



Investigation of Relationship between Communication in Academic Environment and Quality of Work Life among Academic Staff

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Abstract

In this study, it is aimed to identify the relationship between the communication in academic environment and quality of work life of the academic staff who work in the field of sports sciences. Moreover, the administrative functions of each variable are studied considering the academic titles. The research is a quantitative-correlational study. The sample of the study is formed by 51 women and 114 men out of 165 academic staff who work in the field of sports sciences at various universities in Turkey. In the study, as data collection tools, "Quality of Work Life Scale" and "Communication Analysis Inventory in Academic Environment" are used. Data are assessed using Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression analysis and t-test. It is noted with the findings that communication in academic environment (CAE) and quality of work life (QWL) have moderate and negative relations and sub-dimensions of both variables have weak, low and moderate negative relations. Also, it is indicated that CAE is a significant predictor of QWL. It's stated that while academic staff who have administrative position perceives the CAE and its sub-dimensions positively (except for the insufficient share of scientific knowledge and sub-dimensions of faculty atmosphere), QWL gets higher scores only in sub-dimensions about relations with colleagues, work satisfaction and taking responsibility in the office. According to academic title (except for sub-dimension of individuality), there has been found no significant difference in QWL and its sub-dimensions.

Keywords: Communication in academic environment, Quality of life, Interpersonal communication, Organizational communication.

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1. Introduction

Universities, known as the last degree of education by the society and providing knowledge and skills as to market needs, are complex organizations (Afşar-Taşdemir, 2015). Both complex structure of them and the necessity of the accurate and quick flow of information convey the organizational communication to a significant point. No matter how the structure in organization or decentralisation is obviously clear, proper running of these mechanisms and success in coordination is possible by means of intra-organizational communication (Ölçer and Koçer, 2015). Organizational communication is a constant interaction with individuals and external environment to provide running of the organization and perform the organizational aims (Ada *et al.*, 2008). A successful and sustainable structure is not possible for organizations experiencing problems in communication paths that convey the transmission of messages from one unit to another (Yanık, 2015). Effective communication might affect many factors such as the current structure of organization, its culture, run of authority (Vural, 2003).

When analyzed in terms of characteristics of structural communication, it can be mentioned about formal communication which hints the authority and control on employee and informal communication which is spontaneous and less structural according to formal communication. According to message direction, it is faced with vertical, horizontal and diagonal communication features (Arslan and Arslan, 2007). While formal communication carries out basic management processes especially in coordination, informal communication serves purposes such as making things easier in organizations, constituting consensus, sharpening differences and being target-oriented. In addition to these aspects, it provides a vast number of benefits to the institutions due to being fast and fluent (Güllüoğlu, 2012). When organizations are generally examined, it is seen that the direction of message is vertical and horizontal. Horizontal communication, which is a coordination provider, accompanies to this structure which can be a sample of chain of command. Especially during crisis, diagonal communication, which is more complicated, is also used in comparison with these two structures (Genç, 2004).

When considered from universities point of view, it is difficult to build and pursue an effective communication environment because of administration at universities, structuring of organization and characteristics of personnel. Accordingly, determining process quality of communication in academic environment (CAE), following periodically and explanation the relationship with different variables are regarded significant. Quality of work life (QWL), being a variable that is related to human resources in organizations, can also be regarded as a concept which could be examined together with the process of organizational communication. QWL, which is occurred with the contemporary management approaches, states personnel's degree of satisfying needs, work satisfaction and motivation (Cicek, 2005). These factors ranging in a positive way is possible with keeping obvious the communication channels at all levels and using them effectively and efficiently. When viewed in a detailed perspective, Quality of work life is defined as a concept which includes weak and strong aspects such as satisfaction with officers, working conditions, productivity, communication in organization, method of management (Martel and Dupuis, 2006). Ozaslan (2010) states that quality of work life is not merely related to work satisfaction, it is also a concept that is used to explain the relations with life out of work, individual and internal happiness. Therefore, quality of work life is affected by both experiences related to work and various factor which affects these experiences (Easton and Laar, 2013) in addition to the positive factors about work, it affects the factors such as stress, alienation and burnout positively (Newstrom and Davis, 1997).

When quality of work life literature is researched, as one of the first occupations that comes to mind, health staff is regarded a subject which is studied more on when examined in terms of working conditions, risks it contains and performances of professionals. Johnsrud (2002) divides the studies into three main groups which he researches about quality of work life in his scientific journal. The ones in the first group are studies defining and explaining studies, in the second group factors that affect quality of work life and in the last group explaining the behavioural results. Studies are found examining the concept of quality of work life in terms of education sector. In a study that is carried out by Putt and Springer (1980) who lecture in the field of public administration to define the personnel's work satisfaction, detached from many factors that affect the work satisfaction, it is stated that decision-making process is the most significant factor on satisfaction and at this point, it is referred to professional life satisfaction which is a parameter that is related to quality of work life. Soytürk and Tepeköylü-Öztürk (2017) analyze the quality of work life of physical education teachers according to various personal and occupational features. They sign that teachers who are happy with their jobs have higher quality of work life. In the study that is carried out by Erdem (2008) The predictive degree of the quality of work life, their loyalty to schools and organizational dependence of quality of work life of the teachers who work both for public or private schools is examined. As a result of the study, it is indicated that the teachers who work for public schools have lower quality of work life than the ones who work for private schools in many dimensions. Ozaslan (2010) analyses the professional life qualities of the research assistants. He comes to a conclusion that research assistants generally do not take part in the decisions made at universities. According to the result of the study conducted by Afşar-Taşdemir (2015) to determine the quality of work life of researchers, it is proved that participants' quality of work life differs in terms of academic title, salary, their way of employment, job security and total number of working years at universities. When literature is researched in terms of CAE, Gizir (1999) has conducted a study on the most common communication problems of academic staff they face in their own department, other departments in the same faculty and other departments of the university and in order to analyse solution recommendations, and it is found that individuality, insufficient share of scientific knowledge, lack of motivation, alignment, managerial problems, lack of common purpose, criticism, introspective features of department and communication of department atmosphere are factors that affect in a negative way. It is tried to determine by Argon and Kösterelioğlu (2009) whether researchers' perception of communication changes as to some variables or not. As a result, it is found that the academic staff's academic communication level varies considering gender, title, age, working period of time at the faculty and department variables.

Based on these statements in this study, in addition to complicated university structure, it is aimed to determine predictive relationship between academic staff's CAE and QWL who are a part of universities with multidisciplinary structure of sports and who work in the field of Sports sciences. Also, each variable's differences are analysed according to administrative mission situation and academic title variables.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design and Study Group

This research is a correlational and comparative study. Quantitative research techniques have been used. The study group of the research consists of 51 women and 114 men in total 165 academic staff (age = 43.06 ± 10.04 years), who work in the field of sports sciences at many universities in Turkey. Academic staff is included in the research considering voluntariness. 165 academic staff takes part in the research despite being reached to 1565 academic staff.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

In the study as data collection tools, "Quality of work life scale" (QWLS) developed by McDonald (2001) and adapted into Turkish by Akin-Kösterelioğlu (2011) "Communication Analysis Inventory in Academic Environment" (CAIAE) developed by Gizir and Gizir (2005) and "Personal Information Form" that is developed by the researchers have been used.

Quality of Work Life Scale (QWLS): The scale of quality of work life is a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 40 items. It consists of seven dimensions (administrative support, non-work-related stress, income, relationships with colleagues, communication, degree of job satisfaction, use of skills and autonomy, responsibility and duty at work). The high score in the scale that opposite terms are involved indicate that the quality of work life is in good level. In the end of the analysis into structural validity of Akin-Kösterelioğlu (2011). It is determined that sub-item total correlations change from 0.32 to 0.58. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of all scale is 0.94 while) who adapted the scale into Turkish, the QWL scale could account for 46.30% of the total variance and each dimension's self-value is seen over 1% changes from 0.77 to . 0.90. Within the scope of this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the total scale is determined as 0.87.

Communication Analysis Inventory in Academic Environment (CAIAE): It is a 5-point Likert type scale used to determine academic personnel's perceptions of communication processes in academic environment. It consists of 36 items. It has 10 sub-dimensions including negative factors for communication processes in academic environment (lack of communication, individuality, insufficient share of scientific knowledge, lack of motivation, alignment, managerial problems, lack of common purpose, criticism, introspective features and atmosphere of department). The high score of items-also including reciprocal ones has shown that the communication in academic environment is also negative. In the construct validity analysis, it is seen that the factor loadings of the items in the inventory range from 0.44 to 0.90. According to the results of reliability studies, the alpha coefficient in the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency evaluation changes from 0.67 to 0.88 (Gizir and Gizir, 2005). Within the scope of this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the total scale is determined as 0.95.

Personal Information Form (PIF): The information on the personal information of the research group and the independent variables of the research is determined by the Personal Information Form created by researchers. In this form, there are questions about the age, gender, titles of participants and whether they are in the administrative position or not.

2.3. Data Collection

The data has been collected via e-mail. Firstly, a list of universities containing the faculty and high school of sports science, or related to sports science departments is formed. The websites of these universities are visited, the addresses of the lecturers in sports sciences are recorded one by one, and another list is formed. The online scales are electronically sent to 1565 faculty members whose e-mail addresses can be reached 2 times in 2 weeks apart. We get feedback from 169 people, but 165 of them filled in accordance with measurement tools are evaluated.

2.4. Statistical Analysis Data

Data are evaluated by using frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation; Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression analysis (backward model) and t-test statistical testing techniques. Pearson correlation analysis has been used to determine the relationship between the sub-dimensions and total scores of Communication in Academic Environment (CAE) and Quality of Work Life (QWL); and multiple linear regression analysis (backward model) has been used to decide if CAE predicts QWL or not. Differences in dependent variables according to the administrative task status and titles of faculty members are examined with t-test. Whether the data meet the prerequisites of parametric tests are decided by examining the skewness and kurtosis (normal distribution of data) values and Levene (equality of variances) tests. The mahalanobis distance of the data is calculated and multivariate normal distribution is also evaluated. The skewness and kurtosis values of data change from $-0.916 \pm .376$ to $-0.568 \pm .189$.

In the correlation and regression analyzes, whether the relationship between the variables is linear or not has been decided by examining the dispersion diagram. In order to determine the reliability of the scales used in the study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients have been calculated. Type 1 error is accepted as 5%.

3. Results

Table-1. Descriptive statistics of communication in academic environment of academic staff and their quality of work life related to total score

Factor	n	Min.	Max.	\bar{X}	Std. Error
Communication in academic environment	165	1.08	4.81	2.83	.74
Quality of work life	165	2.25	4.43	3.27	.45

When the Table 1 is analyzed, it is seen that academicians'-who work in the field of sports sciences-communication in academic environment is at a good level above the average (the scale is evaluated in reverse) and the quality of work life is at the middle level.

Table-2. Pearson correlation analysis to determine the relationship between communication in academic environment and quality of work life.

n=165	QWL1 ^a	QWL2 ^b	QWL3 ^b	QWL4 ^d	QWL5 ^e	QWL6 ^f	QWL7 ^g	TotalQWL
CAE1 ¹	-.476**	-.382**	-.051	-.677**	-.355**	-.265**	-.502**	-.620**
CAE2 ²	-.439**	-.297**	-.008	-.510**	-.323**	-.161**	-.543**	-.506**
CAE3 ³	-.421**	-.272**	-.021	-.512**	-.381**	-.151	-.399**	-.489**
CAE4 ⁴	-.360**	-.216**	-.073	-.195*	-.253**	-.188*	-.393**	-.401**
CAE5 ⁵	-.119	-.264**	.031	-.280**	-.061	-.031	-.305**	-.243**
CAE6 ⁶	-.604**	-.294**	-.024	-.430**	-.376**	-.108	-.535**	-.572**
CAE7 ⁷	-.527**	-.306**	.047	-.445**	-.441**	-.145	-.510**	-.538**
CAE8 ⁸	-.476**	-.331**	.058	.452**	-.296**	-.130	-.406**	-.486**
CAE9 ⁹	-.315**	-.276**	.005	-.312**	-.252**	-.150	-.284**	-.373**
CAE9 ⁹	-.564**	-.362**	-.023	-.640**	-.358**	-.287**	-.338**	-.606**
Total CAE	-.597**	-.401**	-.013	-.611**	-.419**	-.222**	-.557**	-.661**

**p<0.01 (2-tailed); *p<0.05 (2-tailed).

-1Poor communication, 2Individualism, 3Inadequate sharing of scientific knowledge, 4Lack of motivation, 5Alignment, 6Administrative problems, 7Lack of common goals, 8Criticism, 9Inward-looking character of the department, 10Departmental atmosphere

-aAdministrative support, bNon-work-related stress, cIncome, dRelationships with colleagues, eCommunication, fJob satisfaction and encourage, gResponsibility and duty at work

When Table 2 is analyzed, it is seen that in general there is a strong, medium and weak significant relationship in a negative way between the total score and sub-dimensions of CAE and the total score and sub-dimensions of QWL while there is no relationship between the income sub-dimension of QWL and CAE. Accordingly, it can be said that as the level of the negative components in the communication processes in the academic environment increases, QWL is decreasing. When the relationship levels are analyzed, while the strongest relationship is found between the poor communication sub-dimension of CAE and relationships with colleagues sub-dimension of QWL; the lowest relationship is found between lack of motivation sub-dimension of CAE and non-work-related stressed sub-dimension of QWL.

Table-3. Results of the multiple linear regression analysis for predicting the quality of work life related to the sub-dimensions of communication in academic environment.

Variable	B	Standard Error _B	β	t	p
Constant	176.900	3.899		45.369	.000
Poor communication	-1.206	.301	-.307	-4.000	.000
Lack of motivation	-.995	.371	-.163	-2.684	.008
Administrative problems	-.521	.250	-.160	-2.086	.039
Departmental atmosphere	-1.038	.286	-.271	-3.623	.000

R = .715; R² = .512; Corrected R² = .499

F_(4, 164)=41.893; p=.000.

When the regression analysis is examined Table 3, it is seen that poor communication, administrative problems and departmental atmosphere sub-dimensions of CAE is a significant predictor of QWL (R=.715; R²=.512; F_(4, 164)=41.893; p=.000).The stated variables explain 51% of the total variance in quality of work life. According to the standardized regression coefficient (β) and t values, the relative order of predictive variables on the quality of work life is respectively lack of motivation, poor communication, departmental atmosphere, administrative problems.

When Table 4 is analyzed, it is seen that there are significant differences between total score of CAE scale and its sub-dimensions -except for alignment according to administrative mission status- and relationships with colleagues, level of job satisfaction and encouragement, usage of skills and autonomy, and taking in responsibility and duty at work sub-dimensions. According to this, academic staff who has an administrative role perceives communication in academic environment more positively; similarly, they perceive quality of work life more positively from specified sub-dimensions of the QWL scale.

When Table 5 is analyzed, it is seen that there is a significant difference in individuality-the sub-dimension of CAE- according to the title variable. According to this, it can be said that non-lecturer academic staff feels more individual in communication in academic environment. According to the title, there is no significant difference in CAE total score and its sub-dimensions; and QWL total score and its sub-dimensions.

4. Discussion

According to the findings of the study, the communication of the academicians in academic environments almost good-level near the mid-level while their quality of work life is in the mid-level. According to Winter *et al.* (2000), universities are suffering from chaos in their mission and responsibilities. The universities that are trying to centralization by keeping their organisational respect through cost efficiency should, meanwhile, offer service in different sectors and so they are obliged to get away from centralization by enlarging their income spectrum. This situation may also cause different missions, responsibilities, extra work-load, stress and chaos in the communication process for each personnel within the university, especially the academicians. For this reason, the mid-level quality of work life and academic environment communication is considered an expected finding. When the relations between the two variables are studied, it is observed that the communication in the academic environment is closely related to quality of work life and it explains the 51% of the variation in QWL. In other words, as the negative factors affecting the communication in the academic environment rises, the quality of work life declines. Declares that communication invariably affects attitudes, the feeling of satisfaction and work satisfaction in the workplace. In the research conducted by Muchinsky (1977) organizational communication is

considered highly related to the interpersonal environment, responsibility, administration and the organizational climate pointing to the emotional state. Similarly, in the studies of Erogluer (2011) and Muchinsky (1977) organizational communication is referred as highly related to the work-satisfaction regarding administrators, workmates, the qualification of the work, wage and additional income.

Table-4. T-test results of the comparison of CAE and QWL scores according to the administrative mission of the instructors.

Variable	Administrative Mission	N	\bar{X}	sd	df	t	p
Poor communication	No	117	13.05	4.54	163	3.308	.001*
	Yes	48	10.52	4.31			
Individualism	No	117	12.70	3.52	163	3.920	.000*
	Yes	48	10.22	4.06			
Inadequate sharing of scientific knowledge	No	117	6.26	2.04	163	2.289	.023*
	Yes	48	5.45	2.07			
Lack of Motivation	No	117	9.06	3.02	163	2.245	.026
	Yes	48	7.93	2.71			
Alignment	No	117	8.73	2.63	163	1.906	.058
	Yes	48	7.87	2.62			
Administrative problems	No	117	18.35	5.30	163	3.390	.001*
	Yes	48	15.22	5.59			
Lack of common goals	No	117	9.31	3.11	163	3.342	.001*
	Yes	48	7.52	3.18			
Criticism	No	117	9.64	2.90	163	3.072	.002*
	Yes	48	8.08	3.13			
Inward-looking character of the department	No	117	6.70	2.06	163	2.786	.006*
	Yes	48	5.68	2.30			
Departmental atmosphere	No	117	13.44	4.74	163	3.600	.000*
	Yes	48	10.62	4.09			
TotalCAE	No	117	107.31	25.20	163	4.134	.000*
	Yes	48	89.16	26.58			
Administrative support	No	117	24.07	6.98	163	-3.551	.000*
	Yes	48	24.72	6.70			
Non-work-related stress	No	117	32.59	6.22	163	-3.27	.001*
	Yes	48	32.93	5.57			
Income	No	117	14.12	5.00	163	1.303	.194
	Yes	48	13.02	4.82			
Relationships with colleagues	No	117	14.00	2.94	163	-2.923	.004*
	Yes	48	15.45	2.76			
Communication	No	117	9.34	1.83	163	-1.849	.066
	Yes	48	9.97	2.38			
Job satisfaction and encourage	No	117	21.94	3.57	163	-3.651	.000*
	Yes	48	24.00	2.38			
Responsibility and duty at work	No	117	13.51	3.31	163	-2.133	.034
	Yes	48	14.79	3.92			
Total	No	117	129.94	18.27	163	-1.758	.088
	Yes	48	134.91	17.30			

*p<.05

The academic staff having administrative responsibilities regards their relations in the academic environment as more positive than the academicians who do not have. Concerning the quality of work life, they stated that their relations with their colleagues are better as well as higher work-satisfaction and they get more responsibilities. In the study Sarros *et al.* (1998) state that deans regard the maintenance of effective communication between departments as one of their most important responsibilities and moreover they have too many missions/responsibilities. The academic staffs who also have administrative positions are supposed to develop regular or irregular communication forms with the academicians in each level for the maintenance of the organizational aims. It is also assumed that the correct perception in missions and responsibilities, the maintenance of coordination among the staff and efficient inspection over the staff are closely related to the qualification of the administrator's communication. In addition, in the literary studies and in our study a good level communication is underlined to affect positively the parameters regarding the quality of work life. Therefore, the communication of the academic staff that have administrative positions may highly perceive the relations with colleagues and work satisfaction. When it is considered in terms of those who do not have administrative positions, the researches indicate that the administrators in the faculties are lacking and their communicative relations are weak and they are not glad with the working conditions and the institutions (Boyer, Altbach, and Whitelaw, 1994; in cited from: Johnsrud (2002)).

When the findings of the research are interpreted according to the titles, it is indicated that both academic staff and other lecturers perceive the quality of work life and communication in academic environment similarly. However, instructors who are not academic members perceive more individuality in communication in academic environment. Gizir and Simsek (2005) the individuality results from the feelings of being dominant and having more knowledge and this case causes insufficient knowledge sharing within the organization. In their study, Winter *et al.* (2000) detected that the other academic staff than the academicians cannot be involved enough in the decision process and they are mostly informed very late of the decisions taken within the institution.

Table-5. T-test results for comparison of CAE and QWL scores according to the title of academic staff.

Variable	Title	N	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t	P
Poor communication	¹ Academic Staff	95	11.77	4.57	148.676	-1.770	.079
	² Other	70	13.05	4.58			
Individualism	Academic Staff	95	11.37	4.03	163	-2.401	.017
	Other	70	12.81	3.44			
Inadequate sharing of scientific knowledge	Academic Staff	95	5.93	2.12	163	-.671	.503
	Other	70	6.15	2.02			
Lack of motivation	Academic Staff	95	8.69	2.90	143.381	-.222	.825
	Other	70	8.80	3.09			
Alignment	Academic Staff	95	8.17	2.70	163	-1.735	.085
	Other	70	8.90	2.54			
Administrative problems	Academic Staff	95	16.85	5.85	163	-1.613	.109
	Other	70	18.25	5.05			
Lack of common goals	Academic Staff	95	8.58	3.29	163	-.947	.345
	Other	70	9.07	3.14			
Criticism	Academic Staff	95	9.03	3.10	163	-.796	.427
	Other	70	9.41	2.98			
Inward-looking character of the department	Academic Staff	95	6.15	2.19	163	-1.753	.081
	Other	70	6.75	2.12			
Departmental atmosphere	Academic Staff	95	12.34	4.93	163	-.875	.383
	Other	70	13.00	4.44			
TotalCAE	Academic Staff	95	98.94	27.57	163	-1.733	.085
	Other	70	106.22	25.40			
Administrative support	Academic Staff	95	23.54	6.74	145.585	-1.560	.121
	Other	70	25.24	7.01			
Non-work-related stress	Academic Staff	95	32.73	6.06	163	.099	.921
	Other	70	32.64	6.01			
Income	Academic Staff	95	13.71	5.05	163	-.271	.787
	Other	70	13.92	4.88			
Relationships with colleagues	Academic Staff	95	14.62	3.03	163	.964	.336
	Other	70	14.17	2.85			
Communication	Academic Staff	95	9.55	2.33	163	.226	.822
	Other	70	9.48	1.52			
Job satisfaction, encouragement	Academic Staff	95	22.68	3.55	163	.610	.543
	Other	70	22.35	3.19			
Responsibility and duty at work	Academic Staff	95	14.13	3.79	163	1.067	.288
	Other	70	13.54	3.14			
Total	Academic Staff	95	131.00	18.44	163	-.130	.897
	Other	70	131.37	17.78			

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, it is concluded that the communication of academicians in the sports science field is in the mid-level. Besides, this communication process invariably affects their quality of work life to a large extent. Concerning a general overview, the academic personnel whose ranks are lower do not see the organizational communication process as efficient enough and they define the process as individual. That's why, it is concluded that the academicians, especially the ones who are also in administration position, should care more about sharing of the knowledge and they should be more involved in the decision process. Judging from the assumption that each academicians who are also in the administration position are not equal to each other in terms of their administrative knowledge and skill, the prospective administrators should be given in-service training to prevent the problems related to them in addition to put some criteria such as gaining experience for a certain time.

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