

SELF-ESTEEM AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG THE ACADEMIC STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

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Education in the 21st century is focused on knowledge based on collaboration, interaction, and creativity. We need knowledge, skills, competencies, and characteristics of individuals who will create knowledge with the assistance of university academics. So the objective of our paper was to determine the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction among 150 full-time academic employees, employed at three state universities in the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia. We used the following measuring instruments: job satisfaction survey (JSS) and Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE). Results show that 86 (57.33%) subjects have high self-esteem, 38 (25.33%) have a medium level of self-esteem and 26 (17.34%) have low self-esteem. We found that the low self-esteem of the subjects does not depend on job satisfaction, while there is a significant correlation between the medium level of self-esteem and job satisfaction and the high level of self-esteem and job satisfaction. In addition, the self-esteem of the academic staff depends on the total job satisfaction, coworkers, and nature of work, communication, salary. The obtained results show that job satisfaction and job success are moderators of self-esteem in academic staff (Marcionnetti & Castelli, 2022).

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Job Satisfaction, University Academics, Management Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is focused on knowledge based on cooperation, interaction, and creativity. There is no knowledge economy without the flow of information, the interaction of mutually close or distant persons, who jointly create action, and new information, knowledge, and products emerge from a series of joint activities. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD), in order to create personal, social, and economic well-being, we need knowledge, skills, competencies, and characteristics of individuals who will create knowledge with the assistance of the academic staff in university academics (Khalid et al., 2012).

We have witnessed that modern managers in the 21st century emphasize the job satisfaction of their employees, which is defined as a pleasant emotional state that is the result of the assessment

of one's work, an affective reaction to one's work, and an attitude towards that work. Job satisfaction is an attitude with a clear delineation of the objects of cognitive evaluation: the affect (emotions), belief, and behavior. This means that we form our own attitude towards work by taking into account our feelings, our beliefs, and our behaviors (Luthans, 2005).

Machado-Taylor et al. (2010) in their research confirm that the university represents the highest source of knowledge where future human resources are trained who will become experts in various fields and areas, and at the same time, they will acquire the appropriate education and readiness for the best performance of the tasks that they will be engaged on and that will contribute to the achievement of the goals of the work organization.

The performance of university academics affects the quality of students' satisfaction, learning, and success, the acquisition of adequate communication skills, learning to live together with others, and the development of their own potential and identities. That is why satisfaction and self-esteem of the academic staff are very important constructs in the educational process.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyses the research method used to facilitate the processing of survey data. Section 4 will explain the results of the test data. Section 5 will explain the findings that provide important information and opportunities for further research in the future. Finally, Section 6 presents the conclusion and recommendations from this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining the term job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon that we can hardly measure objectively. It is usually an emotional response of the individual to his/her current work situation. Job satisfaction is a complex approach that includes certain assumptions and beliefs about the job (cognitive component), feelings about the job (affective component), and evaluation of the job (evaluation component). The researchers emphasize that job satisfaction depends on a number of predictors, such as salary, work, promotion, supervision, environment, and coworkers (Sequoya, 2000).

In his theory, Frederik Herzberg related job dissatisfaction to work conditions, such as quality of work, salary, company policy, physical working conditions, relationships with others, and job security, while on the other hand, he related job satisfaction to factors that referred to nature of work or the outcome that is a consequence of the job itself, such as the possibility of promotion, personal development, accountability, success during the very execution of the job (Bentley et al., 2013).

Job satisfaction includes three main components: values, the meaning of values, and perception. Values, according to Ho-Yin et al. (2022), depend on what the person consciously or unconsciously wants to achieve. Thereby, they distinguishes between values and needs, indicating that needs are objective requirements of

the organism that are needed to maintain life, such as the need for oxygen and water. Values, on the other hand, represent subjective requirements that are present in the human brain. The second component is the meaning of values. People differ from each other not only in the values they have, but also in the meaning they give to these values, and those differences affect the degree of their job satisfaction. The third component is perception. Satisfaction reflects our perceptions of current situations and our current values. However, perception does not have to fully represent an accurate picture of objective reality. Namely, when it is not perfect, we must pay attention to seeing the individual in the specific situation in order to understand his/her personal reactions.

2.2. Job satisfaction and university academics

The attitudes of university academics toward their work are very important in the development of the university because they affect the quality and satisfaction of their job. Keeping employees satisfied in their careers is a priority for every employer. Satisfaction of the university employees is the reason for changes in their behavior and emotion (Eslami & Gharakhani, 2012). Satisfaction with work is a combination of several factors, such as the organization's vision, management system, motivation, salary, benefits, and behavior. Luthans's (2005) study suggests that motivation, self-esteem, and satisfaction are closely related. The best combination is high motivation and self-esteem, which have a positive effect on job satisfaction among the academic staff, and the employees develop a positive attitude not only in regard to the job but also in regard to the organization as a whole.

2.3. Self-esteem as a concept and developmental phenomenon

The term self-esteem implies acceptance, respect, and belief in oneself. When a person accepts oneself as he/she is, then the person lives peacefully accepting all his/her weaknesses and strengths. Only by respecting ourselves, do we become aware of our value as unique human beings, and when we believe in ourselves, then we also believe that we are capable enough to face life's challenges. As a psychological construct, self-esteem is the negative or positive image of oneself. Furnham (2005) understands the concept of self-esteem as an emotional component and the value of the self-concept. He points out that it is a subjective category, i.e., a personal assessment of oneself. In psychology, self-esteem means evaluation or our personal assessment of the self-image. It can refer to a person's specific character and abilities, memories of past events, and current personal perceptions. According to Kernis (2003), self-esteem is a global predisposition that directly determines a person's behavior at a certain time and in the context of living.

Robins and Trzesniewski (2005) say that many psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and educators associate self-esteem with a number of critical factors that are required to understand a person's behavior. At the same time, the above-

mentioned authors point out that if we consider self-esteem as an independent or dependent variable in certain researches, we will find that there is a high correlation between self-esteem and academic performance, the feeling of joy, positive mental health, alcoholism, and addictions, juvenile delinquency or certain mental disorders. Self-esteem is largely a product of a person's different emotional reactions to himself/herself, which to a great extent depend on what is indeed happening in the individual's life (McLeod & Owens, 2004; Toropova et al., 2021). In this way, self-esteem defines the real self-image, while self-acceptance depends on the relationship between the real self-image and the ideal self-image (Wagner et al., 2014; Austin, 2020). In fact, in those cases the person does not accept himself/herself, the image he/she has of himself/herself, he/she tends to experience himself/herself as a negative person, or by using various defense mechanisms, he/she replaces the real image of himself/herself with the ideal image and begins to live in his/her consciousness (Orth et al., 2012). It is an integral part of employee engagement.

2.4. Self-esteem and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a complex term that cannot be defined unilaterally. Namely, for a long time job satisfaction has been considered a single concept, however, today this term is approached as a very complex cluster of attitudes towards different aspects of work, which are created depending on the expectations of the individual in regard to the work he/she performs and the work environment, whereby nature of work, payment, promotion, subordination, and coworkers include the most frequently studied aspects, that is, factors that influence job satisfaction (Vlosky & Aguilar, 2009). According to Spector (1985), job satisfaction is determined by "a person's feelings about his/her job and various aspects of the job" (p. 236).

Caprara et al. (2006) and Lopez (1982) found that the first step in achieving job satisfaction is for the person to determine the professions, which he/she considers will make him/her good, motivated, and successful. If a person feels incompetent in a certain job, then he/she greatly reduces his/her personal self-esteem. Reduced self-esteem leads to emotional exhaustion, and a feeling of guilt, and over time the individual becomes dissatisfied with himself/herself because he/she is dissatisfied with the job he/she performs, thereby reducing his/her job satisfaction (Cherabin et al., 2012; Noordin & Jusoff, 2009). At the same time, the level of job satisfaction is influenced by internal and external motivation factors, the quality of supervision, the relationships within the work group, and the degree to which the individual succeeds or fails in his/her work (Froese & Xiao, 2012).

Lin and Lin (2011) reported that teachers place more emphasis on internal satisfaction, but other studies suggest a mix of findings that internal and external factors are predictors of teacher job satisfaction (Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022). Their internal satisfaction comes from teaching activities and responsibility, while the external factors are related to academic staff satisfaction, including

salary, perceived support from supervisors and colleagues, and availability of university resources, among other things. The researchers have concluded that motivated and satisfied academics are more likely to be present at their workplace, to have higher levels of performance (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Gilman et al., 2012), show a better level of motivation and a better ability to work (Khan & Iqbal, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research problem

From the review of the world literature on the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction, as well as from the research conducted by a number of researchers, we set out to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction (salary, development, management, benefits, rewards, work process, colleagues, nature of work and communication) in university teachers employed at the state universities in the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia. Therefore, the objective of this paper is:

- 1) To determine whether self-esteem is a statistically significant predictor of increased or decreased job satisfaction among university teachers.
- 2) To determine the level of job satisfaction among university teachers.
- 3) To determine whether there is a significant statistical relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction among academic teachers.
- 4) To determine which aspects of job satisfaction affect the self-esteem of academics.

3.2. Participants

Research participants included a total of 150 academic employees (age = 42.50; $S_s = 7.24$; range 28–60), 120 males (50%) and 120 females (50%), employed in three state universities in the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia. In the category of academic rank, 30% ($N = 30$) were assistants, 30% ($N = 30$) were docents, 30% ($N = 30$) were associate professors and 10% ($N = 10$) were full professors. The research was conducted from January to May 2022. The study was performed in a group, at the universities where the respondents are employed, with a duration of approximately 20 minutes. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous.

3.3. Instruments

The first measuring instrument is the job satisfaction survey, JSS (Spector, 2000). The scale contains of 36 items, and each item has closed answer choices, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Salary (pay), rewards, management, benefits, promotion, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication are the nine dimensions of this scale. Based on the data obtained on this scale, nine independent scores can be calculated, while the tenth score is the aggregate score of the respondents on each statement and represents a general measure of job satisfaction.

The validity of the individual subscales was: $\alpha = 0.78$ for the subscale Satisfaction with the Salary, $\alpha = 0.71$ for the subscale Rewards, $\alpha = 0.79$ for the subscale Management, $\alpha = 0.75$ for the subscale Benefits, $\alpha = 0.69$ for the subscale Promotion, $\alpha = 0.73$ for the subscale Operating Procedures, $\alpha = 0.79$ for the subscale Coworkers, $\alpha = 0.82$ for the subscale Nature of Work, and $\alpha = 0.74$ for the subscale Communication.

The second measuring instrument is the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965; Robins et al., 2001). The self-esteem scale consists of ten statements, five of which are formulated in a positive and five in a negative direction. The total scale score ranges between 10 and 40. The validity of the scale was $\alpha = 0.82$.

3.4. Data processing

The data processing was performed by using the statistical software package SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and factor analysis were applied for data analysis. In this research, the significance levels were accepted as $p < 0.01$ or $p < 0.05$.

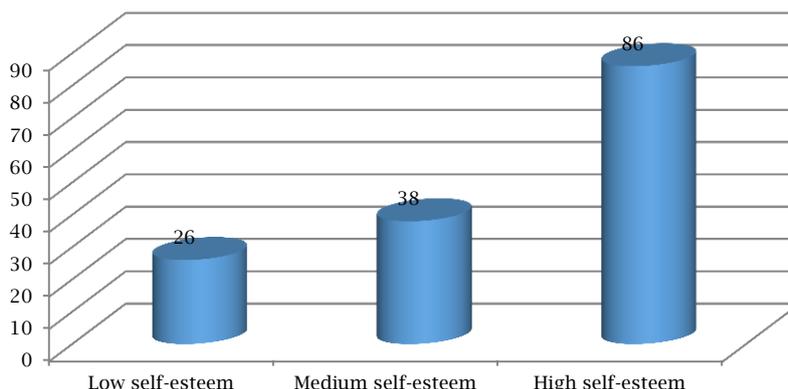
3.5. Ethical problems

During the research, the moral standards and rules for data collection and processing were observed. The research was conducted with a previous agreement with the deans of the faculties and the voluntary participation of the respondents — professors, docents, and assistants. The basic ethical standards were based on the voluntary participation of the respondents, anonymity, and a relaxed atmosphere during the research.

4. RESULTS

The data from the conducted research show that for the entire sample of examined persons (150 respondents), 86 (57.33%) subjects have high self-esteem, 38 (25.33%) have a medium level of self-esteem and 26 (17.34%) have low self-esteem (Figure 1). This percentage distribution testifies to the fact that university teachers highly value the social significance of their work and their participation in the vocational training of young people.

Figure 1. Self-esteem level of the respondents



The descriptive statistics of the variable “self-esteem” is indicated in Table 1 and it shows that the mean value of low self-esteem is $M = 19.33$

($SD = 3.51$), the mean value of medium self-esteem is $M = 28.10$ ($SD = 1.51$) and the mean value of high self-esteem is $M = 34.32$ ($SD = 3.31$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of self-esteem among the respondents

Self-esteem level	Count	Mean of global scores	Standard deviation
Low self-esteem	26	19.33	3.51
Medium self-esteem	38	28.10	1.51
High self-esteem	86	34.32	3.31
Total	150	29.23	4.95

As can be seen in Table 2 in subjects with low self-esteem, the mean value of job satisfaction is $M = 112.67$, but we observed the highest mean values in the subscales that refer to the management of the operating procedures, the nature of work, the presence of colleagues, and communication. The mean value of job satisfaction among the surveyed persons with medium self-esteem was

$M = 115.10$, whereby the subscales were dominated by rewards, nature of work, and communication. The subjects with high self-esteem showed an average value of job satisfaction ($M = 135.09$), and all subscales had similar mean values ranging from 13.11 (for the operating procedures) to 16.93 for the nature of work.

Table 2. Job satisfaction and its subscales in relation to self-esteem

<i>Job satisfaction and subscales</i>	<i>Low self-esteem</i>	<i>Medium self-esteem</i>	<i>High self-esteem</i>
Job satisfaction	112.67	115.10	135.09
Salary (pay)	12.35	13.01	14.20
Rewards	15.21	16.90	16.89
Management	14.23	15.21	16.11
Benefits	12.61	13.80	14.26
Promotion	13.23	12.34	13.68
Operating procedures	18.06	13.90	13.11
Coworkers	16.21	16.02	14.23
Nature of work	17.34	15.60	16.93
Communication	19.34	16.20	16.65

A review of correlation coefficient values showed that the low self-esteem of the respondents does not depend on job satisfaction ($F(26) = 5.250$, $p = 0.084$), whereby the statistical significance is at the $p > 0.01$ level. On the other hand, there is

a statistically significant association between medium self-esteem and job satisfaction ($F(38) = 7.051$, $p = 0.003$, $p < 0.05$) and high level of self-esteem and job satisfaction ($F(86) = 8.620$, $p = 0.000$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction

<i>Self-esteem</i>		<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Low	Between groups	3650.337	3	1215.779	5.250	0.084
	Within groups	6916.795	23	141.151		
	Total	10567.132	26			
Medium	Between groups	2892.025	9	98.376	7.051	0.003*
	Within groups	600.875	29	13.939		
	Total	3492.900	38			
High	Between groups	2273.225	12	89.425	8.620	0.000**
	Within groups	13005.005	74	11.056		
	Total	15278.230	86			

In order to determine the predictive value of self-esteem in relation to total job satisfaction and the nine aspects of job satisfaction: salary (pay),

rewards, management, benefits, promotion, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication, we applied regression analysis.

Table 4. Regression coefficients for self-esteem and job satisfaction aspects as criteria

<i>Job satisfaction aspect</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>Adjusted R²</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Salary (pay)	0.032	0.024	2.123	0.002
Rewards	0.024	0.013	1.642	0.123
Management	0.018	0.005	1.243	0.265
Benefits	0.026	0.011	1.803	0.109
Promotion	0.087	0.019	1.325	0.123
Operating procedures	0.018	0.004	1.269	0.119
Coworkers	0.085	0.064	5.465	0.000
Nature of work	0.059	0.038	4.348	0.001
Communication	0.043	0.029	3.005	0.003
Total job satisfaction	0.026	0.041	2.789	0.004

The obtained results show that the self-esteem of the studied population depends on total job satisfaction, satisfaction with the salary, satisfaction with coworkers, satisfaction with the nature of work, and satisfaction with communication. The percentage of explanation of the variance indicated in Table 4 ranges from 6.4% for satisfaction with the coworkers, 4.1% for overall job satisfaction, 3.8% for satisfaction with the nature of the job, 2.9% for satisfaction with the communication to 2.4% for satisfaction with the salary.

5. DISCUSSION

Job satisfaction can be defined as the worker's cognitive, affective, and evaluative response to it. Also, it is a complex of attitudes, involving certain assumptions and beliefs about work, feelings, and performance evaluation; therefore it is one of the most researched topics in the field of human behavior in organizations. The reason for this is the opinion that a satisfied employee is productive

and that the success of a company is impossible if the employees are not satisfied (Ortan et al., 2021; Kumar, 2020). The relationship between job satisfaction and self-esteem has been studied for decades by many different researchers (Casper & Fishbein, 2002; Cooper & Locke, 2000; Ali & Tatlah, 2022). Akfopure et al. (2006) focus on the relationship between high level of self-esteem and high production results, interpersonal success, happiness, a healthy lifestyle, and high job satisfaction. When it comes to self-esteem as a cause of good attitudes in the workplace, it is usually difficult to prove this type of statement, but the fact that higher self-esteem affects job satisfaction is indisputable (Hina et al., 2014; Chakrabarty et al., 2008). The results of our research prove that the academic staff employed at the state universities has a high level of self-esteem. Every university professor in the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia highly evaluates his/her personal importance and efficiency. University academics that have a high level of self-

esteem show a high level of satisfaction with the job as a whole and in terms of its content (salaries, working conditions, growth, rewards, work process management, communication). Our finding is very similar to the results of certain studies that simultaneously confirm that low self-esteem is a potential indicator of job dissatisfaction (Huysse-Gaytandjieva et al., 2015; Daft, 2005; Türkoglu et al., 2017). Some results confirm the strong correlation between self-esteem and aspects of job satisfaction (Saygi et al., 2011), rewards, salary, and coworkers (Aziri, 2011; Chipunza & Malo, 2017; Wang et al., 2017).

Some researchers revealed that only some aspects of job satisfaction were significant for self-esteem: communication, colleagues, salary, benefits, and nature of work (Robertson et al., 2012; Ghasemy & Elwood, 2022). Similar results were obtained from a study of 17 public and private universities which prove that self-esteem is positively related to salary, benefits, and rewards (Hina et al., 2014; Yüce & Koçak, 2018). Our research has a similar focus. The relationship between all aspects of job satisfaction (salary, rewards, management, promotion, work process, type of work, and communication) and the level of self-esteem is shown. With the regression analysis, we determined that only some aspects of job satisfaction are significant factors for the high self-esteem of the academics at the universities in the Republic of Kosovo and North Macedonia. These aspects include coworkers, nature of work, communication, and salary.

Self-esteem is a need, a desire of the person to be competent, strong, successful, free, and independent from others (McKay & Fanning, 2000; Khan et al., 2021). Higher self-esteem leads to greater optimism, hope, energy, and initiative. People who think about themselves and their abilities in a positive way are highly esteemed throughout their work process and life (Diener, 2000).

6. CONCLUSION

The linkage between the level of self-esteem and job satisfaction has been investigated by many researchers (Hayat et al., 2020). Chen et al. (2022) in their research found that only some aspects of job satisfaction were significant for self-esteem: communication, colleagues, pay, benefits, and nature of work. Our study added to the scope of research with a similar focus. The relationship between all aspects of job satisfaction (salary, rewards, management, growth, work process, type of work, and communication) with the level of self-esteem was demonstrated. Factor analysis revealed that only some aspects of job satisfaction were significant predictors of high self-respect of the academic staff in universities in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Kosovo such as salary, coworkers, nature of work, and communication. Therefore, the basic role of universities is to stimulate and motivate academics in their work (Hui et al., 2013; Ingersoll, 2001; Ahmed, 2012).

It is an indisputable fact that a person by means of his/her job provides economic security, place, and status in the community, develops his/her personality, shapes his/her identity, and develops his/her skills and abilities. A person often finds meaning in his/her life through the job. A person spends more time at work than at home, with family or friends. If he/she is not satisfied with the work environment, he/she feels dissatisfied, gets tired easily, and evaluates his/her efficiency at a low level. People who are not satisfied with their jobs are more likely to experience some emotional and behavioral problems (Ferris et al., 2010; Ohadomere & Ogamba, 2021). Based on the findings of the current research, it can be said that self-esteem has an important role in academics' job satisfaction.

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