates from the lack of understanding of the cost of losing human resource. Literatures indicate that a loss of a single qualified person costs the organization much. As many departments did not see turnover as a problem. Others admitted to have to deal with the negative effects of early career departures of employees.

The cost of replacing these was revealed as high. The experience base was established as having paramount importance, (Rivera, 1999:2)

According to Netswera, *et al* (2005; 36), the success of the most competitive companies throughout the world, including higher education institutions, lies in their highly skilled employees on which these institutions spend millions to retain. As evidences in the result section of this paper has shown, turnover for the 38 departments is 17.12%. Interms of the University's objective of producing a high calibre work force, the loss of this much academic staff from 38 departments is too costly, because replacing a single person requires a huge cost in terms of time and monetary terms. If a given department faces budgetary constraint it will immediately react; but for the loss of a single staff no one says anything. Mobley (1982: 15-31), argued that, Even if organizations of the future have 'virtual' employees, they will need to manage them as a resource. When an employee leaves, this can have a variety of effects that not only impact on the organization, but also the individual employee and wider society, (cited on Morrell, 2001; 5)

On the other hand, table 45 indicates the composition of those employees who left the University during the past five years, as per the primary data for the 38 departments, among those who left the University majority were MSC/MA degree holders (63) followed by PHD holders (62), but this fact has never been observed even though literature reveals the cost of losing best employees to be enormous beyond monetary quantification. Also worth noting is that the loss of one competent employee to a competitor institution strengthens the competitor's advantage, (Netswera, *et al* 2005; 36)

Regarding the academic rank of instructors in the University the majority are lecturers 52 (37.96%) while assistant professors 41(29.93%) and full professors 16 (11.68%) succeed. Even though professors are few and precious for the country; they share the largest percent of those who leave the University. If the trend continues like this it will affect the University's expansion goal. Therefore, voluntary quits by high-level employees are an expense that deserve serious attention and further investigation, (Pigors and Myers, 1981).

As far as gender is concerned, the number of female staff is much less than the number of male instructors, i.e. female staff constitutes 111(14%), while male staff covers the remaining 688(86%). When one observes the composition of those who left the departments during the last five years, for these groups, females' constitute 20 and males constitute 117 out of the 137 but if one tries to see the turnover of both groups taking the current number of female and male staff at the 38 departments, females have a turnover rate of 18% while that of males is 17%. This can be attributed to many reasons behind. Given the few females in the University, having too much of them leaving has its own implication for the decision to be made. According to Cotton and Tuttle (1986; 63), gender effects on turnover are less reliable among non-managerial and

nonprofessional employees, whereas they are stronger among professional versus other employees. Gender therefore appears to be a better predictor of turnover for the more professional jobs. Thus in case of Madda walabu University too, further research is needed on why females leave more than males given that they are few in number.

In most cases instructors of higher education institution have an access to get scholarship opportunities, but most of them do not return back to the University after completing their study. This is another kind of turnover as per this project. Accordingly, of those staff who went for study, majority seem not to return, i.e. 78% of them are those who are delay by more than two year. Thus they are treated as if they do not return, because as per the University's legislation, a person who does not return from study within a maximum of 18 months is treated as absent. In addition review of documents (secondary data) indicates that study leave is one of the reasons for turnover. In the long term this will certainly strengthen Ethiopian higher education. However, educational opportunities abroad often lead to 'brain drain', while even the short-term absence of professors and administrators presents significant challenges at the home institution. Extra teaching responsibilities fall onto the colleagues who remain behind, and a wide range of development and research projects are often handed off to less experienced and less-qualified staff. Meanwhile, the movement of individuals from one university to another or out of higher education altogether is pervasive throughout Ethiopia. Staff turnover takes place at all levels, driven by the desire to improve earnings and to move from rural toward urban areas. Constant staff turnover wreaks havoc on an institution's capacity to operate efficiently and to manage long-term planning and development, Reisberg L (2010)

Documentary analysis yields an overall turnover rate of 14.5% for academic staff of Madda walabu University during the past four years (2013-2016), for the average total population of the University 2399 this rate should not be deemed simple. Because the cumulative effect of this turnover would harm the University in the short and long run if it continues in this manner. As Dee (2004; p. 593) pointed out, "some degree of turnover is inevitable and perhaps desirable, although high rates of faculty turnover can be costly to the reputation of an institution and to the quality of instruction."

Both secondary and primary data indicates that lecturers leave more than the rest groups. But the total figure of full professors is exaggerated on the primary data for the 38 departments this is so because the primary data is collected for both Ethiopian and Non Ethiopian and Non-Ethiopian are naturally expected to leave up on the completion of their contract, except few. With respect to discipline area there is relatively high turnover around social science and education, succeeded by Medical faculty.

Finally, the documentary review indicates that the rate of turnover across different time periods is changing from time to time, even-though the trend is not constant a loss of single person cannot be undermined. Table 3-12, indicates the composition of turnover of academic staff being classified as faculty versus their professional rank for the period between (1998 and 2000 EC), and it is shown that lecturers left more than other staffs with different rank and for the same period, technology faculty was more affected by academic staff turnover .In the category of lecturers social science and

education faculty shows the greatest number, this category contains a combination of two faculties.

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