



The Impact of Higher Education Institution Culture on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

A community of a higher education institution (HEI) is an important link in ensuring the quality of the entire organisation. The majority of its staff, i.e. teachers in particular, play the key role. It is therefore very important to find out whether teachers are satisfied with their work. In order to clarify the factors affecting job satisfaction of teaching staff, this article analyses the literature that has contributed to the understanding of job satisfaction as a complex construct, which is most influenced by the culture of the HEI. The second part of the article examines the attitudes of teaching staff at the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies of Vilniaus Kolegija/ Higher Education Institution (VIKO) towards the impact of HEI culture on their job satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, as this method provides information rich in interpretation and a high degree of realism. This qualitative study assumed that social reality is created by its participants, with personal involvement in interpreting the views of the survey participants, exploring individual cases, phenomenon of the meaning created by individuals, and other internal phenomena. The research strategy is based on a phenomenological approach. The interviews were conducted in a way that ensured the ethics of the research and adherence to its principles. The following ethical principles were taken into account in the context of this study: confidentiality and anonymity, the principle of fairness, the principle of respect for personal privacy. The interviews were conducted until the data became full and the information obtained became repetitive. The study involved 9 teachers working at the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies of the study programmes of Fashion Design, Image Design, Fashion Technology and Business, Popular Music, Musical Theatre, Management of Cultural Activities and Dance Pedagogy. The analysis of the study revealed that the respondents are satisfied with their work, the psychological climate of the Faculty, the relationships based on support and assistance, mutual cooperation and collegial support, the working conditions at the Faculty, the opportunities for professional development and the improvement of competences, they feel a sense of pride in being a member of the VIKO community and identify the values declared by VIKO as their priority values.

Keywords: organisational culture, teachers, job satisfaction

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a complex and multifaceted concept. An analysis of scientific literature (Duan & Yuanyuan, 2018; Sinniah et al., 2022; Marasi, et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2023; Chen, 2023; Smith, 2021; Geiger, et al., 2023; Serinkan & Kiziloglu, 2021; Blömeke, et al., 2021; Pavlović, et al., 2020; Borrego, et al., 2023; Sell, 2023; Serinkan & Kiziloglu, 2021; et al.) allows perceiving job satisfaction as a multidimensional construct, distinguishing various factors that affect employees' job satisfaction, fostering a cohesive organisational community, ensuring employees' gender equality, revealing the relationship between teachers' satisfaction with their job and students' satisfaction with their studies, identifying problems of the entire organisation and cases of its successful performance.

An analysis of scientific literature and empirical research (Duden, 2011; Patapas & Labenskytė, 2011; Shahzad, 2012; Pavlović, et al., 2020; Serinkan & Kiziloglu, 2021; Smith, 2021; Geiger, et al., 2023; et al.) has revealed that the majority of modern organisations understand that employees' job satisfaction is an important factor for organisational prosperity and that job satisfaction is directly affected by the organisation's culture. A strong organisational culture and the ability to manage work processes well has a positive impact on employees and enhances organisational performance, encourages continuous improvement, provides intrinsic motivation, and shapes employees' beliefs, behaviours, values and customs, which has a direct impact on many of the organisation's interests: the organisation's reputation in the public eye, performance, employees' benevolence, motivation and job satisfaction. A well-designed (purposeful and supportive) organisational culture helps the organisation to develop its strategy, improve the quality of its employees' work and their relationships with each other. An organisational culture that unites, integrates and differentiates the organisation's employees from those of other institutions, and job satisfaction, are essential because human resources are most valuable resources of organisations in today's business world.

A higher education institution is different from other organisations in the way it operates. Modern education and research institutions are innovative and international, open and creative, motivating and inclusive, collaborative and responsive to the needs of the future society, sustainable and socially responsible HEIs, striving for national and international leadership in the field of education and research. The importance of members of the educational community, their emotional and physical well-being, a motivating and inclusive working environment, the promotion of organisational culture, tolerance and community are emphasised in strategies of many Lithuania's research and higher education institutions. Thus, one of the objectives of the Strategy of Vilniaus Kolegija/ Higher Education Institution for 2021-2025 is to cultivate an organisational culture focused on community mobilisation and socially responsible community spirit. To achieve this goal, the plan is to ensure the sustainability of staff of the institution, to strengthen the effectiveness of VIKO self-governance, to improve the competences of community members, to develop a multicultural environment, to create an environment conducive to self-expression of community members, to improve the system of encouragement for the community members, and to strengthen internal and external communication. Fostering organisational culture and strengthening community cohesion is a strategic goal of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies of VIKO. Thus, the HEI community is a significant link in ensuring the quality of the work of the entire organisation, and here the majority of the institution's employees – the teaching staff – play a major role. It is therefore very important to find out whether teachers are satisfied with their jobs and to identify the impact of the culture of the HEI on teachers' job satisfaction.

Researchers identify a number of personality and environmental impact variables that have a direct impact on job satisfaction. Therefore, research on teachers' job satisfaction must become

an increasingly important area of research to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' well-being at work, professional attitudes, and work values, all of which contribute to improving the quality of education and strengthening organisational culture. The topic of teachers' job satisfaction has not been sufficiently researched in Lithuania, so this article formulates a **scientific problem** – *the impact of the culture of a higher education institution on teachers' job satisfaction at the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies of Vilniaus Kolegija/ Higher Education Institution*.

The object of the study is the impact of the culture of Vilniaus Kolegija/ Higher Education Institution on the job satisfaction of teaching staff at the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies.

The aim of the study is to theoretically analyse and empirically justify the impact of the culture of Vilniaus Kolegija/ Higher Education Institution on the job satisfaction of teaching staff at the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies.

Research objectives:

1. To make a theoretical justification of the impact of the culture of a higher education institution on teachers' job satisfaction.
2. To analyse the attitude of teaching staff of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies towards the impact of the culture of VIKO on their job satisfaction.

Research methods: scientific literature analysis, qualitative research: semi-structured expert interviews.

The authors of this article rely on **the assumption** that teachers' job satisfaction is a dynamic phenomenon directly related to the culture of a higher education institution, and that it is therefore necessary to identify the relationship between the culture of a higher education institution and teachers' job satisfaction, to monitor the changes and to take the respective action.

2. Theoretical Justification of The Impact of The Culture of a Higher Education Institution on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Various scholars define organisational culture as the shared symbols, rituals, values, beliefs and habits that constitute the norms of an organisation and distinguish its external constituents (Smith, 2021; Geiger, et al., 2023). The culture of an organisation is seen as its soul, as it forms the basis of the intellectual-spiritual capital of the organisation. A new understanding of modern organisational culture requires a reassessment of values, roles and all the processes that take place in the organisation, so that every employee has access to all the information he needs, and is ready for co-creative work.

The analysis of the scientific literature (Diskienė & Goštautas, V. 2010; Duden, 2011; Patapas & Labenskytė, 2011; Khan et al., 2011; Shahzad, 2012; Smith, 2021; Geiger, et al., 2023, etc.) revealed that there is no unanimous agreement on the definition of organisational culture, but there is a consensus among researchers on the key statements. Organisational culture has a significant impact on work performance, shapes the sense of identity of members of the organisation, unites them, encourages commitment to the organisation, determines the behaviour of the employees, and improves job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is particularly closely linked to employees' relationships and interactions with their supervisors. Smith (2021) discusses positive organisations that promote joy and satisfaction in the workplace, where compassion plays an important role. The study emphasises that recruiting and retaining talented employees can be achieved by fostering a positive and thriving culture. Organisations that

create an internal culture that strengthens the bond between employees, fosters loyalty, builds a sense of identity, reduces the potential for misunderstandings, improves work processes, encourages continuous improvement, provides intrinsic motivation, and shapes employees' beliefs, behaviours and values will also create a higher level of employee satisfaction, higher rewards and benefits, all of which will lead to a more successful organisation. Hence, the culture of an organisation has a direct impact on employees' job satisfaction.

In the context of higher education, authors (Duan, et al., 2018; Pavlović, et al., 2020; Serinkan & Kiziloglu, 2021; Chen, 2023; Borrego, et al., 2023; Sell, 2023; Geiger, et al., 2023) define organisational culture as the culture at a particular school, that is favourable to the learning processes and all stakeholders. The culture of a higher education institution influences the thinking of the community, manifesting itself in established traditions and customs, norms of behaviour, and unifying values, attitudes and beliefs. While some of the above characteristics are common to cultures of all HEIs, each necessarily has its own unique characteristics and develops a distinctive culture based on the pursuit of the vision of the HEI, the achievement of its strategic objectives, collaborative leadership, a positive microclimate and relationships between staff, support from colleagues and authorities, a sense of community and partnership.

In order to find the relationship between the culture of a HEI and teachers' job satisfaction, a conducted literature review (Abid Alvi, et al., 2014; Bahir, 2020; Pavlović, et al., 2020; Serinkan & Kiziloglu, 2021; Blömeke, et al., 2021; Smith, 2021; Sinniah, et al. 2022; Chonody, et al. 2022; Sell, 2023; Borrego, et al. 2023; Geiger, et al. 2023; Chen, 2023, etc.) revealed more detailed findings of the factors of HEI culture that affect teachers' job satisfaction (Table 1).

Table 1. Factors of culture of a HEI affecting teachers' satisfaction.

Hygiene factors	Organisational factors	Social factors	Personal factors
higher education policy; image of the organisation, quality of work; working conditions, pay; job security; status; gender equality	reputation of the HEI, participation in the organisation, psychological climate, collaborative leadership, congruence of goals and values of employees and the organisation	cooperation between teachers, relations with subordinates, peer support; partnership	professional vocation, professional development; career opportunities

Researchers have paid considerable attention to *social factors* when analysing the impact of HEI culture on teachers' job satisfaction. Smith (2021) highlights the importance of a positive and thriving culture on employee job satisfaction. The researcher examines organisations that have positive social relationships, which promote joy and satisfaction at the workplace, where compassion plays an important role, examined through four dimensions: noticing, feeling, doing and creating a meaning. A study by Sell (2023) looks at contextual factors related to levels of employee morale and job satisfaction in academic institutions. The findings suggest that HEIs can purposefully create workplaces that support staff wellbeing by assessing, monitoring and addressing levels of collegiality, establishing robust mentoring programmes, and ensuring that systems are in place to enable academic and support staff to recognise each other's work. Borrego, et al. (2023), Chen (2023), et al. also emphasise collegial support and partnership, which enables teaching staff of HEIs to feel psychologically safe, boosts their intrinsic motivation and increases job satisfaction.

An analysis of published research on *organisational factors* in HEIs that influence teachers' job satisfaction reveals that administrative flexibility and transparency, as well as the

congruence of employee and organisational values, have recently featured prominently in research. Pavlović, et al. (2020) identify one of the most important factors for job satisfaction of teaching staff as improving perceived organisational support. Chen's (2023) study revealed that HEIs can increase job satisfaction of employees by providing more regulatory flexibility, implementing mechanisms for handling faculty complaints, and reward systems that meet faculty needs. Sell (2023) argues that maintaining transparency in decision-making and resource allocation is important in creating workplaces that support employee well-being. A study by Geiger, et al. (2023) showed that job satisfaction is strongly influenced by the alignment of personal values of teachers with the stated values of a HEI and the surrounding communities. Blömeke, et al. (2021) conducted an international study involving 154,959 respondents, which found that innovativeness of schools has a contextual impact on job satisfaction, teaching practices and teacher exchanges. More innovative HEIs have better outcomes in terms of teacher job satisfaction, collaboration and exchange, student cognitive engagement and innovative teaching practices. The study confirms that innovative school environments and innovative teachers improve quality indicators of a HEI. A study by Geiger, et al. (2023) revealed the impact of the culture of a HEI that promotes the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the workplace and the possibility to conduct DEI activities in everyday work on the job satisfaction of HEI employees.

Personal factors such as professional development and career progression are also addressed in the context of the impact of the culture of a HEI on teachers' job satisfaction. According to Yang & Hwang (2014), Sinniah et al. (2022), Borrego, et al. (2023), professional development opportunities empower teachers of a HEI psychologically, boost their intrinsic motivation and increase job satisfaction. According to Sell (2023) and Chen (2023), in order to ensure employee job satisfaction, it is important for institutions to provide a better work-life balance and to expand professional development opportunities.

Among the *hygiene factors* analysed by researchers, working conditions, salary and job security in higher education are discussed the most. A study by Borrego, et al. (2023) found that well-organised working conditions, such as access to resources, information and support, enable HEI teachers to develop psychologically, feel safe at work, boost intrinsic motivation and increase job satisfaction. Chen (2023), Sinniah, et al. (2022) suggest that HEIs can increase job satisfaction of teaching staff by improving their working environment and equipment, also pointing out the importance of remuneration in line with the needs of the teachers.

To summarise the analysis of scientific literature, it can be concluded that the following factors impact job satisfaction of teachers of HEIs: collegial support of teaching staff, partnership, compassion, mentoring programmes promoting peer-to-peer recognition of teaching staff, congruence of values of teachers and the organisation, flexibility and transparency in administration, alignment of teachers' needs with the organisation's management mechanisms, the introduction and promotion of innovation, the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, professional development, a possibility to pursue a career, access to resources, information and support, and the improvement of working facilities and remuneration to meet the needs of teachers.

3. Research Results and their Interpretation

A survey on the job satisfaction of teaching staff of the study programmes of Fashion Design, Image Design, Fashion Technology and Business, Popular Music, Musical Theatre, Management of Cultural Activities and Dance Pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies of Vilniaus Kolegija/Higher Education Institution (VIKO ACTF) was carried out in November 2023. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, as this method provides information rich in interpretation and a high degree of realism. This qualitative study assumed

that social reality is created by its participants, with personal involvement in interpreting the views of the survey participants, exploring individual cases, phenomenon of the meaning created by individuals, and other internal phenomena. The research strategy is based on a phenomenological approach. The interviews were conducted in a way that ensured the ethics of the research and adherence to its principles. The following ethical principles were taken into account in the context of this study: confidentiality and anonymity, the principle of fairness, the principle of respect for personal privacy. The interviews were conducted until the data became full and the information obtained became repetitive. The study involved 9 teachers working at the Faculty: 5 interviewees in the 45-64 age group and the remaining 4 – in the 25-45 age group. 6 respondents indicated VIKO as their primary place of employment and 3 said that they work here part time. Teachers who have been working in the institution for 5 to 30 years (3 teachers who work up to 5 years, 3 – for 20 years and 3 – for around 30 years) took part in the survey.

Respondents were asked to give their views on the impact on job satisfaction of the hygiene, social, personal and organisational culture factors identified in Table 1. They were also asked to rate and comment on the overall job satisfaction at the VIKO ACTF.

When answering the question “How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your work at the Faculty in general?”, 7 teachers responded that they were completely satisfied and only 2 answered that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The assessment of the seniority of the teachers interviewed showed that teachers working at the institution for 10 to 20 years elaborated on the fact that they feel part of the school, are secure, valued and respected by colleagues and students, know other staff well, have excellent relations with the administration, and are active members of the VIKO community.

The study also sought to find out the satisfaction of VIKO ACTF teachers with *the psychological climate*. A summary of the responses showed that almost all teachers were satisfied with the psychological climate of the Faculty. They commented that they feel safe, freely express their opinions in communication with the administration and colleagues, openly voice their ideas, often feel sufficiently motivated to work actively, do not feel fear in the working environment, feel that their professional contribution and personal achievements are valued. They also mentioned that they do not experience psychological violence. According to the teachers interviewed, the environment of VIKO and the ACTF encourages friendly and cooperative relationships, which creates a positive psychological climate.

When asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being absolutely important, how important *VIKO's values* was to them, almost all respondents rated VIKO's strategic values of openness, community, innovation and professionalism at 5. They also mentioned that they uphold these values in their activities as a teacher. Respondents highlighted feeling a sense of pride in being a member of the VIKO community, feeling good about representing VIKO, and contributing to the image and reputation of VIKO in society.

When investigating the respondents' opinion on *participation in the organisation's activities*, the teachers indicated that the following factors are important to them: the administration of the Faculty involves in the processes of improvement of the activities of VIKO and the ACTF, it listens to and supports the opinions, the initiative of teachers, and responds to the proposals made. The teachers interviewed also indicated that they are satisfied if they are involved in working groups when organising ACTF events.

The analysis of the respondents' opinion on *mutual cooperation and collegial support* revealed that the teachers interviewed were fully satisfied with relationships based on support and assistance not only with the Faculty's administration but also with other colleagues. The

respondents found it important that colleagues of the Faculty show respect, recognise and appreciate them as a teacher, support initiatives, willingly share suggestions for improving the environment of the ACTF and the quality of studies, share information about competency development seminars and conferences, and offer to participate. The teachers mentioned a high level of satisfaction with the support from colleagues and the Faculty administration, and were particularly satisfied with the sense of community and partnership. They are also involved in informal activities organised by the Faculty (joint outings, celebrations, round tables, etc.). At the same time, however, the results of the survey showed that maintaining good relations with colleagues is a rather complex process, requiring not only mutual effort (including that of the administration) but also time.

The study aimed to find out whether the job satisfaction of teachers is affected by the opportunities for professional or *competence development* provided by the ACTF. The results show that all 9 respondents are fully satisfied with the opportunities and financial conditions provided by the Faculty to develop their competences and all respondents take advantage of such opportunities – they participate in various competence development courses, seminars, conferences, trainings, foreign internships, and they successfully apply the acquired knowledge not only in teaching, but also in their project work, scientific, expert and other work-related activities. Some of the teachers share their experience in internal VIKO trainings. They also encourage students to participate in the activities of the Faculty's scientific society, and involve them in research, preparation of articles and conference presentations.

When asked about the impact of the *working conditions* at the Faculty on job satisfaction, the respondents are satisfied with the availability of literature at the library and the reading room, access to a wide range of electronic sources, clarity of the objectives of their work and proper formulation of tasks, as well as clear and rational allocation of time for various work activities and tasks. Teachers are fully satisfied with the conditions provided at the Faculty for taking a break, the smooth and timely communication at the Faculty and the fact that individual needs are taken into account in the scheduling or choosing the classroom and educational environment; they are highly satisfied with the organisation of the work at the Faculty and good working conditions at the premises of the Faculty.

In highlighting the importance of the *workload*, teachers mentioned that the nature of academic activities at the VIKO is demanding, and most teachers are under a lot of pressure and stress. Some mentioned experiencing exhaustion and stress. Teachers attributed the workload not only to contact work with students or preparing lectures to follow new trends in the field of study, but also to the time allocated to prepare for and participate in scientific, project and expert activities.

When asked about the *impact of salary on job satisfaction*, respondents unanimously answered that salary is a very important factor in job satisfaction. The teachers having participated in the study are quite satisfied with the financial remuneration for their direct work, i.e. for teaching or contact work with students. However, teachers expressed the opinion that the effort they put into all the activities that are part of their job does not fully match the financial reward they receive. When asked to comment further, they mentioned that often the reward of the Faculty's administration for additional activities not related to direct remuneration compensate for direct financial remuneration. The respondents distinguished one-time bonuses, various gifts bearing VIKO logos (backpacks, water bottles, notebooks, etc.), public mention of activities at Faculty or community meetings, or by posting them on the website of VIKO and the Faculty as examples of such reward.

In addition, teachers made the following comments on working conditions, work organisation and improvement of mutual relations between employees: as in any other place, there is always

room for improvement; I would suggest to raise the salary of the employees, to strengthen the community, to trust, nurture and respect employees, to introduce a health insurance plan for employees, to draw a clear line between work and free time (after-work calls, writing e-mails after work hours, etc.). To encourage inter-faculty cooperation so that staff get to know each other better and get together, organise teambuilding's abroad; to improve mutual relationship between staff; to insulate the building.

In summary of the results of the interviews, the following factors of the culture of a higher education institution can be concluded to have an impact on the job satisfaction of teaching staff of VIKO ACTF: the importance of the values of VIKO, participation in the organisation's activities, mutual cooperation and collegial support, development of competences, working conditions, workload, salary and psychological climate.

4. Conclusion

The culture of a higher education institution is defined as the culture within an individual school that is supportive of the learning process and all stakeholders, manifested in established traditions and customs, norms of behaviour, unifying values and attitudes, and directly influencing the community's mindset and job satisfaction. In the search for a link between the culture of a HEI and teachers' job satisfaction, an analysis of the scientific literature of the last ten years (Duden, 2011; Patapas & Labenskytė, 2011; Shahzad, 2012; Abid Alvi, et al., 2014; Pavlović, et al., 2020; Bahir, 2020; Serinkan & Kiziloglu, 2021; Smith, 2021; Blömeke, et al., 2021; Sinniah, et al. 2022; Chonody, et al. 2022; Geiger, et al., 2023; Sell, 2023; Borrego, et al. 2023; Chen, 2023, etc) has shown that the following factors of a HEI culture have the greatest impact on teachers' job satisfaction: collegial support, partnership, compassion, mentoring programmes that promote peer recognition, congruence of values of teachers and the organisation, flexibility and transparency in administration, alignment between the needs of teachers and the organisation's governance mechanisms, innovation and nurturing, implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, professional development, possibility to pursue a career, access to resources, information and support, improvement of work equipment and remuneration in line with the teachers' needs.

A study of the attitudes of teach staff of VIKO ACTF revealed that the culture of a higher education institution determines the job satisfaction of its employees. The teachers who participated in the study are satisfied with their work, the psychological climate of the Faculty, feel a sense of pride in being a member of the VIKO community and identify the values declared by VIKO as their priority values. The respondents are fully satisfied with the relationships based on support and assistance, mutual cooperation and collegial support, the working conditions at the Faculty, the opportunities for professional development and the improvement of competences, which leads to their job satisfaction. However, the concerns expressed by teachers about the financial rewards for extra activities, heavy workload and the resulting tensions do not have a positive impact on their job satisfaction.

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