THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. Since the late 20th century, organisational culture has attracted considerable attention from researchers worldwide, becoming a key subject of academic inquiry. In the context of higher education, organisational culture has been shown to exert a significant influence on institutional development and workplace dynamics. A comprehensive grasp of this concept empowers university administration to cultivate a professional environment conducive to the success of faculty and staff. The present study explores theoretical perspectives on organisational culture and examines the views of academic staff across various countries regarding key aspects of institutional culture. A particular focus is placed on faculty self-assessments of their perceived appreciation by both university management and students. The research methodology encompasses an analysis of scientific literature and a survey of teaching staff with regard to organisational culture in higher education. The analysis of data involves the utilisation of descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, hypothesis testing through the implementation of t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and correlation analysis. The findings provide insights into the core values upheld by higher education institutions from the organisational culture perspective, offering a deeper understanding of faculty experiences and institutional practices.

Keywords: higher education, organisational culture, values.

JEL Classification: I25, A13

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, the concept of organisational culture has gained widespread attention, becoming a central subject of academic inquiry. The classification of organisational culture has been advanced by scholars such as Geert Hofstede, Edgar Schein, Kim Cameron, and Robert Quinn, who have examined the different levels and dimensions through which it can be analysed and understood. Within the domain of higher education, organisational culture exerts a pivotal influence in shaping institutional values, the experiences of faculty members, and the prevailing dynamics within the workplace. Despite the extensive research that has been conducted in this field, variations in faculty perceptions across different countries and demographic groups remain underexplored.

The present study aims to investigate theoretical perspectives on organisational culture by analysing the views of academic staff in various countries regarding their experiences within higher education institutions. A fundamental emphasis is placed on faculty self-evaluations of their perceived appreciation by both university management and students. The research also examines whether these perceptions differ based on gender, age, and teaching experience, as well as the potential correlations between these factors.

Following the advent of the concept of organisational culture in the late 20th century, it has emerged as a pivotal subject in the field of research for a considerable number of researchers. The scientific discussion surrounding the definition of organisational culture and the aspects characterising an organisation that should be included in this definition remains ongoing. Dubkēvičs (2018) emphasises that collective behaviour is a defining feature of organisational culture, and that it is the organisational culture itself that determines organisational outcomes. In their paper published by the Harvard Business Review,

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Groysberg and colleagues state that organisational culture, together with organisational strategy, is among the primary tools available to top leaders to maintain organisational viability and effectiveness. Organisational culture expresses the company's goals through its values and beliefs, and guides activity through shared assumptions and group norms (Groysberg et al., 2018). The consequences of organisational culture are pervasive, impacting numerous facets of an organisation, including its structure, performance, strategy, definitions of success, employee job satisfaction, and leadership style (Koehn, 2022). This is a fundamental aspect of organisational management, which has been characterised as a complex and holistic phenomenon (Alvesson, 2002). This phenomenon is complex and multifaceted, influenced by a multitude of factors (Wilson, 2001). Edgar Schein defined organisational culture as a dynamic phenomenon within an organisation that is interesting and interactive, and shaped by the gestures, behaviours and attitudes of leaders and employees. According to Schein, organisation culture is "as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problem". Schein (2017) proposed that organisational culture can be analysed at several levels, including artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. However, Hatch advanced the argument that Schein's model exhibits lacunae pertaining to symbols and the processes of organisational culture. The author posited a cultural dynamics model, incorporating a conceptual framework that situates symbols in relation to assumptions, values, and artefacts (Hatch, 1997).

Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001) is one of the most important figures in the development of the concept of the organisational culture. In his book "Cultural Consequences", which is published in 2001, he formulated organisational culture as "*collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group of category of people from another*" (Hofstede et al., 2010). Culture is defined as a learned, collective phenomenon, as it is shared with individuals occupying the same social environment and consists of unwritten rules. The following four manifestations are considered to be the primary ones: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. These are widely regarded as the main components of culture. Symbols can be defined as verbal expressions, gestures, visual representations or tangible objects that possess a particular significance and are recognised exclusively by individuals belonging to a specific cultural group. A hero is a person who acts as a role model for a specific culture. They can be dead or alive and real or imagined. Rituals are collective activities that are specific to a certain group. Examples include ways of greeting, social and religious ceremonies, language use in text and speech, and daily interactions between group members, as well as communication beliefs (Hofstede et al., 2010).

It is important to discuss the difference between organisational culture and organisation climate. Daniel Denison in his research in 1996 stated that both organisational culture and climate "*could be regarded as examining the internal social psychological environment of organisations an the relationship of that environment to individual meaning and organisational adaptation*" (Denison, 1996). The fields of culture and climate research address analogous phenomena, namely the creation and influence of social contexts within organisational settings. Nevertheless, a distinction between these two concepts can be observed as follows: organisational culture refers to the manner in which all processes are conducted within the organisation, whereas culture describes how these processes are perceived within the organisation (Rostila et al., 2010). In 2018, Dubkēvičs proposed that organisational culture may be defined as a system of values, whereas organisational climate is to be understood as the individual perception of the internal environmental factors of the organisation. Dubkēvičs (2018) has asserted that both concepts are intertwined within the organisational structure.

Nevertheless, organisational culture can influence organisational performance in both negative and positive ways. A supportive and encouraging culture improves organisational performance. Focusing on essential values such as empathy and compassion would help organisations improve their employees' well-being, which would increase their performance and productivity (Arghode et al., 2021). Recent research proves that creative employees may have greater organisational cultural alignment in a more dynamic and tolerant cultural environment, which leads to lower staff turnover as this type of climate encourages them to stay with the company and work more efficiently (Zhang et al., 2021). However, readiness for innovation can also be influenced by organisational culture. Recent studies have indicated a correlation between a hierarchical organisational culture and a negative perception of innovation. Indeed, it has been posited that managers who aspire to promote innovation in their organisations should be cautious of this particular cultural paradigm (Naqshbani et al., 2015). Organisational culture can be used as a tool for organisations in order to improve skills and knowledge of the individual employees and of the teams, to develop the culture for better results of working together and deliver better services (Alonazi, 2021), as well as it plays crucial role in the

development of intellectual capital, and it's role in the modern companies is growing, as it is one of the tools what can be used to increase productivity of the company (Dyakona et al., 2016).

The role and impact of organisational culture is a popular topic of research across a variety of organisations, and educational institutions are no exception. The results of such research are required for practical applications in the field of organisation management. It is possible to consider organisational culture as a tool that should be used by higher education organisations to improve the quality of services provided to students and general cultural policies for the achievement of organisational goals (Ortiz-Colon et al., 2017). Higher education institutions act as organisational entities and develop their own strategies in response to the challenges they face, such as the socio-economic challenges of society and the economics of the modern world. HEIs build infrastructure for knowledge and expand their values and beliefs among students (Serdenciuc, 2017). Organisational culture can have a positive influence on co-operation between industry, professionals, and educational institutions, which is crucial for providing high-quality vocational education. However, the influence of organisational culture on academic outreach has not been sufficiently emphasised in previous academic research (Lv et al., 2022). There is a strong correlation between organisational culture and the job satisfaction of teaching staff at higher education institutions. The enhancement of organisational support within the university milieu has been demonstrated to engender an augmentation in job satisfaction among teaching staff (Pavlovic et al., 2021).

The research conducted by Bamber and Elezi was predicated on the objective of ascertaining the various organisational cultures prevalent within higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. The findings indicated that market culture exerts a predominant influence within the domain of higher education institutions (Bamber & Elezi, 2016). A study undertaken in 2021 drew parallels between the organisational cultures of two universities with analogous characteristics. The study utilised the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument, a widely employed tool for measuring organisational culture that was developed by Cameron and Quinn. Pushnykh and others have posited that the primary focus of institutional management should be the cultivation of a distinct organisational culture. This approach, they argue, would necessitate a comprehensive consideration of the institution's unique characteristics, thereby facilitating the enhancement of its strengths while concurrently minimising internal risks and controversies (Pushnykh et al., 2021). In 2020, an investigation was conducted into the correlation between organisational culture and the commitment of students to higher education institutions. The authors of this scientific paper have posited that students exhibit a greater degree of commitment to the university if its culture is rooted in clan culture, thereby demonstrating a heightened level of attention to co-operation and the relationships between students and staff members. The implementation of digital transformation strategies in higher education institutions is demonstrably associated with organisational culture. This assertion is supported by research conducted in Indonesia in 2021 (Pomyalova et al., 2021). Different aspects are taken into account also using experience in other fields (Hamdani et al., 2021; Kalkis et al., 2024; Braslina et al., 2024) including big and increasing role of marketing communication and artificial intelligence application (Sergejeva & Zeidmane, 2024; Salkovska et al., 2024; Salkovska et al., 2023; Bormane&Blaus 2024). Researchers across the globe have identified these aspects as being of paramount importance in the realm of higher education management.

2. Materials and Methods

A survey was conducted among academic staff members to ascertain their perspectives on various aspects pertaining to the organisational culture of higher education institutions. The questionnaire for the survey was prepared by Julija Mironova based on extensive advice from Biruta Sloka. It was prepared based on the results of previous research that were reflected in the scientific publications. The questionnaire was designed to obtain as much information as possible from the respondents in order to analyse the obtained data later. An evaluation scale of 1–10 (where 1 is the lowest evaluation and 10 is the highest evaluation) was used to measure the respondents' attitudes. The obtained data were analysed with a variety of statistical analysis methods using several statistical indicators, including indicators of central tendency or location (e.g., arithmetic mean, mode, median); indicators of variability or dispersion (e.g., range, standard deviation, standard error of mean); cross-tabulation by different groups; testing of statistical hypotheses using t-test and analysis of variance (e.g., ANOVA); and application of correlation analysis to investigate relationships between the analysed variables. A pilot survey was conducted to evaluate the quality of the questionnaire. This survey yielded several recommendations concerning the formulation of questionnaire questions, which were subsequently implemented. It was determined that several changes suggested during the pilot survey should be implemented in the designed questionnaire. The survey was administered by Julija Mironova via the online

survey platform *QuestionPro*. Invitations to participate in the survey were dispatched to members of academic staff via email, accompanied by a personal invitation to take part.

The empirical data collected for the research study was obtained from the Official Statistics portal of the Republic of Latvia, which contains databases pertaining to academic staff members engaged in primary employment within higher education institutions and colleges from 1997 to 2024. The specific databases utilised in this study, designated as IGP020, were analysed to ascertain the trends in the development of academic staff within higher education institutions in Latvia. It is imperative to closely monitor the situation pertaining to academic staff numbers, given the numerous legislative changes that have occurred. Notably, the recent amendments to the documentation now permit individuals to be elected to an academic position exclusively within a single higher education institution. In the past, a number of academic staff members were employed at several higher education institutions. This was due to the relatively low salaries for academic staff members on the one hand, and the significant time and effort required to obtain the relevant qualifications (scientific degrees, academic degrees such as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, lecturer or assistant). Trend analysis was used to analyse the tendency, and the results are reflected in the 'Results' section. A survey of academic staff members was conducted to find out about their feelings and working conditions during the pandemic, which required an additional

physical and emotional contribution to academic work in higher education institutions. The empirical data analysis in this paper examined how teaching staff in higher education institutions feel appreciated by management and students. The analyses on these aspects are realised by gender, age group and years of teaching experience in higher education institutions. The primary findings are presented in tabular and graphical formats, and these findings are employed in the subsequent discussion and conclusion sections. Moreover, the study offers practical recommendations to higher education institutions on how to organise their work in a manner that reduces the incidence of burnout among academic staff.

3. Results

The results of an analysis of time-series data on the development of academic staff at the main job in higher education institutions and colleges in the Republic of Latvia from 1997 to 2024 were obtained from the statistical database of the Official Statistics portal of the Republic of Latvia. The trend was calculated by the authors, and the results are reflected in Figure 1.

The number of educators in higher education institutions in Latvia has generally followed an upward trend over the years, with notable fluctuations. A rise was noted in the early 2000s, peaking around 2008, followed by a decline that was probably influenced by economic conditions. In the ensuing years, the figures stabilised, although recent data suggests a slight decrease.
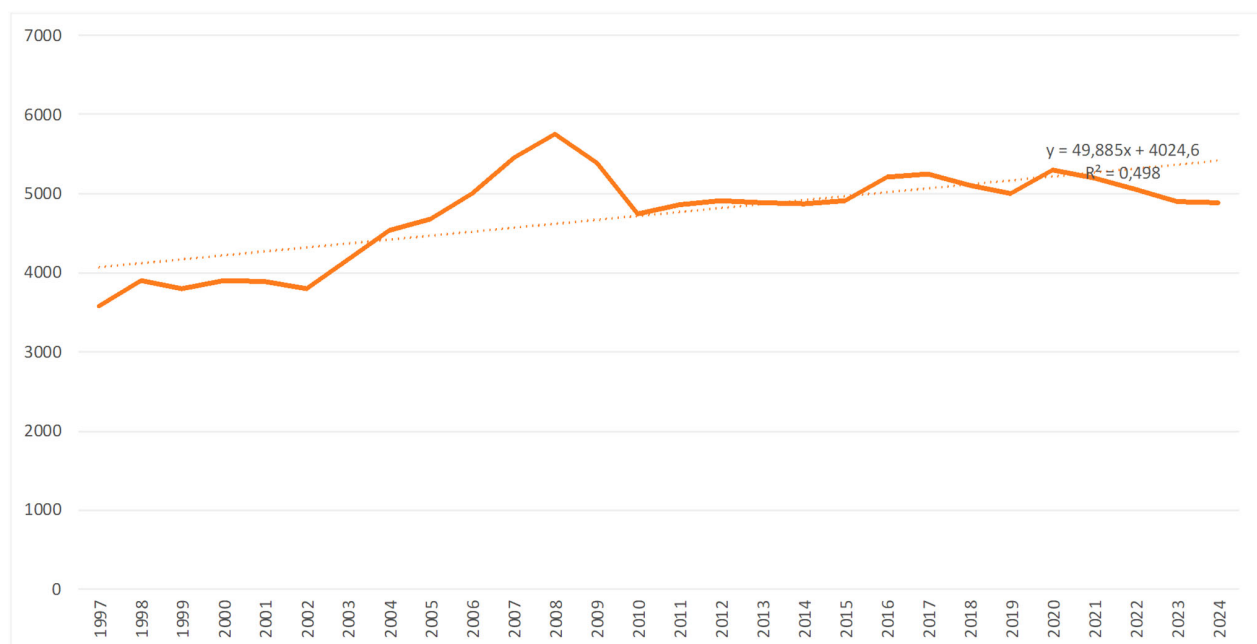

The trend equation shown on the chart: $y = 49{,}885x + 4024{,}6$, $R^2 = 0{,}498$

Figure 1. Number of academic staff in higher education institutions in Latvia from 1997 till 2024

Source: authors' construction and calculations based on OSP of Republic of Latvia data

As indicated in scientific publications and mentioned above, appreciation in academic work is crucial, both from higher education institution management and from students. In the survey of academic staff conducted by Julija Mironova, respondents were asked how appreciated they felt by the management of the higher education institution and by students. The main descriptive statistics are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Key descriptive statistics on academic staff assessments: self-evaluations and evaluations by university management and students

Statistical indicators		Please evaluate how appreciated you feel by	
		the management of the institution	students
N	Valid	1584	1586
	Missing	17	15
Mean		6.43	7.73
Standard Error of the Mean		0.589	0.0416
Median		7	8
Mode		8	8
Standard Deviation		2.34	1.658
Range		9	9
Minimum		1	1
Maximum		10	10

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

The arithmetic mean of the evaluations (on a scale of 1-10) by respondents for appreciation by management was 6.43, indicating a moderate level of perceived appreciation. Conversely, the arithmetic mean of evaluations by respondents for appreciation by students is higher at 7.73, suggesting a more positive perception of student appreciation. The median mean of the ratings provided by respondents was 7 for the management team and 8 for students. The majority of staff members expressed a sense of appreciation from management, with their sentiments of appreciation from students exhibiting a slightly higher tendency. The most frequently assigned evaluation score for both management and students was 8. Educators reported feelings of appreciation at a score of 8, from both the management of the higher education institution and the students.

The distribution of educators' responses regarding their rating of appreciation by the management of their higher education institution is presented in Figure 2.

Educators were invited to provide evaluations on the extent to which they felt appreciated by the management of their respective institutions, with a scale ranging from 1 to 10. The most prevalent rating assigned is 8 (mode), with 7 and 9 following closely behind, suggesting that a significant proportion of educators perceive a high level of appreciation. A smaller number of responses are 5 and 6, suggesting that some educators feel only somewhat appreciated. A smaller proportion of respondents allocated a lower number of responses, ranging from 1 to 4, but these responses nevertheless suggest that a proportion of educators feel minimally appreciated. The distribution of ratings indicates a tendency for higher ratings, suggesting that educators may feel acknowledged by management. However, lower ratings also reflect variations in staff experiences. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results and their interpretation, along with the conclusions that can be drawn from the experiment.
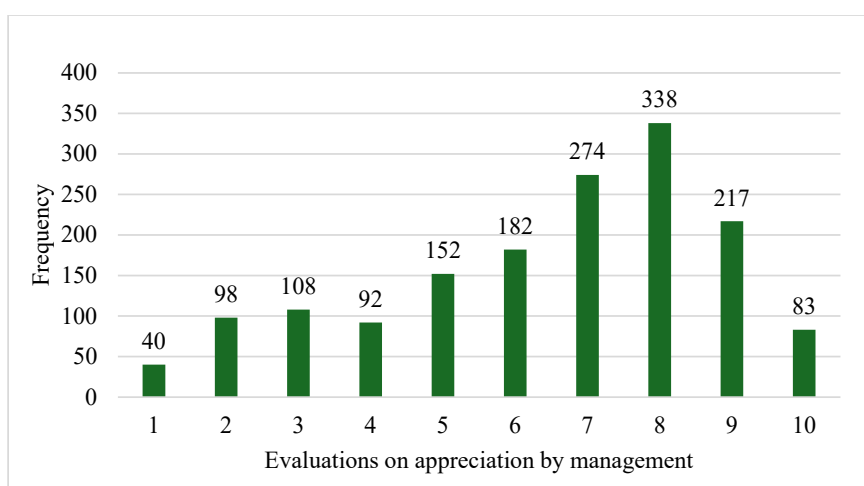

Figure 2. Distribution of academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by university management

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

The distribution of educators' responses regarding their rating of appreciation by the students is presented in Figure 3.

Educators were invited to provide ratings on how appreciated they feel by the management of their institution, with responses ranging from 1 to 10. The most prevalent rating assigned is 8, with 8 and 7 being the next most common, suggesting that a significant proportion of educators perceive a high level of appreciation from their students. A smaller number of responses are 5 and 6, suggesting that some educators feel only somewhat appreciated. A smaller proportion of respondents allocated a lower number of responses, ranging from 1 to 4, yet these responses nevertheless suggest that a certain number of educators feel only marginally appreciated. The distribution of ratings indicates a tendency for higher ratings, suggesting that educators may feel acknowledged by management. However, lower ratings may reflect variations in staff experiences.

As illustrated in Table 2, the primary indicators of descriptive statistics encompass evaluations of academic staff, with regard to the appreciation of management of higher education institutions and students, categorised by gender.

The mean appreciation ratings reported by male and female respondents were similar, with a mean score of 7.73 and 7.77, respectively. The standard deviations are also comparable (1.632 for males and 1.65 for females), suggesting that the variation in responses is commensurate between genders.

Conversely, perceptions of appreciation from institutional management are lower for both groups. The mean score for male respondents was found to be marginally higher (6.53) in comparison to the mean score for female respondents (6.35), although this disparity was found to be negligible.

The prevailing sentiment among academic staff is one of being underappreciated by institutional management in comparison to their students. The gender differences in both aspects are negligible, yet male respondents exhibit marginally higher levels of appreciation from management.

Main indicators of differences in evaluations by both groups, tested by t-test, are presented in Table 3.

The p-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female academic staff in their perception of appreciation from management or in how they perceive appreciation from students.
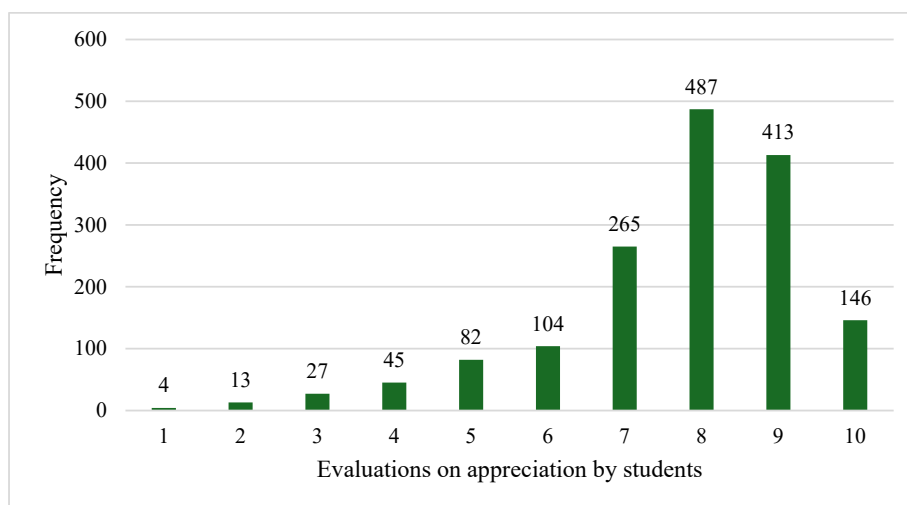

Figure 3. Distribution of academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by students

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

Table 2

Descriptive statistics on academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by university management and students, by gender

Evaluated aspect	Gender	N	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean
Students	male	680	7.73	1.632	0.063
	female	791	7.77	1.65	0.059
Management of institutions	male	677	6.53	2.360	0.091
	female	791	6.35	2.350	0.084

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

Table 3

Key indicators of differences in academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by management and students (t-test results)

Analysed aspects	Equality of variances	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of the Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error of the Difference
Management of institution	assumed	0.64	0.800	1.485	1466	0.138	0.18305	0.12329
	not assumed			1.485	1429.447	0.138	0.18205	0.12329
Students	assumed	0.925	0.336	-0.484	1469	0.628	-0.04156	0.08578
	not assumed			-.0484	1440.846	0.628	-0.04156	0.08579

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

Main statistical indicators of ANOVA analysis of both groups in relation to age are presented in the Table 4.

The present study found no statistically significant correlation between self-evaluations and the appreciation of members of academic staff by management of higher education institutions. However, statistically significant differences were found between the groups in terms of how appreciated they felt by students.

In order to identify which groups feel more appreciated by the students, the authors conducted Tukey Post-Hoc tests. It is evident that respondents within the 71-80 age group are the most appreciated by students when compared to other age groups. This is due to the fact that this group has the highest arithmetic mean value of 7.99.

The primary statistical indicators of the ANOVA analysis of both the aforementioned aspects (i.e., appreciation by management and appreciation by students) groups in relation to experience are presented in Table 5.

The duration of experience of teaching staff does not have a significant impact on how staff feel appreciated by management or students.

A correlation analysis was conducted in order to examine the relationships between educators' appreciation by management and students, as well as their teaching experience and age group. The objective of this analysis was to understand how different factors influence their perceptions in higher education institutions. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 4

Key ANOVA results on academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by management and students across age groups

Evaluated aspect		Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Please evaluate how appreciated you feel by the management of the institution		Between Groups	41.690	6	6.948	1.269	0.269
		Within Groups	8564.569	1564	5.476		
		Total	8606.258	1570			
Please evaluate how appreciated you feel by the students		Between Groups	50.622	6	8.437	3.092	0.005
		Within Groups	4275.906	1567	2.729		
		Total	4326.529	1573			

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

Table 5

Key ANOVA results on academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by management and students by years of experience in higher education

Analysed aspect	Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Please evaluate how appreciated you feel by the management of the institution	Between Groups	20.511	9	2.279	0.415	0.928
	Within Groups	8600.225	1566	5.492		
	Total	8620.735	1575			
Please evaluate how appreciated you feel by the students	Between Groups	82.797	9	9.200	2.401	<0.001
	Within Groups	4244.732	1569	2.705		
	Total	4327.529	1578			

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

Table 6

Key correlation analysis results on academic staff's self-evaluations of appreciation by management and students in relation to years of experience and age group

Analysed aspect	Correlation indicators	Appreciation by the management of the institution	Appreciation by the students	Teaching experience in years	Age group
Appreciation by the management of the institution	Pearson Correlation	1	0.279*	0.027	0.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001	0.290	0.120
	N	1584	1573	1576	1571
Appreciation by the students	Pearson Correlation	0.279**	1	0.099*	0.075*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001		<0.001	0.003
	N	1573	1586	1579	1574
Teaching experience in years	Pearson Correlation	0.027	0.099**	1	0.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.290	<0.001		<0.001
	N	1576	1579	1593	1585
Age group	Pearson Correlation	0.039	0.075**	0.0765*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.120	0.003	<0.001	
	N	1571	1574	1585	1588
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Source: construction and calculations by Julija Mironova based on data from a survey she designed and conducted

A positive correlation was observed between the appreciation of management and that of students, indicating that educators who feel valued by the institution tend to also receive positive recognition from students. A positive correlation was identified between the appreciation expressed by students and both teaching experience and age group. This finding suggests that educators with greater experience or those in more advanced age groups may experience heightened feelings of appreciation from their students.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that while educators generally perceive a greater sense of appreciation from students in comparison to their institution's management, variations emerge across various demographic and professional groups. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of organisational culture in academia and align with existing literature on faculty recognition and job satisfaction. The findings suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in appreciation from management based on gender. The mean score for appreciation by management (6.43) indicates a moderate level of perceived institutional support, suggesting that while some faculty members feel valued, others experience a lack of recognition. Conversely, the mean evaluation score of 7.73 from students indicates a significantly higher level of appreciation among this demographic. This finding suggests that academic staff experience a stronger sense of validation from students than from institutional leadership. The results further confirm that appreciation from students is positively correlated with appreciation from management, implying that faculty members who feel supported by their institutions may also foster stronger relationships with students, leading to mutual recognition.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that there were no significant differences in the perception of appreciation by management across different age groups and years of experience. This suggests that institutional recognition does not vary systematically across career stages. A significant difference was found in appreciation by students across different age groups; the highest mean score was observed among faculty aged 71–80.

Correlation analysis indicated a positive relationship between student appreciation and both teaching experience ($r = 0.099$, $p < 0.001$) and age ($r = 0.075$, $p = 0.003$). The findings of this study suggest that faculty members with longer careers and older age may establish deeper pedagogical connections with students, possibly due to refined teaching methodologies and a more authoritative presence in the classroom.

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