AN APPROACH TO THE EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS[1]

AKADEMİK ORGANİZASYONLARDA PROFESYONEL GELİŞİMİN DUYGUSAL BOYUTLARINA BİR YAKLAŞIM

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the emotional aspects of professional growth in academic organizations. Participants from three growth stages of academic life were brought together in 6 focus groups of 8-10 people in each and a total of 50 academicians were interviewed about their positive and negative emotional experiences related with their academic work, duties and other factors, since the beginning of their academic career. The transcriptions of 17 hours of audio recordings formed the data base of this study and was subjected to a systematic coding via content analysis. For each academic stage, the factors/sources of positive and negative emotions were coded to fall into three categories; personal growth, relations and context factors with two or three dimensions in each. A quantitative analysis of data was carried out to single out the more important sources of especially negative emotions during each growth stage, discussing the results as to the possible measures for positive impact on academic performance.

Keywords: Academic life, emotions, academicians, professional growth

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, akademik organizasyonlarda profesyonel gelişim aşamalarının duygusal boyutunu incelemektir. Akademik yaşamın üç farklı evresinden katılımcılar, herbiri 8-10 kişilik 6 odak grup içinde biraraya getirilmiş ve bu odak gruplarda toplam 50 akademisyenle akademik kariyerlerinin başlangıcından beri akademik çalışmaları, görevleri ve diğer faktörlerle ilgili olan olumlu ve olumsuz deneyimleri hakkında görüşülmüştür. Bu toplantıların 17 saatlik teyp kaset kaydı, çalışmanın veri tabanını oluşturmuş ve sistematik olarak kodlanarak içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Her bir akademik evre için olumlu ve olumsuz duygu kaynakları, bireysel gelişme, ilişkiler ve genel ortam faktörleri olmak üzere üç kategoriye ayrılmış ve herbir kategori içinde de iki ya da üç boyut tespit edilmiştir. Her akademik gelişme aşaması için, özellikle olumsuz duyguların daha önemli kaynaklarını tespit etmek üzere veriler sayısal analize tabi tutulmuş ve sonuçlar akademik performans üzerinde olumlu etkiler yaratmak açısından alınabilecek önlemlere değinilerek tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akademik yaşam, duygular, akademisyenler, profesyonel gelişim

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to investigate the emotional aspects of professional growth in academic organizations. Academic organizations, more specifically universities are places where knowledge is created and dissipated through scientific methods. Even the basic mission of the university gives the impression that the dominant values must be rationality and objectivity within the academic circles. Therefore it is not surprising to have so few studies addressing the emotional consequences of academic life. Yet recent studies on different kinds of organizations have successfully demonstrated the significance of emotions on the final performance and well being of human resources. This was the major reason why the authors chose to study the sources of critical emotions during the major stages of academic career as a major drawback to effective academic performance.

The professional growth stages of academicians can be roughly divided into three stages. The first stage covers the period from start as a research or teaching assistant to obtaining the PhD and the related rights of teaching independently as an assistant professor. The second stage is that of assistant professorship during which the person develops and demonstrates teaching and research skills until s/he raises the quantity and quality of her/his work to the standards required by her/his university to be given a tenure as an associate and then as a full professor. This tenure will carry the person to the third stage where s/he will feel greater job security of a permanent position.

Through these professional growth stages the person will be required to develop her/his skills on three major academic roles, namely, teaching, research and service to the university and the community. This is a long process of training, socializing and experimenting through which the candidate academician prepares herself/himself, hoping for a bright career in the third stage. The seemingly difficult accessibility of tenure standarts, the uncertainties inherent in this long developmental process, the initial skills differential with experienced academicians and the family and university pressures to work hard and be successful inevitably creates critical emotional states that the person has to learn to cope with. The nature of the emotions and the effectiveness of handling critical negative emotions during each professional growth stage will affect the persons performance and productivity as an academician. Therefore this paper was based on the basic premise that it is a worth while effort :

i) To analyze the factors of positive and negative critical emotions of academicians at each growth stage,

ii) To determine the most important sources, especially of negative emotions,

iii) To pinpoint the controllable factors within the academic setting in order to enhance the academic performance and productivity,

iv) To suggest certain measures on controllable factors, that would alleviate the effect of negative experiences while enhancing those of positive ones.

The above mentioned research questions were explored in six focus groups 8-10 people each, two of research assistants, two of assistant professors and two of tenured professors and associate professors of Akdeniz University and the transcript of approximately 17 hours of focus group meetings was subjected to content analysis to determine the major factors and the underlying dimensions of negative and positive emotions.

The positive and negative experiences mentioned were categorized into three major factors:

i) Personal growth factors with academic skills and scientific competence dimensions;

ii) Relations factors with formal, informal and academic relations dimensions;

iii) Context factors with HRM system, physical environment and resources and supportive scientific climate dimensions.

Greatest number of negative and smallest number of positive emotion references were made to context factors, which are to a great extent controllable and thus improvable by the higher education authorities and university management. In all the dimensions the number of negative references were greater than the positive references and these numbers were closest to each other in the relations category. The role of the academic advisor seems to have a major impact on the professional growth of academicians, especially during the early stages. The following paper is a preliminary effort to analyze the emotion factors and potential measures in academic settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional aspect of academic life has not been a topic frequently referred to in literature pertaining to higher education. Within this context, Henry Rosovsky's book titled Universite: Bir Dekan Anlatıyor (The University: an Owner's Manual) (1995) presents an unexpectedly sincere account of various emotions related with academic positions and experiences. Rosovsky probably did not mean to make a predominantly emotional approach to academic profession, but in his effort to prepare a guide about university life to help students and professors understand eachother, he was able to provide an unsystematic but very rich collection of work feelings in academic settings. In his book, he reflects all his experience from 1973 to 1984 as the Dean of the Natural and Literary Sciences of Harvard University.

There are many publications dealing with effective management of academic departments, colleges and universities (Bennett 1983; Ehrle and Bennett 1988; Gilley, Fulmer and Reithlingshoefer 1986; Tucker and Bryan 1988), but in none of them it is possible to find any real reference to work feelings relevant for academic life. These academic organizations are handled as completely rational arenas where no emotions prevail or at least emotions do

not interfere with everyday life. This approach is in accordance with Enders' definition of academic profession (1999:72):

"The academics are in charge of generation and transmission of complex knowledge, they have a professional culture of cognitive rationality and their job roles are characterized by a high degree of disposition as regards the goals of their works and procedures employed to pursue these goals".

A comparatively thorough approach to behavioral aspects of academic life can be found in Bess's edited book titled College and University Organization: Insights from the Behavioral Sciences (1985) which contains a collection of papers dealing with behavioral aspects, but even those are confined to traditionally accepted emotions in organization studies, namely motivation and satisfaction.

In a recent article dealing with the problems of research assistants in Turkish universities (Korkut et al. 1999) reference was made to another survey carried on Dutch research assistants, the results of which are pretty well related with emotion issues. In that survey, anxiety and stress levels for research assistants in natural and social sciences were compared on different dimensions. The most frequent problem was anxiety related with teaching. The survey by Korkut et al. on research assistants from 34 universities in Turkey investigates the problems of junior academicians in detail, but makes no reference to emotional aspects. Demir (1996) also makes a comprehensive critique of Turkish academic system, making thorough reference to the ill aspects of the faculty hiring, promotion and tenure systems, without any reference to the emotional consequences in academic settings.

Though we do not rely on a comprehensive survey of higher education literature, it would not be a wrong assertion to note that emotions in academic organizations have been adopted as a topic of interest even less frequently than organizations in general. Is it necessary then to try to understand emotional aspects of academic work? From many perspectives the answer seems to be "yes".

The need to approach emotions as an integral part of organizational life and see the interplay between emotionality and rationality was emphasized by Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) in their article where they try to illustrate their argument that emotions are often functional for the organization, by making references to motivation, leadership and group dynamics. Diamond and Allcorn (1987) also note that," the health and well-being of organizations (their ability to carry out meaningful work purposefully) rests upon the ability of leaders and followers to work collaboratively", therefore,"organizational analysts and administrative practitioners must learn that psychologically regressed and defensive interactions between themselves and others within work group cultures disrupt work and diminish self-confidence."

Lazarus (1991:420-22) also contends that positive emotions and/or processes generating them have a favourable effect on performance and social

functioning..."When people are treated warmly or have positive experiences, they are apt also to feel safe, secure, self-confident and expansive -that is- challenged rather than threatened or in need of self protection." Therefore, "given the appraisals involved in positive mood states, we should not be suprised that performance is better, cognitive activity is much less strained, thoughts and ideas come more easily, and we see others more favourably and open ourselves to them."

In another book on emotions, Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) attempt to determine the causal relations between health and emotions. Especially for psychosomatic disorders and heart diseases, there seems to be sufficient reason to believe that the stress hormones affect the immune system and increase the likelihood of heart attack or an infection. Though not proved clearly yet, the authors find enough reason to state that it is plausible that positive emotions - which are certainly good for morale or one's psychological sense of well being- also offer protection against disease or increase the likelihood of positive health.

As with other types of organizations, emotional aspects of academic settings and experiences deserve at least some attention, so that their impact on performance can be studied. This is what this paper is attempting to clarify.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Focus Groups

The unexplored nature of the research questions mentioned above led the authors of this paper to adopt focus groups as the major data collection methodology. It is suggested that focus groups are useful when one is orienting to a new field; in need of generating hypotheses based on informants' insights; wants to evaluate different research sites or study populations; is developing interview schedules and questionnaires or is getting participants' interpretations of results from earlier studies (Morgan, 1988,11). Morgan describes this method with the following terms (p.12)

> *"Focus groups constitute one specific technique within the broader category of group interviewing to collect qualitative data. The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group."*

The methodology for conducting focus groups was designed according to the relevant literature (Calder 1977; Colwell 1990; Cox et al. 1976; Fern 1982; Gabriel Vol 32, No 4; Griggs Vol 29, No 1; Morgan 1988; Sykes Vol 32, No. 3; Szybillo and Berger 1979; Tynan and Drayton 1988) and attention was paid to the formation of focus groups, preparation of discussion questions and style of the moderator before and during group discussions.

Group Formation

The survey was conducted on the academic personnel of Akdeniz University which is the only university in city of Antalya where the authors live. Due to the fact that many of the individual faculties and schools of the university are quite young, especially the tenured personnel and to some extent the assistant professors have previous experiences with other universities of the country and some with universities abroad. For this reason, the formation of focus groups solely from the academic personnel of Akdeniz University was not seen as a major drawback on producing a rich collection of academic experiences. On the contrary, the eventual combination of different academic experiences has been as various as that of focus groups formed from different universities.

Akdeniz University is a relatively young university (17 years old) with 11 faculties (Medicine, Agriculture, Natural and Literary Sciences, Economic and Administrative Sciences, Engineering, Law, Education, Veterinary, Marine Products, Communications and Fine Arts) and 9 schools of higher education two of which have a 4 year education, the others 2 years of vocational education; three institutes governing graduate studies in health sciences, social sciences and natural sciences. The overall number of academic personnel recruited in these units can be summarized as: 530 research assistants, 181 assistant professors, 243 associate and full professors. Appendix 1 shows the distribution of academic personnel among faculties and 4 year schools of higher education, 3 institutes and the remaining 2 year vocational schools.

To have a sufficient representation of each stage of academic growth, the authors decided to form at least two focus groups from each developmental stage and the nomination of people to be invited was requested from the Dean or Associate Dean of the faculties and the Directors of Schools in case the authors did not know the academicians well enough. For the nomination of research assistants, a minimum period of 2 years of academic experience and recruitment in different disciplines were communicated as a requirement to ensure that they had a sufficient and differentiated repertoire of academic experiences conducive to critical work related emotions. For the nomination of assistant, associate and full professors our only request was that they came from different disciplines to make sure that they all did not mention the same experiences.

In forming the final focus groups, attention was paid to place people coming from the same discipline, informal group or family (there was one husband and wife and one father and daughter among the participants) into different groups; among the nominated people those who would be available on the predetermined meeting dates were given prominence and when the minimum number of 8 people promised to participate, the meeting date and hour were announced to the participants. In cases of uncertainty about the participation of one or two people, one or two extra participants were invited.

Staying within this procedure and principles, 6 focus groups of 8-10 participants were formed, 2 of research assistants, 2 of assistant professors and 2 of tenured associate and full professors. Appendix 2 shows the distribution of focus group participants among faculties and 4 year schools of higher education. Appendix 3 demonstrates the demographic characteristics of participants in these focus groups.

Data Collection: Group Meetings

Focus group meetings were held at the Board Meeting Room of the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences. The room provides a nice and peaceful atmosphere where participants felt themselves relaxed. The authors of this study both participated in the focus groups, one acting as a moderator and the other taking care of the technical details of audio recording the sessions with two separate recording machines.

The moderator started the focus group sessions with a brief explanation of the objectives and methodology of the study. And then she formulated the first question to be discussed:

"What were the positive emotions that you experienced related with your academic work, duties and other factors, since the beginning of your academic career? What were the reasons or sources of such emotions. Was the process of academic advising influential on these emotions? Please mention those feelings that you liked, elevated you and you wanted to continue."

The sequence of speaking was determined on a volunteered basis, until everybody in the group took her/his turn with the first question. Then the moderator formulated the second question to be discussed:

"What were the negative emotions that you experienced related with your academic work, duties and other factors, since the beginning of your academic career? What were the reasons or sources of such emotions? Was the process of academic advising influential on these emotions? Please mention those feelings that were unpleasant and you did not want to continue."

As the discussion of the second question progressed the moderator had to intervene from time to time inorder to reorient the discussions to the research questions and several sub-questions were formulated or repeated to provide a focus to the discussions:

" What were the effects of these emotions on your work performance?"

"How did the academic advising process influence your work related feelings?"

"With whom did you share your emotions and how did you cope with these feelings?"

Each focus group meeting took at least 2.5 hours, at the end of which the participants found it difficult to finish the discussion and leave the meeting room. At the end of six focus groups, 17 hours of audio tape recording was available as the data base of the study.

Data Base and Analysis

The transcriptions of 17 hours of audio recordings formed the data base of this study. This text was subjected to a systematic coding via content analysis the methodology of which was conducted according to the relevant literature (Gokce 1995; Krippendorf 1980; Yıldırım and Simsek 1999). The procedure followed may be summarized as below:

Each focus group session was carefully examined to first record and then "scissor and sort" each different mention of either an experience or a factor/source giving rise to a positive or negative emotion, either explicitly expressed or implicitly meant. For each academic stage, the factors/sources of positive and negative emotions were coded to fall into three categories with 2 or 3 dimensions in each.

1. Personal growth factor with academic skills and scientific competence dimensions;

2. Relations factor with formal, informal and academic relations dimensions;

3. Context factor with HRM system, physical environment and resources and supportive scientific climate dimensions.

The results of this analysis with the corresponding counts and the definitions of each factor and dimension will be provided below.

RESULTS

Factor Definitions

1. Personal growth factor: All kinds of experiences that are related with the personal growth needs and goals of academicians. The positive and negative experiences that fit into this category could be placed on two dimensions, namely the academic skills and the scientific competence.

- **Academic skills dimension** covers all kinds of experiences related with getting prepared and feeling ready for academic duties such as teaching and research. Getting pedagogical training or systematic orientation for teaching, feeling competent in teaching, getting positive feedback from students, being subjected to a systematic career planning from the department were some of the sources of positive emotions on this dimension.

  First teaching experiences, feeling unprepared for teaching and dealing with students, having received no prior training for teaching or pedagogical education, negative feedback from the students were the major sources of negative emotions on this dimension.

- **Scientific competence dimension** covers all kinds of experiences related with developing as a scientist, learning new things, getting results from

research, publishing books and papers, feeling competent in conducting scientific research. Thus positive emotions on this dimension were linked to goal congruent results. The negative emotions were generally linked to feeling hindered from scientific work and development by over load of teaching or administrative paper work, excessive red tape, being occupied by unnecessary subjects or unrestpectful visitors; feeling unproductive or incompetent or blocked in research.

2. Relations factor: All kind of experiences related with the interpersonal relations of the academician in the academic setting. The positive and negative experiences that fit into this category could be placed on three dimensions, namely the formal, informal and academic.

- **Formal dimension** covers all kinds of experiences related with the formal organizational structure and hierarchical relations at the department, faculty or university in general. The positive emotions on this dimension were linked to feeling independent in taking academic decisions, carrying out academic functions, being free from management pressure, a democratic atmosphere, getting respect for opinions; and having played founder role for the department or faculty. On the other hand, negative emotions were linked to oppression from the upper levels of the hierarchy, arbitrary decisions and arbitrary treatment from management, the relations consequences of rector elections; too much control and too little initiative;and being unable to defend one's rights.

- **Informal dimension** covers all kinds of experiences related with the informal relationships that arise among people in the department, faculty or university in general. The positive emotions mentioned on this dimension were generally linked to; being close to students; good human relations at the department; recognition and respect from students, family, peers, professors and community at large. Negative emotions were linked to; lack of trust, soar human relations, conflict and quarrel among senior people in the department; lack of recognition and bad treatment.

- **Academic dimension** covers all kinds of experiences related with interpersonal relations that arise as a result of academic duties and activities, such as teaching, advising, supporting and sharing information or knowledge. The positive emotions mentioned on this dimension were linked to teaching, advising and supporting students; scientific communication and sharing among academics and the academic advising received from the advising professor during masters or PhD studies. Negative emotions on the other hand were linked to the major sources of insufficient support from the advising professor; lack of academic communication and information etc. sharing among people and the overall feeling of loneliness due to lack of adequate attention.

3. Context factors: All kinds of experiences that are related with the context of academic work, such as the physical facilities and resources (equipment,

laboratories, libraries); human resource management systems and the scientific climate that are expected to jointly prepare a medium conducive to a pleasant climate for academic production. Thus, positive and negative experiences in this category could be placed on three dimensions, physical facilities and resources, human resource management and scientific climate.

- **Physical facilities and resources dimension** covers all the experiences related with the physical organization and monetary funds provided for the academics. The school building, infrastructure of the campus, libraries, computers, laboratories, research funds and salaries in general were among the sources mentioned. The positive emotions on this dimension were linked to adequate infrastructure, rich sources of research funds, adequacy of libraries and moving into new school buildings. The negative emotions, on the other hand were linked to low salaries, inadequate libraries, inability to participate in scientific meetings, inability in funding high research expenditures, inadequate school buildings and difficulties inherent in getting scholarships.

- **Human resource management dimension** covers all the experiences related with the selection, hiring, evaluation and promotion of academic personnel. The only mention of positive emotion was linked to the system of electing a new dean. There were a whole bunch of negative experiences linked to the selection, hiring and job security of research assistants; lack of a proper system of criteria for the selection, training, evaluation and promotion of academic personnel; eventual arbitrariness in academic personnel promotions, especially due to organizational politics; the uncertanties and threats related with the renewable contract positions of research assistants and assistant professors.

- **Scientific climate dimension** covers all the experiences related with an environment supporting scientific endeavour of academicians. The positive emotions mentioned on this dimension were linked with the quality of available academic personnel and feeling oneself in a scientific environment. Whereas, negative emotions were linked to the lack of a climate conducive to scientific productivity; low quality of academic personnel; lack of academic cooperation among disciplines; inadequacy of university-industry cooperation projects; legitimacy provided for the second income earning of academicians and commercialization of academic activities.

Summary Results

Various results of the focus group interviews are summarized in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5. Appendix 4 shows the distribution of positive and negative emotional references among academic growth stages. Some of the interesting results to be observed from Appendix 4 can be summarized as follows:

i) Total number of negative emotional references were 80% greater than total number of positive references.

ii) In all dimensions and for every growth stage the total number of negative references were greater than the positive ones.

iii) The ratio of positive to negative emotional references was smallest in the HRM system dimension (ratio: .04) and greatest in the Informal Relations dimension (ratio: .97).

iv) The research assistants mentioned fewer positive emotional experiences compared to both assistant professors and tenured associate and full professors.

v) The research assistant group mentioned the highest number of positive emotional experiences in Academic Relations, Academic Skills and Informal Relations dimensions. Whereas, the least number of positive emotions were mentioned in all three dimensions of the Context factor plus the Formal Relations dimension.

vi) The same group mentioned the highest number of negative experiences in Academic Relations, Scientific Competence, Academic Skills and Physical Facilities and Resources dimensions. Whereas, the least number of negative references were made to the Formal Relations, Informal Relations and HRM System dimensions.

vii) The assistant professors mentioned the highest number of positive emotional experiences in all three dimensions of the Relations factor. Whereas, they mentioned the least number of positive emotions in all three dimensions of the Context factor.

viii) For the same group, the dimensions receiving the highest number of negative references were the HRM System, Academicc Relations and Informal Relations dimensions. Whereas the Scientific Climate, Scientific Competence and Academic Skills dimensions received the lowest number of negative references.

ix) The tenured associate and full professors mentioned the highest number of positive emotional experiences on the Academic Relations and Physical Facilities and Resources dimensions. Whereas the least number of references was made to the HRM System.

x) For the same group, the dimensions receiving the highest number of negative reference were, the HRM System, Academic Skills and Physical Facilities and Resources. Whereas the Informal Relations, Academic Skills and Scientific Climate dimensions received the least number of negative references.

xi) In all dimensions, Academic Relations received the highest number of positive and the second highest number of negative emotional references; the HRM system receiving the highest number of negative references.

Appendix 5 shows the total references to positive and negative emotional experiences in relation to the number of defined emotions in each category and

gives lists of most frequently used emotion labels.The terminology used for Appendix 5 are defined as follows:

Total number of references, refers to the total number of cases where the participants made reference to a specific academic experience that resulted in a positive or negative emotion.

Defined emotions, refers to the total number of cases where the participants explicitly mentioned an emotion in relation to the academic experience narrated.

Emotion label, refers to the different names given to defined emotions. The frequency of use for each emotion label is listed in Appendix 6. Appendix 5 shows only those labels that were cited more than 3 times.

Some of the interesting results to be observed from Appendix 5 can be summarized as follows:

i) For all the positive emotional experiences made reference to, only 70% were defined as an emotion. For negative references, this ratio was 51%.

ii) For defining positive emotions only 24 different emotion labels were used; for negative emotions this number was 41.

iii) Among positive emotions, the highest ratio of defined to total references was calculated for Scientific Competence dimension and the lowest ratios were calculated for the HRM System and the Physical Facilities and Resources dimensions.

iv) Among negative emotions, the highest ratio of defined to total reference of emotions was calculated for the HRM System and the lowest was calculated for Informal Relations.

v) People showed a tendency to express their positive or negative emotions using only 7-8 emotion labels. And when these labels were analysed, it was observed that there was a preference for more general terms like pleasure, positive, pleasant, annoyance, negative, trouble or problem rather than more specific labels.

DISCUSSION

The results of the focus group interviews need to be discussed further, inorder to extract some meaningful conclusions. Below we shall try to deal with each significant result separately:

i) Despite the fact that in all focus group meetings, the participants were asked to narrate their positive experiences-emotions first, and they were given enough time and chance to recall these, the results show that the number of negative experiences mentioned were 80% higher than positive ones and the number of different emotion labels used were 43% higher than positive

emotion labels. This brings to mind the question, whether human beings are inclined to recall negative experiences and emotions more strongly than positive experiences and emotions. Bower (1994:304) points out that there is abundant evidence to indicate that people better remember events that evoke greater emotional reactions, whether positive or negative. If this is correct, should we conclude that our participants in the focus groups have had 80% more strong negative emotions than positive ones?

ii) The HRM system of the context factor was detected as a critical dimension in creating negative emotions rather than positive emotions. This reminds us about the two-factor theory by Frederick Herzberg which differentiated between hygiene factors and motivators. Here the HRM system acts as hygiene factor, causing dissatisfaction when poor, but not causing motivation when good. Could this be the reason why this dimension received such a high number of negative references besides so few positive ones?

Since emotions are conceptualized as beginning with appraisals of the way in which circumstances or events bear on a person's motives, goals and desires (Shaver et al. 1987/Arnold 1960) and prototypical emotion episodes begin with an interpretation of events as good or bad, helpful or harmful, consistent or inconsistent with a person's motives (Shaver et al 1987/ Roseman 1984), there is more reason to believe that HRM system of Turkish universities in general has been a constant source of frustration for academicians.

Studies by Korkut et al. (1999), Araştırma Görevlileri Derneği (1997), Açıkgoz and Açıkgoz (1992) and Demir (1996) all emphasize especially the context factors, the HRM system, the physical facilities and resources and pay as the most important problems for junior academicians. Our study confirmed that these factors pose an important source of negative emotions.

However, this situation does not seem to be relevant just for Turkish universities. Rosovsky's (1995:175-182) book draws attention to the frustration of assistant professors in the U.S. concerning matters of getting tenure, lower pay rates, job insecurity etc. and he notes that, " We should always be able to emphatize with our friends in temporary status. Only then we can understand the factors that cause anxiety, pain or nervousness in them and can be more thoughtful, understanding and supportive."

Enders (1999:77) also makes reference to a survey on studies regarding academic profession in European countries, U.S. and Japan to conclude that academicians are most critical with their teaching load, inadequate resources and problems of job security and advancement, especially for junior academic staff.

Another interpretation of this result might be related to the amount of control an academician can have on any dimension. The negative emotion generativeness of the HRM system may be due to the fact that academicians possess least amount of control on this dimension which has the potential to most influence professional goal attainment. This can be compared to the Informal Relations dimension which resulted in the smallest difference between

the numbers of positive and negative references. This can be explained by the fair amount of control the academicians can have on establishing good human relations.

iii) It is also quite understandable to see how critical the Academic Relations, Academic Skills, Scientific Competence and Physical Facilities and Resources dimensions are for the research assistants who are preoccupied with acquiring the academic skills and scientific competence for a brighter academic career which necessitates effective academic relations, advising and sufficient physical facilities and resources.

iv) It was also quite understandable to see those of the Relations and Context factors as the most critical dimensions for the assistant professors. Having completed their PHD studies, their preoccupation with the academic skills and academic competence dimensions seems to have diminished, instead they seem more preoccupied with their relations at the university, having their voices heard, securing tenured positions etc.

Their greatest concerns are with the HRM system (the highest number of negative references on this dimension came from this group), the academic promotion procedures of which are subject to considerable criticism. They have been articulate on the Academic Relations dimension, because they all had powerful negative or positive experiences during their dissertation studies.

v) For the tenured associate and full professors, the most critical dimensions have been the Academic Relations, HRM system and Physical Facilities and Resources, Scientific Competence and Scientific Climate. Their greatest concern seems to be with the HRM system the negative impact of which they lived through while getting their tenure.

vi) It was quite meaningful to have the Academic Relations dimension receive the highest number of positive and the second highest number of negative references. In both categories, Academic Relations proved its potential to influence the lives of academicians through their journey up the academic ladder. During this process, they are first taught, given academic advising and trained how to teach, research and advise and then they are expected to do these themselves. Most of their lives rest on academic relations arising from their academic duties and activities. Therefore this critical dimension must be handled very carefully and effectively.

vii) When asked about their emotional experiences from the start of the academic career, it was interesting to note that, while people told stories about their past experiences, in 30% of positive cases they did not explicitly define any emotion and for negative experiences they defined emotions only in 52% of cases. Several questions need to be discussed pertaining to this result.

Do people generally have difficulty in defining emotions that arose as a result of a critical experience? If this can not be said, was it because the experiences were related to an academic setting that people felt it difficult to tie

emotions to what have been experienced? If so, can we speak about untold feeling rules in academic organizations, conducive to difficulty in tieing emotional labels to what has been lived?

In formulating the reasons why four kinds of means, neutralizing, buffering, prescribing and normalizing are used for regulating experience and expression of emotion in work settings, Ashforth and Humphrey (1995:104) point out that:

> *"Only a limited range of emotional expressions tends to be socially acceptable. Expressions of negative emotion, such as fear, anxiety and anger tend to be unacceptable except under fairly circumscribed conditions.... Further, expressions of intense emotion, whether negative or positive, tend also to be unacceptable except under certain conditions..Accordingly, at least four somewhat overlapping means have evolved for regulating the experience and expression of emotion in work settings."*

This topic of feeling rules in academic settings, which could not be dealt with in this study, needs to be further explored.

viii) The ratios of defined to total emotional references varied a lot among dimensions and positive and negative categories. It was not possible to detect any pattern, but a probable explanation for this variation might be that emotions were defined to the extent that they were personally felt strongly. Some of the experiences were more general opinions about the pluses and minuses of academic life. In those cases they naturally did not define any specific emotion. Probably, the defined emotion ratios represent the real occurence of critical emotions, where the person automatically tied an emotion label to what s/he felt.

ix) Another result that needs to be discussed is the repeated use of the same positive and negative labels by participants. This seems to be a generalizable problem. Frijda et al. (1989:224) draws attention to the fact that emotion names are used somewhat sloppily and are subject to preferences and that most people may well use aversion, when contempt, would fit an experience more precisely. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995:102) on the other hand quotes from Sandelands (1988), noting that organizations often lack a vocabulary and a culture for even discussing emotive activities and subjective experiences. This is linked to the prevalence of rationality as the dominant organizational paradigm, which limits people's effort and motivation to find accurate expressions for their experiences. This is another topic that needs to be explored further.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this preliminary qualitative study carried through six focus groups, the authors were able to conclude that:

i) The emotional experiences of academicians can be categorized into three factors, namely, personal growth, relations and context factors.

ii) Among these factors, Academic Relations dimension of the Relations factor has the potential to be a very important source of positive and negative emotions. On this dimension, relations with the academic advisor were repeatedly emphasized as a very important factor in facilitating or complicating the journey up the academic ladder. As Rosovsky (1995:140-156) notes, on one side you can find happy doctoral students in the warm atmosphere of family life and on the other side, you can find equal number of unhappy students who believe that their academic parents are neglecting them, and in between you can find the majority. Therefore the doctor-father, as called in Germany to indicate the ideal state between doctoral student and academic advisor, is the most important person and should be selected very carefully. Students need help in developing a research project. Especially in natural sciences it is usually the advisor who suggests the dissertation topic. Besides, students need someone, a critique to read and comment on their dissertation drafts. For this intellectual guiding, students are advised to choose a supportive person that could extend help in overcoming big obstacles and continue her/ his support at the beginning of their academic career as an assistant professor. Therefore, the best choice might not be the brightest professor, but someone that would take care of graduate students.

iii) Informal relations dimension of the relations factor was found to be the second powerful source of positive emotions. The human relations climate at the academic department or institution in general and the social relations with students were frequently cited as sources of positive experiences. This dimension was repeated as a source of negative emotions frequently, but ranked only 5th among other sources of negative emotions. Overall appraisal of this dimension would take us to the conclusion that, informal relations or the social climate - a friendly, supportive and collaborative atmosphere- is conducive to positive emotions, which could be expected to generate a favourable effect on performance and social functioning (Lazarus 1991:420-22). This conclusion should warn us, the academics to pay greater attention to preserving the positive social atmosphere in our academic settings. Rosovsky (1995:182) also notes that, a good academic department should look like a family. Advisors and senior professors should treat junior academicians as members of the same community, give them a sense of belonging, and be supporting, guiding and nurturing. The ideal state is to have the department help them achieve the best of their capabilities.

iv) The HRM dimension was found to be the strongest source of negative emotions, scoring the highest number of negative and the lowest number of positive references. It is to be emphasized that, as with other types of organizations, academic personnel expects to be treated within a clear, systematic and fair hiring, evaluation, promotion and tenure system. Especially for the assistant professors, academic promotion to tenured associate professor positions poses a lot of uncertainties or insecurities, due to less than fair implementation of academic standards in granting associate

professorship. This conclusion should be taken as an urgent need to review the whole HRM system in universities. For the research assistants, an important problem with the HRM system is the lack of clarity in job definitions, which can easily lead to abuse of their effort in secreterial or administrative duties.

v) The physical facilities and resources dimensions of the context factors were found to be the third important source of negative emotions in our study confirming the results of other studies on Turkish universities. Starting with the low salaries, inadequate libraries and laboratories, lack of adequate funds for research were frequently expressed as sources of negative emotions, but only one third as much positive references were made to the same group.

vi) The context factor in total received the highest number of negative references, indicating that the overall context designed and implemented by the higher education authorities need to be revised and reformed radically, in such a way that they are no longer powerful sources of negative emotions. Since the context factors possess direct influence on the conditions conducive to goal attainment, improvement on these dimensions promise to create an atmosphere of greater academic well being and performance.

This study was only meant to be a preliminary study on emotions in academic organizations. Though the emotionality issues in this setting are much more complicated and deserve further investigation, we have good reason to assert that improvement in the critical emotion factors detected in this study will enhance the overall performance in universities.

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Appendix 1

Distribution of academic personnel among faculties and 4 year schools

FACULTIES, SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES	Tenured Associate and Full Professors	Assistant Professors	Research Assistants	Lecturers	Specialists	TOTAL
Medicine	129	89	281	16	17	532
Agriculture	32	18	9	7	3	69
Natural and Literary Sciences	38	16	9	3	6	72
Economic and Administrative Sciences	12	10	24	1	1	48
Engineering	7	1	4	2	-	14
Law	1	1	1	-	-	3
Education	1	5	1	-	-	7
Communications	1	4	-	-	-	5
Veterinary	5	7	13	-	-	25
Marine Products	1	-	-	-	-	1
School of Tourism and Hotel Business (4 year)	3	4	1	5	-	13
School of Health Sciences (4 year)	1	-	9	-	-	10
Institute of Social Sciences	-	-	34	-	-	34
Institute of Natural Sciences	-	-	107	-	-	107
Institute of Health Sciences	-	-	34	-	-	34
2 year vocational schools (7)	12	26	3	167	35	775
TOTAL	243	181	530	201	62	1217

Appendix 2

Distribution of focus group participants among faculties and 4 year schools

FACULTY OR 4 YEAR SCHOOL	Tenured Associate and Full Professors	Assistant Professors	Research Assistants	TOTAL
Medicine	4	3	3	10
Agriculture	1	3	3	7
Natural and Literary Sciences	4	2	2	8
Economic and Administrative Sciences	4	6	6	16
Law	1	-	-	1
Education	1	1	-	2
Communications	1	-	-	1
School of Tourism and Hotel Business (4 year)	-	2	2	4
School of Health Sciences (4 year)	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	16	18	16	50

Appendix 3
Demographic characteristics of participants in six focus groups

	Research Assistant	Assistant Professor	Tenured Associate and Full Professors	TOTAL
Total no. of participants	16	18	16	50
Age	$\overline{X}=28$ $25 \leq X \leq 33$	$\overline{X}=40$ $33 \leq X \leq 47$	$\overline{X}=49$ $37 \leq X \leq 60$	—
Gender	9 women 7 men	6 women 12 men	6 women 10 men	21 women 29 men
Marital status	6 married 10 single	11 married 7 single	15 married 1 single	32 married 18 single
Length of service at this university	$\overline{X}=3.8$ $1 \leq X \leq 7$	$\overline{X}=11$ $3 \leq X \leq 20$	$\overline{X}=6$ $1 \leq X \leq 19$	—
Having worked at another university	5 yes 11 no	16 yes 2 no	15 yes 1 no	36 yes 14 no
Stage of academic work	9 doctoral 5 masters 2 medical spc.	—	—	—
Stage of dissertation	8 continue 7 finished 1 not required	—	—	—
Intention to continue academic career	13 yes 3 don't know	—	—	—
How long ago tenure obtained	—	—	$\overline{X}=9$ $2 \leq X \leq 33$	—
How long ago assistant professorship obtained		$\overline{X}=3.7$ $1 \leq X \leq 13$	—	—

Appendix 4

Distribution of emotional references among academic growth stages

FACTOR	DIMENSION	Positive Emotions				Negative Emotions				RATIO
		Research Assistants	Assistant Professors	Associate and Full Professors	TOTAL	Research Assistants	Assistant Professors	Associate and Full Professors	TOTAL	
Personal Growth	Scientific Competence	5	5	6	16	11	6	13	30	.53
	Academic Skills	10	4	6	20	10	6	9	25	.80
Relations	Formal	-	9	6	15	5	9	10	24	.63
	Informal	6	16	6	28	7	15	7	29	.97
	Academic	11	13	15	39	21	13	10	44	.89
Context	HRM System	0	-	2	2	6	26	19	51	.04
	Phy. Fac. and Resources	1	1	9	11	11	12	11	34	.32
	Scientific Climate	0	4	8	12	10	1	9	20	.60
	TOTAL	33	52	58	143	81	88	88	257	.56
	No. of participants	16	18	16	50	16	18	16	50	
	No. of emotions per participant	2.06	2.9	3.6	2.9	5.06	4.9	5.5	5.1	

Appendix 5

Distribution of emotional experiences, defined emotions and emotion labels

FACTOR	DIMENSION	Positive Emotions — Total no. of references	No. of defined emotions	% of total to defined emotions	Most frequently used positive emotion labels (used more than 3 times)	Negative Emotions — Total no. of references	No. of defined emotions	% of total to defined emotions	Most frequently used negative emotion labels (used more than 3 times)
Personal Growth	Scientific Competence	16	13	.81	Satisfaction (13); Happiness (12); Pleasure (11); Positive (effect, feeling) (11); Pleasant (6); Motivation (6); Delight (4)	30	17	.57	Annoyance (18); Negative (effect, feeling) (15); Trouble (11); Demotivation (11); Problem (9); Unhappiness (8); Dissatisfaction (7); Anxiety (6) (4)
	Academic Skills	20	13	.65		25	15	.60	
Relations	Formal	15	11	.73		24	10	.42	
	Informal	28	22	.79		29	12	.41	
	Academic	39	27	.69		44	19	.43	
Context	Phy. Fac. and Resources	11	5	.45		34	15	.44	
	HRM System	2	-	0		51	33	.64	
	Scientific Climate	12	9	.75		20	11	.55	
	TOTAL	143	100	.70	24 different emotion labels	257	132	.51	41 different emotion labels

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Appendix 6

List of Negative and Positive Emotion Labels Mentioned

No	Negative Labels	Frequency	No	Positive Labels	Frequency
1.	Annoyance	18	1.	Satisfaction	13
2.	Trouble	11	2.	Happiness	12
3.	Demotivation	9	3.	Pleasure	11
4.	Problem	8	4.	Positive (feeling effect)	11
5.	Unhappiness	7	5.	Pleasant	6
6.	Dissatisfaction	6	6.	Motivation	6
7.	Anxiety	4	7.	Delight	4
8.	Exhaustion	3	8.	Extraordinary	3
9.	Pain	3	9.	Nice	3
10.	Inadequacy	3	10.	Luck	3
11.	Fear	3	11.	Liking	3
12.	Negative feelings	15	12.	Enjoy	2
13.	Torture	2	13.	Comfortable	2
14.	Oppression	2	14.	No trouble	2
15.	Disillusionment	2	15.	Different	2
16.	Loneliness	2	16.	Worth it	1
17.	Alarm	2	17.	Meaningful	1
18.	Panic	2	18.	Trust	1
19.	Stress	2	19.	Wonderful	1
20.	Guilt	2	20.	Respect	1
21.	Sadness	2	21.	Rejoice	1
22.	Mistake	1	22.	Grateful	1
23.	Shock	1	23.	Advantage	1
24.	Deficiency	1	24.	Attractive	1
25.	Vicious circle	1			
26.	Feeling bad	1			
27.	Excitement	1			
28.	Sorrow	1			
29.	Role conflict	1			
30.	Unnecessary load	1			
31.	Confusion	1			
32.	Uneasiness	1			
33.	Depression	1			
34.	Intimidating	1			
35.	Mistrust	1			
36.	Dilemma	1			
37.	Phobia	1			
38.	Forcing	1			
39.	Costly	1			
40.	Destroyed	1			
41.	Displeased	1			