



ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB SATISFACTION AND ATTITUDE AMONG RESEARCH ASSISTANTS IN SCHOOLS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS¹

(BEDEN EĞİTİMİ VE SPOR YÜKSEKOKULU ARAŞTIRMA GÖREVLİLERİNİN İŞ TATMİNİ VE ÖĞRETİM ÜYELİĞİNE İLİŞKİN TUTUM İLİŞKİSİNİN İNCELENMESİ)

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to determine whether the job satisfaction of research assistants at Schools of Physical Education and Sport, and their attitudes to university lecturers, varies at a meaningful level regarding some variables and to find out the correlation between them. The sample of the research includes 96 research assistants. The levels of job satisfaction were determined by the “Job Satisfaction Scale” (Baş and Ardıç, 2001) while attitude levels concerning lecturers were determined by the “Research Assistants’ Attitude to Lecturers’ Scale” (Semerci, 2004). The research assistants’ points and general job satisfaction, subdimension job satisfaction and quality of job satisfaction, image of the institution, satisfaction of job security, satisfaction with academic atmosphere and executive consultant, communication and satisfaction points with colleagues did not vary according to the different age variable. On the other hand, differences at a meaningful level in the points of salary satisfaction according to the age variable were confirmed. According to the research assistants’ service period variable, no differences were found in the job satisfaction, the subdimension job satisfaction and in the average of the points of lecturers. A moderate positive versatility among general job satisfaction with regard to research assistants’ attitude to lecturers, satisfaction from the job quality and image of the institute; communication and the satisfaction with colleagues as the subdimension was confirmed.

Key words: research assistant, member of faculty, job satisfaction, attitude

ÖZ

Bu araştırma, beden eğitimi ve spor yüksekokulu araştırma görevlilerinin iş tatmini ve öğretim üyeliğine ilişkin tutumlarının (ÖÜİT) bazı değişkenlere göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılık gösterip göstermediğini belirlemek ve aralarındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini; 96 araştırma görevlisi oluşturmaktadır. İş tatmin düzeyleri “İş Tatmin Ölçeği” (Baş ve Ardıç, 2001), öğretim üyeliğine ilişkin tutum düzeyleri ise “Araştırma Görevlilerinin Öğretim Üyeliğine İlişkin Tutum Ölçeği” (Semerci, 2004) kullanılarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırma görevlilerinin cinsiyet değişkenine göre ÖÜİT puan ortalamaları, genel iş tatmini ve iş tatmini alt boyutlarından iletişim boyutu hariç diğer alt boyut puan ortalamaları arasında anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşma saptanmamıştır. Yaş değişkenine göre, araştırma görevlilerinin ÖÜİT puanları, genel iş tatminleri ve iş tatmini alt boyutlarından işin niteliğinden tatmin, kurum imajından tatmin, iş güvencesi, akademik ortamdaki tatmin, yöneticiden (danışmandan) tatmin, iletişim ve çalışma arkadaşlarından tatmin puanları anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşmamaktadır. Diğer taraftan ücretten tatmin puanlarında yaş gruplarına göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşma saptanmıştır. Araştırma görevlilerinin hizmet süresi değişkenine göre iş tatmini, iş tatmini alt boyutları ve ÖÜİT puan ortalamalarında anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşma bulunmamıştır. ÖÜİT’leri ile genel iş tatmini, işin niteliğinden tatmin ve kurum imajından tatmin, arasında orta düzeyde pozitif yönlü; iletişim ve çalışma arkadaşlarından tatmin alt boyutları arasında düşük düzeyde pozitif yönlü, anlamlı bir ilişki saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: araştırma görevlisi, öğretim üyesi, iş tatmini, tutum

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INTRODUCTION

Conceptualized as job satisfaction in the literature, professional satisfaction is an issue that begins with the choice of the profession and affects the individual during his entire life (Yalçınkaya, 2000; Koç, 2001). The concept of job satisfaction and the assessment of job satisfaction began first in 1911 with the research of Frank Taylor. Taylor stated that rewards like the earnings of the practiced job, promotion, incentive payments, appreciation, and opportunities for progress could achieve job satisfaction (Aslan, 2001). In 1935, Hoppock found that job satisfaction forms part of general satisfaction. In 1945, Elton Mayo concluded from a study of a group of factory workers that the most important determinant of job satisfaction was inter-group interaction and that this factor preceded other variables like safety, relation to the work, and success (Bektaş, 2003).

Although job satisfaction as an attitude is distinct from motivation which involves behavior, the first systematic evaluation of job satisfaction in the literature was related with motivation theory (Yüksel, 2005). But because of the complexity of human behavior, it is hard to say that any of the motivation theories in itself could completely explain the issues of motivation and job satisfaction (Can et al., 2001). Therefore, Maslow's theory of "The Hierarchy of Human Needs" of 1954, Herzberg's "Double Factors Theory" of 1959, and the "Equality Theory" of Adams are motivation theories and also the main studies about job satisfaction as well. Besides these theories explaining job satisfaction, Hackman and Oldham's "Job Features Model" and "the Cornell Model" devised by Smith, Kendall and Hulin, are important theories that try to explain job satisfaction (Dorsan, 2007).

There are many definitions of job satisfaction. In general, job satisfaction is the content workers feel about their job. Job satisfaction occurs when attributes of the job comply with the demands of the worker and the worker is pleased with his job (Akıncı, 2002).

As job satisfaction is related to many variables in the organization, many studies have been done on its various aspects. Locke (1976) presented the dimensions being used in the evaluation of job satisfaction. These are; the job itself, payment, promotion, working conditions, benefits of the work, fellow workers, personal values, employee-employer relationship (Güney et al., 1996). In addition to these variables, more factors affecting job satisfaction can be listed as a feeling of success, relations with the management, relations with employees, job safety, more responsibility, being recognized, high salary, promotion opportunity, unambiguity of roles, participation in decisions, freedom, good coordinated work, lack of continuity, relocation, performance, life satisfaction, and trade unions (Lam, 1996; Adler et al, 1985; Bakan & Büyükbeşe, 2004). The perceived work stress also has been found as a factor affecting job satisfaction (Norbeck, 1985; Baş & Ardiç, 2001).

In light of the above explanations, it can be said that, if the individual perceives that his profession is realizing his values and beliefs, if he has reached the ideals in his profession, he will develop positive feelings towards his profession and get satisfaction from his job.

Attitudes are hidden behind particular value judgments and beliefs. Attitudes are formed as patterns of behavior and action towards the events of life. Thus, attitudes can be defined as being related to a side of the individual's inner world, processes of enthusiasm and recognition that appear in connection with particular value judgments and beliefs (Eren, 2004).

Each attitude has cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components. The cognitive component shows the knowledge the individual has about a particular attitude, the emotional component shows the like-dislike degree of the individual towards the attitude, and the behavioral component indicates the tendency of the individual to act in a direction which has evolved under the influence of the former two components (Baysal & Tekarşlan, 2004). In this sense, attitude is expressing an emotional, social-psychological, and personal concept.

Job satisfaction is a cumulative phenomenon based on the formation of attitudes related to the job (Baysal & Tekarşlan, 2004). In this way, job satisfaction is based on the attitude of the employee to his work, but it relates to a more extensive concept. While satisfactions outside the job are not included with the definition, they may affect job satisfaction.

In this context, job satisfaction depends on the degree to which the individual's job role complies with his cultural value system; it is also affected by his needs, emotions, and expectations (Kolosa, 1979).

According to Balçı, attitude to the job can contribute to job satisfaction, because job satisfaction is a general attitude that comprises several attitudes related to various fields. Job attitude is the state of readiness to act according to job-related personal factors towards a particular objective. According to Vroom, job satisfaction and job attitude are identical and show the emotional reaction of the employees towards their existing job roles. However, this approach may not be appropriate because job attitude is one of the factors affecting job satisfaction. Job satisfaction appears as a general attitude formed by several effective attitudes from many areas. Job attitude is the employee's condition of readiness to act to achieve job related goals, determined by job-related personal factors (Ayık, 2000).

Universities are institutions with duties like nurturing the qualified manpower needed by state and society, progressing science and technology; providing solutions to national problems, being the producer and carrier of culture; they are organizations with the human being as sole input and output where human relations are at the highest level (Bakan & Büyükbeşe, 2004). Academic life follows a consecutive order like that in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The road of a research assistant heading to a professor's career is long

and difficult. Thus, promotion and advancement opportunities affect the job satisfaction of academic staff, because reaching the targeted academic status is closely related with fulfilling his expectations and his self-realization need, developing self-confidence, increasing self-esteem, better payment, and finally, a better personal life (Çetinkanat, 2000).

According to Law 2547, academic staff at Turkish universities are divided into four groups, namely, academic staff members, instructors, lecturers, and educational assistants. Research assistants constitute the fourth group of educational assistants. Paragraph 33 of Higher Education Law 2547 defines research assistants as follows: “Research assistants are educational assistants with the duties of aiding the research, studies, and experiments as well as fulfilling other related duties given by the authorized bodies at higher education institutes” (Korkut, 2002).

The academic profession can be described as a stressful one. The requirement of career completion, the sometimes quite excessive course load hindering research, job safety and payment being insufficient, all these factors may cause financial and psychological discomfort for individuals (Koyuncu, 2001). In spite of these sometimes negative conditions, one of the main objectives of the university is to achieve the devotion of young academics through the basic functional steps of organizational culture: perception, action, judgment, and establishing devotion.

To achieve modern standards at universities, besides many factors, the human factor - the sufficient quantities and qualities of academic staff members as well as academic assistants - is of the greatest importance (Çıkrıkçı & Demirtaşlı, 1997; Arslan, 1995). Merely cognitive development of the academic staff is generally seen as not sufficient. Academic staff should be able to maintain love and positive attitudes to their profession. Otherwise the academician will inevitably fail in their professional career. Alongside cognitive development (knowledge, comprehension, etc.), the research assistant ought to gain emotionally positive attitudes towards the academic profession too.

It is expected that, for research assistants at academic institutions, a high attitude towards the academic profession should positively affect their job satisfaction and thus should increase their devotion towards the university, and as a result, the individual’s decision-making process whether to further pursue an academic career as an academic staff member should be affected. Thus, this study is important in that it explores the relationship between perceived job satisfaction and opinions, and attitudes towards the academic profession of research assistants employed at physical education and sports colleges.

The aim of this study is to find out whether job satisfaction and attitudes towards the academic profession among research assistants at physical education and sports colleges show meaningful differences according to some variables, and to show any possible relations.

Toward this general objective, we sought answers to the questions below:

1. Do the general job satisfaction of research assistants, job satisfaction subsets, and the averages of attitude scores towards the academic profession, differ significantly according to the gender variable?
2. Do the general job satisfaction of research assistants, job satisfaction subsets, and the averages of attitude scores towards the academic profession differ significantly according to the age variable?
3. Do the general job satisfaction of research assistants, job satisfaction subsets, and the averages of attitude scores towards academic profession differ significantly according to the average employment period variable?
4. Are there significant differences between the general job satisfaction of research assistants, job satisfaction subsets, and the averages of attitude scores towards the academic profession?

By determining the effect of the job satisfaction of research assistants employed at physical education and sports colleges on their attitude towards the academic profession, data for action towards the development of job satisfaction and attitude will be obtained, also the efficiency of academic staff and the organization as a whole will benefit from the results.

METHOD

Research model

With the objective being the exploration of job satisfaction of research assistants at physical education and sports colleges and their attitudes towards the academic profession, first, a review of the related literature was conducted. Thus, the research review model represents a descriptive study. With this research model, care has been taken to obtain authentic features of the participants for the data collection and exploration of the status quo.

Survey population and sample

The population of the study consisted of 196 research assistants employed at the physical education and sports colleges of 40 universities (ÖSYM, 2007) in Turkey. At the formation of the survey population, the web sites of the colleges were used. As the sample of the survey, research assistants working at these colleges were interviewed face to face, with 96 research assistants who joined the survey by e-mail.

Data collection tools

E-mail addresses were found from the web-sites of the universities and an explanatory e-mail was sent to the research assistants. The address of the

web page containing the questionnaire was included as an active link in the e-mail. The questionnaire consisted of three sections asking for personal data relevant to the study, attitude towards the academic profession, and perception of their job satisfaction. After completing the questionnaire, the participants pushed the send button at the bottom of the page and sent the data to the collecting computer. Which questionnaire was sent by whom, was not known. To increase participation, a second e-mail was sent as a reminder.

Scale for Measuring the Attitudes of Research Assistants to the Academic Profession

This scale was developed by Semerci (2004) to measure the attitudes of research assistants towards the academic profession. It features seven degrees, with 7 for “I completely agree”, 6 for “I mostly agree”, 5 for “I somewhat agree”, 4 for “I don’t know”, 3 for “I don’t agree very much”, 2 for “I don’t agree”, and 1 for “I absolutely don’t agree”. 38 items are included in the scale.

Reliability and Validity of the Scale

The reliability and validity testing was performed by Semerci (2004) who found the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value as 0.78 and the cronbach alpha value as $\alpha=0.93$.

Job Satisfaction Scale

This scale was developed to measure the job satisfaction levels of academics (general academic staff). In “the Job Satisfaction Scale” developed by Bař & Ardiç (2001), 8 aspects of job satisfaction are represented by the sections, namely; attributes of the job, image, work security, academic environment, leadership, communication, colleagues, and payment, with 38 items representing these aspects.

The questions on job satisfaction are in 5 Likert-type degrees. The participants were asked to indicate for each item their degree of agreement by choosing from “completely right”, ”right”, ”neither right or wrong”, ”wrong”, or “totally wrong”. The points given to these choices were ordered according to the above as 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. While “completely right” was given 5 points, “totally wrong” got 1 point. With the points obtained from each item, the job satisfaction levels were determined.

Reliability and Validity of the Scale

The reliability and validity testing of the scale was conducted by Ardiç & Bař (2001) by “factor analysis”. Principal Components Analysis by SPSS-PC was carried out to determine the factorial structure, and Varimax Rotation to establish factor groups, finding cronbach alpha to be $\alpha=0.94$.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS 15.0 to derive mean, standard deviation, and, according to the variables, t test, Kruskal Wallis test, and Mann Whitney-U test were used. The analysis of the relation between dependent variables was computed by Pearson moments multiply correlation coefficient technique. 0.05 was accepted as the level of significance in the statistical computations.

FINDINGS

Personal Characteristics of the Study Group

Of the research assistants constituting our study group, 65.6 % were male, 34.4 % female, 3.1 % were in the age group of 21-25, 49 % in the age group of 26-30, 30.2 % in the age group of 31-35, and 17 % were 36 and above. 18.8 % had been working in their institutes for 1-3 years, 42.7 % for 4-6 years, 29.1 % for 7-9 years, and 9.4 % for 10 years and above.

Findings from the Measured Data

Table 1. ATAP (Attitude towards Academic Profession) Points of Research Assistants, General Job Satisfaction, and Job Satisfaction sub-dimensions T Test Results.

	Gender	N	M (X)	s.d.	df	t	p
ATAP point	Male	63	6,13	0,52	94	-1,72	0,088
	Female	33	6,31	0,40			
General Job Satisfaction	Male	63	3,46	0,30	94	-1,69	0,093
	Female	33	3,58	0,43			
<i>Satisfaction from the features of the job</i>	Male	63	3,72	0,54	94	-1,57	0,118
	Female	33	3,91	0,60			
<i>Satisfaction from institutional image</i>	Male	63	4,24	0,79	94	-0,34	0,732
	Female	33	4,30	0,71			
<i>Job security</i>	Male	63	2,95	0,88	94	-1,11	0,268
	Female	33	3,15	0,71			
<i>Satisfaction from the Academic Environment</i>	Male	63	2,54	0,44	94	-0,27	0,781
	Female	33	2,57	0,76			
<i>Satisfaction from the administration (supervisor)</i>	Male	63	3,49	0,55	94	-1,28	0,204
	Female	33	3,64	0,56			
<i>Communication</i>	Male	63	3,45	1,08	94	-2,00	0,048
	Female	33	3,92	1,11			
<i>Satisfaction from Colleagues</i>	Male	63	3,90	0,87	94	-1,06	0,291
	Female	33	4,10	0,86			
<i>Satisfaction from Payment</i>	Male	63	4,11	0,84	94	1,02	0,331
	Female	33	3,89	1,17			

Table 1 shows that the **ATAP** point mean of male research assistants is 6.13, while the mean of female research assistants is 6.31. In **General Job Satisfaction**, the female research assistants mean is 3.58 while the male mean is 3.46. The t test results indicated no significant differentiation between male and female mean of ATAP points, General Job Satisfaction means, and Job Satisfaction subdimensions mean points - except that of the communication subdimension.

Table 2. Research Assistants' ATAP Points, General Job Satisfaction, and Job Satisfaction Subdimensions Kruskal Wallis Test Results According the Age Variable.

	Age Groups	N	Mean Rank	Df	X ²	p	Significant difference
ATAP point	21-25 years	3	43,83	3	0,33	0,95	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	50,02				
	31-35 years	29	47,60				
	36 and up	17	46,65				
General Job Satisfaction	21-25 years	3	28,17	3	2,60	0,45	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	46,45				
	31-35 years	29	51,19				
	36 and up	17	53,18				
<i>Satisfaction from the features of the job</i>	21-25 years	3	33,67	3	2,09	0,55	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	48,72				
	31-35 years	29	45,81				
	36 and up	17	55,09				
<i>Satisfaction from institutional image</i>	21-25 years	3	41,17	3	0,41	0,93	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	49,67				
	31-35 years	29	47,02				
	36 and up	17	49,09				
<i>Job security</i>	21-25 years	3	46,50	3	2,44	0,48	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	46,54				
	31-35 years	29	46,45				
	36 and up	17	57,76				
<i>Satisfaction from the Academic Environment</i>	21-25 years	3	45,50	3	0,41	0,93	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	46,98				
	31-35 years	29	49,52				
	36 and up	17	51,50				
<i>Satisfaction from the administration (supervisor)</i>	21-25 years	3	25,17	3	2,91	0,40	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	47,12				
	31-35 years	29	52,09				
	36 and up	17	50,32				

Table 2 (Continued). Research Assistants' ATAP Points, General Job Satisfaction, and Job Satisfaction Subdimensions Kruskal Wallis Test Results According the Age Variable.

	Age Groups	N	Mean Rank	Df	X ²	p	Significant difference
<i>Communication</i>	21-25 years	3	51,00	3	0,39	0,94	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	46,89				
	31-35 years	29	50,84				
	36 and up	17	48,50				
<i>Satisfaction from Colleagues</i>	21-25 years	3	26,33	3	2,29	0,51	Insignificant
	26-30 years	47	50,37				
	31-35 years	29	49,19				
	36 and up	17	46,06				
<i>Satisfaction from Payment</i>	21-25 years(A)	3	7,67	3	18,16	0,00	A-B
	26-30 years(B)	47	40,95				A-C
	31-35 years(C)	29	55,59				A-D
	36 and up(D)	17	64,50				B-C
							B-D

Table 2 shows Kruskal Wallis test results of the General Job Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction Subdimensions, and their ATAP points of research assistants according to age groups. According to the analysis, research assistants' Attitude Towards Academic Profession points ($X^2=0.33$, $p>0.05$), General Job Satisfaction ($X^2=2.60$, $p>0.05$), and from the Job Satisfaction Subdimensions - *Satisfaction from the features of the job* ($X^2=2.09$, $p>0.05$), *Satisfaction from institutional image* ($X^2=0.41$, $p>0.05$), *job security* ($X^2=2.44$, $p>0.05$), *satisfaction from academic environment* ($X^2=0.41$, $p>0.05$), *satisfaction from the administrator (the supervisor)* ($X^2=2.91$, $p>0.05$), *communication* ($X^2=0.39$, $p>0.05$), *satisfaction from colleagues* ($X^2=2.29$, $p>0.05$) points do not show any significant differentiations.

On the other hand, *satisfaction from payment* points showed significant differentiation ($X^2=18.16$, $p>0.05$) according to the age groups. A Mann Whitney U-test conducted in order to determine the source of the *satisfaction from payment* subdimension showed that research assistants placed in the age group D (36 years and up) had a higher level of *satisfaction from payment* than those of age groups B (26-30 years) and A (21-25 years); research assistants in the C (31-35 years) age group had a higher level of *satisfaction from payment* than those of age groups B (26-30 years) and A (21-25 years); and research assistants of age group B (26-30 years) had a higher level of *satisfaction from payment* than those of age group A (21-25) ($p<0.05$).

Table 3. Research Assistants' ATAP Points, General Job Satisfaction, and Job Satisfaction Subdimensions Kruskal Wallis Test Results According the Period of Duty Variable.

	Period of Duty	N	Mean Rank	df	X ²	p
ATAP point	1-3 years	18	56,67	3	2,76	0,43
	4-6 years	41	45,63			
	7-9 years	28	49,95			
	10 years and up	9	40,72			
General Job Satisfaction	1-3 years	18	50,00	3	3,13	0,37
	4-6 years	41	43,04			
	7-9 years	28	52,82			
	10 years and up	9	56,94			
<i>Satisfaction from the features of the job</i>	1-3 years	18	48,78	3	0,94	0,81
	4-6 years	41	45,94			
	7-9 years	28	52,48			
	10 years and up	9	47,22			
<i>Satisfaction from institutional image</i>	1-3 years	18	50,28	3	1,02	0,79
	4-6 years	41	46,61			
	7-9 years	28	47,71			
	10 years and up	9	56,00			
<i>Job security</i>	1-3 years	18	45,72	3	7,04	0,07
	4-6 years	41	46,20			
	7-9 years	28	46,38			
	10 years and up	9	71,17			
<i>Satisfaction from the Academic Environment</i>	1-3 years	18	46,50	3	4,15	0,24
	4-6 years	41	42,98			
	7-9 years	28	55,23			
	10 years and up	9	56,72			
<i>Satisfaction from the administration (supervisor)</i>	1-3 years	18	37,64	3	4,73	0,19
	4-6 years	41	53,88			
	7-9 years	28	49,04			
	10 years and up	9	44,06			
<i>Communication</i>	1-3 years	18	61,94	3	6,02	0,11
	4-6 years	41	44,40			
	7-9 years	28	44,50			
	10 years and up	9	52,72			
<i>Satisfaction from Colleagues</i>	1-3 years	18	52,64	3	2,03	0,56
	4-6 years	41	44,04			
	7-9 years	28	50,45			
	10 years and up	9	54,50			
<i>Satisfaction from Payment</i>	1-3 years	18	41,50	3	6,50	0,08
	4-6 years	41	45,27			
	7-9 years	28	51,63			
	10 years and up	9	67,50			

Table 3 presents the Kruskal Wallis test results of the general job satisfaction of research assistants, the job satisfaction subdimensions, and the ATAP points. According to the analysis, the ATAP points of research assistants ($X^2=2.76$, $p>0.05$), general job satisfaction ($X^2=3.13$, $p>0.05$), and from the subdimensions of job satisfaction - *satisfaction from job features* ($X^2=0.94$, $p>0.05$), - *satisfaction from institutional image* ($X^2=1.02$, $p>0.05$), - *job security* ($X^2=7.04$, $p>0.05$), - *satisfaction from academic environment* ($X^2=4.15$, $p>0.05$), - *satisfaction from the administrator (supervisor)* ($X^2=4.73$, $p>0.05$), *communication* ($X^2=6.02$, $p>0.05$), - *satisfaction from colleagues* ($X^2=2.03$, $p>0.05$), and *satisfaction from payment* ($X^2=6.50$, $p>0.05$) showed meaningful differences.

Table 4. Relations between ATAP Points, General Job Satisfaction Points and Job Satisfaction Subdimension Points of Research Assistants.

	General job satisfaction	Satisfaction from the features of the job	Satisfaction from institutional image	Job Security	Satisfaction from Academic Environment	Satisfaction from the Administrator (Supervisor)	Communication	Satisfaction from Colleagues	Satisfaction from Payment
ATAP Points	r ,33(**)	,49(**)	,46(**)	,12	,02	-,11	,27(**)	,21(*)	-,07
	p ,00	,00	,00	,24	,78	,28	,00	,03	,47
	**p<0,01	*p<0,05							

Table 4 presents the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient results of research assistants' ATAP points, general job satisfaction points, and job satisfaction subdimension points. The correlation coefficient, as absolute value being between 0,70 and 1,00 can be defined as a high relation, being between 0,70-0,30 as a medium relation, and being between 0,30-0,00 as being a low relation (Büyüköztürk, 2007). The analysis revealed a medium level positive meaningful relation between ATAP points and general job satisfaction ($r=.33$, $p<0.01$); between ATAP points and *satisfaction from the features of the job* ($r=.49$, $p<0.01$); between ATAP points and *satisfaction from the institutional image* ($r=.46$, $p<0.01$), and a low level positive significant relation between communication ($r=.27$, $p<0.01$) and *satisfaction from colleagues*.

On the other hand, a significant relation between ATAP points and job satisfaction subdimension-*job security*, -*satisfaction from academic*

environment, -satisfaction from administrator (supervisor), and -satisfaction from payment was not found ($p>0,05$).

DISCUSSION and INTERPRETATION

The study revealed that in general, all research assistants had positive attitudes towards the academic profession and their job satisfaction was quite high. Although general job satisfaction of research assistants was found high, the *job security, satisfaction from academic environment, and satisfaction from administrator (supervisor)* dimensions were given fewer positive answers than the other dimensions.

The negativity of answers given to *job security* can be linked to the fact that “research assistant” is a temporary educational assistant’s job, dedicated to a master’s or doctorate study, and under normal circumstances lasts only as long as the study program is continuing. The *satisfaction from the academic environment* and the *satisfaction from the administrator (supervisor)* being low can be interpreted as meaning that since most research assistants were conducting master’s and doctorate studies in cooperation with the YOK (High Education Council) on behalf of their “own” universities at another university, these universities were not able to provide the academic environment and sufficient interest towards these students as would be desired.

The sub-problems formed in view of the objectives of the study were statistically questioned and in the findings below are discussed and explained.

1. In the case of research assistants, do the mean levels of general job satisfaction, job satisfaction subdimensions, and the attitudes towards academic profession points differ significantly in relation to the gender variable?

While male research assistants’ Attitude towards Academic Profession points averaged 6.13, for female research assistants this average was computed as 6.31. It can be concluded that, in general, all research assistants have positive attitudes towards the academic profession. Supporting these findings, Semerci and Güney’s (2006) study on research assistants at the Cumhuriyet and Fırat universities showed, in relation to attitudes towards the academic profession, no meaningful difference between male and female research assistants, but the attitudes towards the academic profession were found to be quite high. As a result, it can be said that no significant difference in relation to gender exists in attitudes towards the academic profession. In other words, relating failure in job satisfaction or negative attitudes towards the academic profession to gender would not be an accurate approach.

In relation to general job satisfaction, the mean points of female research assistants was found as 3.58 while that of males was found to be 3.46.

In all of the subdimensions of job satisfaction except *satisfaction from payment*, female research assistants' mean points were higher than those of males. On the relationship of job satisfaction and gender, it can be stated that because female employees do not fully shoulder the economical burden of a family, their expectations in relation to working life and their aspiration level may be lesser, and consequently, female employees get satisfied in their jobs more easily, in other words, it can be said that the job satisfaction of female employees working under similar conditions is higher than that of male employees.

In relation to gender differences, in general job satisfaction and in all job satisfaction subdimensions except the communication subdimension, no meaningful difference was found between the mean points.

The research done on job satisfaction arrived at two different results trying to explain gender differences. Studies supporting our findings (Ak, 2005; Gülay, 2006; Balcı, 1987; İncir, 1990; Güçray, 1995; Baş & Ardiç 2001; Can & Koçak, 2003; Avşaroğlu et al., 2005; Can et al., 2006; Kıvrak et al., 2006; Dorsan, 2007) found that the gender variable had no statistical influence on job satisfaction levels. On the other hand, while some studies found that women had higher levels of job satisfaction (Xin & MacMillan, 1999; Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995; Azar & Henden, 2003; Balcı, 2004; Çelik, 2003; Dudak, 2005; Akçamete et al., 2001; Vaydonoff, 1980; Özdayı, 1990; Aslan, 2001; Söğüt & Karakılıç, 2006) other studies presented contrary findings (Ağan, 2002; Ardiç & Baş, 2002; Günbayı, 2001; Kınalı, 2000; Karahan, 2006) that stated higher job satisfaction levels for men.

Studies exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and gender revealed contradictory results. Thus, any influence of gender on job satisfaction remains a disputed issue.

Comparing studies revealed that psychological motivators of men and women may show differences from time to time. While women and men both find the same job features equally attractive, there are indications that women have lower expectations related to their workplace and thus, are more satisfied than men under similar conditions. As a result, it may be a more accurate statement to say that job satisfaction has more to do with expectation levels than with gender. For example, while women attach more importance to working conditions and social relations in the workplace, men consider payment, career development and promotion opportunities as more important (Kırel, 1999).

2. Do the mean points of general job satisfaction of research assistants, job satisfaction subdimensions, and attitude towards academic profession differ in relation to the age variable?

It was found that research assistants in various age groups showed no significant differences related to attitude points towards the academic profession, general job satisfaction, and job satisfaction subdimensions except *satisfaction from payment*.

While there is related work on job satisfaction supporting our study (Akıner et al., 2007; Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2006; Koç, 2001; Yerlisu, 2003; Gülay, 2006; Greenreese et al., 1991), some research to the contrary (Baş & Ardiç, 2001; Demir, 2002; Balcı, 2004; Dudak, 2004; Öner, 2007; Ergin, 1997; Söğüt & Karakılıç, 2006; Göktaş, 2007) presents findings supporting a meaningful difference between age groups.

The age of a person influences their attitudes, perceptions, desires and expectations related to work. There is a complex relationship between age and job satisfaction mentioned in the literature. Herzberg explains the relationship between age and professional satisfaction with a U-shaped curve. Professional satisfaction is high at the entrance, but lowers with time, then, with a progressing career, it begins to rise again (Davis, 1988). While some studies assert that a relationship between age and job satisfaction has not been shown, some mention a linear and some others a bell curve relationship. Spector (1997) quotes Brush, Moch and Pooyan as having shown in 19 studies that job satisfaction increases with age. Zeitz, quoted by Davis (1988), revealed a bell curved relationship that shows job satisfaction decreasing in the earlier stages of life, then again jumping upwards at about 45. One reason might be accommodation improving with increasing experience. Again, the high promotion expectations of young employees and considerations about other work areas as well might increase dissatisfaction in newcomers. In our case, the difference can be linked to the circumstance that research assistants are not in these positions for a long time and hence, the age groups do not show an extended variation.

On the other hand, related to *satisfaction from payment*, the highest listed mean in satisfaction from payment among research assistants is found in the age group of 26-30 years and the lowest in the group of 21-25 years. Significant differences showed that research assistants in the *36 and up* age group had a higher *satisfaction from payment* level than those in the 26-30 and 21-25 year age groups. Also, the 31-35 year old group had a higher satisfaction from payment level than the 26-30 and the 21-25 year old group; while the 26-30 year old group showed again higher satisfaction from payment levels.

3. Do the general job satisfaction levels, job satisfaction subdimensions, and attitude towards the academic profession point means of research assistants differ meaningfully in relation to the period of service variable?

Research assistants' attitude towards the academic profession points, general job satisfaction, and satisfaction subdimension points do not significantly differ in relation to the period of duty.

Research showed that period of duty - in parallel with age - has a close relationship with job satisfaction (Dorsan, 2007). The difference of this to our study may stem from the circumstance that the job of the research assistant is, according to Law 2547, a transitory position which ceases automatically at the end of the semester when the master or doctorate study has been finished, successfully or not. Thus, a research assistant's duty period in itself is not long lasting, and time-related differences are not extensive.

4. Are there significant relations between the general job satisfactions and job satisfaction subdimensions of research assistants and their attitudes towards the academic profession?

A medium-level, positive, significant relationship was found between research assistants' attitudes toward the academic profession and general job satisfaction, *satisfaction from features of job, satisfaction from institutional image*; while a low-level, significant, positive relationship was found between communication and *satisfaction from colleagues*. Thus, no significant relationship was found between attitudes towards the academic profession and general job satisfaction, also from the job satisfaction subdimensions of *job security, satisfaction from academic environment, satisfaction from the administrator (supervisor), and satisfaction from payment*.

According to these findings:

Although research assistants' general job satisfaction level may be considered high, the job security, satisfaction from academic environment, satisfaction from administrator (supervisor) dimensions achieved fewer positive answers than the other dimensions. As a result, arrangements with the aim of positively affecting the perceptions of research assistants in these dimensions should be undertaken.

In consideration of the fact that the great majority of our study group consisted of research assistants studying in cooperation with YÖK at universities other than their own, the study findings suggest that care should be given to the academic environment presented to them at their host universities.

The university administration should support career plans of research assistants by ensuring and motivating their aspirations towards the future.

More studies such as this one should be carried out. As a suggestion for following studies, a wider study group should be used with the aim of addressing problems such as the attitude, stress, exhaustion, job satisfaction, etc. of research assistants assigned according to articles 33-a and 50-d of Law 2547.

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