

MOTIVATION for RESEARCH and JOB SATISFACTION of the UNIVERSITY STAFF: are THEY INTERCONNECTED?

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Abstract

The paper describes a case of strategic planning and human resources management in Almaty Management University in Kazakhstan. The aim of the research was to identify a correlation between job satisfaction and the research capacity of the university teaching staff and administrators.

To assess job satisfaction of the personnel, we conducted two surveys based on questionnaires, which assisted in identifying positive sides of academic life as well as concerns of unsatisfied employees. 60 members of the teaching staff participated in the first study conducted in 2014 and 84 members of the teaching staff participated in the second study in 2014, for a total of 144 members. The additional survey on research yielded 30 responses from faculty members. An analysis of the results indicates a close correlation between job satisfaction and motivation for research.

Keywords: *job satisfaction, research motivation, university, human resources, Kazakhstan.*

1 Problem Definition

Many articles have been published on the topic of job satisfaction of employees, including university teaching staff. This article investigates a set of research questions related to human resources (HR) management and research and development (R&D) organization.

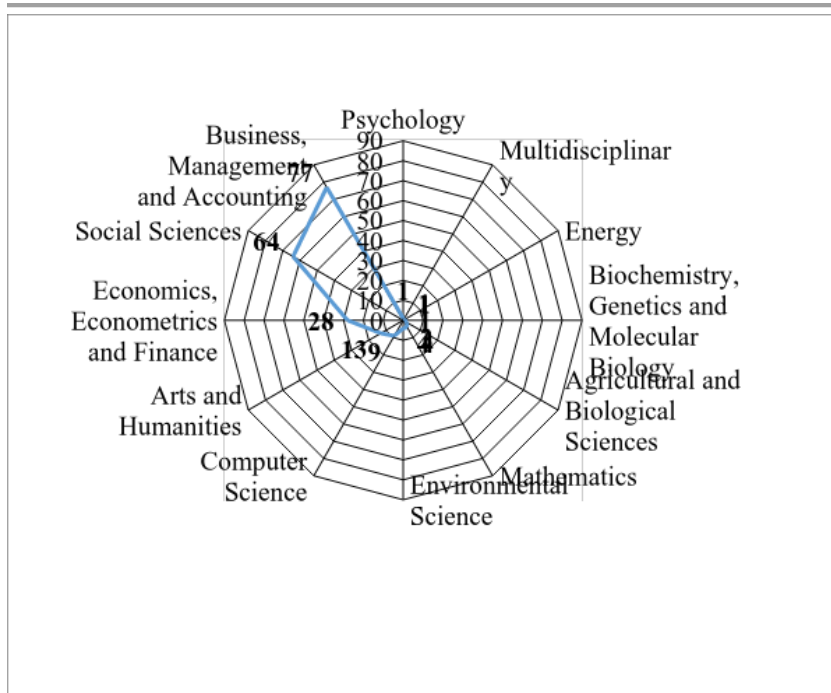
The Almaty School of Managers was established in 1988, which was reorganized into International Academy of Business (IAB) in 1996. In May 2014, IAB obtained university status and renamed itself - Almaty Management University (ALMA University). The university is positioning itself as a leader in the market of business-education in Kazakhstan. It provides a tri-lingual, multi-level system of education with BA, MA, MBA, DBA, Ph.D and Executive Education programs.

In 2015 Almaty Management University elaborated its strategy for 2015-2020 with a set of strategic directions including but not limited to academic excellence, internationalization, advanced research, IT development, creating an entrepreneurial university, tri-lingualism policy (Kazakh - Russian – English), knowledge management, corporate social responsibility, and talents' development. These items are interconnected in their content and goals and each has the purpose of leading the university to a higher level of academic excellence and increased competitiveness in national and regional markets, mainly Eurasia and Asia.

The core idea of R&D at the university is of a comparative and international aspect, with an interdisciplinary nature of research and empirical country-specific research. According to the University's *Concept of the Research Development until 2020*, the aim is to promote internationalization of R&D through establishing international research laboratories, international research collaborations, an international peer-reviewed online journal named 'Eurasian Management Journal', etc.

A valuable component of the research potential assessment in Almaty Management University was the "Map of Science" – a project initiated by the Research department in September 2014, in which all of the 205 faculty members of ALMA University categorized himself or herself according to Scopus science categories. The results are presented below in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1.
Distribution of ALMA University Faculty Members by Subject Categories of Science by Scopus



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2 Analysis of Publications and Recent Research

According to Altbach and Salmi, the key factors of establishing a World-Class University are “a) a high concentration of talents (faculty members and students); b) abundant resources to offer a rich learning environment and to conduct advanced research; and c) favorable governance features that encourage leadership, strategic vision, innovation and flexibility” (Altbach and Salmi 2011, p.3). Barber, Donelli, and Rizvi add to this that ‘universities can only be truly global in impact if they are global in their research partnerships’ (Barber, Donelli, Rizvi 2013).

The labor intensive nature of a university and the fact that the largest portion of the budget is allocated to personnel explains why a university’s effectiveness largely depends on its academic staff. In recent decades, much research was done on the U.S., Western European and Asian universities’ staff job satisfaction (see: Wong, Heng 2009; Mustapha, 2013; Oge, Damar 2013; Tanova, Nadiri 2007; Mangi, Soomro, Ghumro, Abidi, and Jalbani 2011). However, there is a lack of research on this topic in Kazakhstan. The *Independent Kazakhstan Quality Assurance Agency for Education* (IQAA) (<http://iqaa.kz/>) in its complex self-evaluation instrument for universities contains ‘**The Involvement of the Teaching Staff in Research**’ questionnaire. The recommended set of questions allows the administering university to identify the overall situation of teacher motivation for research efforts. One of the most recent studies was presented by Yulia Frolova from KIMEP University (see Frolova 2014). Her research interest was to identify factors of potential job satisfaction given by 154 students of this university or in other words to assess the expectations of young professionals towards their future work.

To focus on research activities as a factor in job satisfaction, an analysis of ALMA University’s staff could be especially valuable. E. Istileulova, the former Director of the Center for Research and Development of the International Academy of Business (IAB), mentioned the “increasing pressures for universities to commercialize their research and increase their contribution to their local and regional environments”, and reached the conclusion that “for those institutions located in areas of low demand, this can lead to low-impact equilibrium of universities” (Istileulova 2010).

A comparative longitudinal survey was conducted by the Center for Research and Development of IAB in order to identify what could effectively stimulate the teachers’ research activities, namely their participation in funded research projects, and publications in international peer-reviewed journals.

In late 2009, the first project, called ‘Motivation Maps’, was presented to assess IAB faculty member’s capacity in research and science. The sample size of that survey was 76 professors and

teachers, or 96.1% of faculty members. After identifying seven KPIs related to R&D, and human capital of the institution in general, Isteleulova came to a conclusion:

“There is an urgent need to provide both motivation and new types of networking opportunities for researchers as well as developing their expertise....Research productivity does not weigh heavily into the determination of faculty bonus payments, internal IAB funding of faculty research is limited, and IAB should provide fully paid sabbaticals for large research projects or qualification upgrading.... To motivate faculty, the faculty compensation and teaching workload allocation system might need to be adapted to reward research outputs that are used in the classroom and broadly disseminated to business school’s clients, alumni and potential participants” (Isteleulova 2010).

A more recent attempt to study IAB research capacity was conducted by Tayauova, Amirbekova, and Kanagatova, who analyzed the university’s policy of internationalization supported by “Bolashak”, the Kazakhstani state policy of research scholarships for scientists and university faculty members. In 2013, the total number of scholarship-holders from the university was 29. Professors and top-managers (83% of them were females and 17% males, 24% had doctoral degrees, 51.7% candidates of science degree and 24% non-degree ones) were sent to Haas Business School in California and Singapore Management University where they were able to study best learning practices (Tayauova, Amirbekova and Kanagatova 2013).

3 Human resources

One of the main responsibilities of HR is the assessment of employee satisfaction, work attitudes, and emotional responses to professional activities. Human resources is crucial in today’s contemporary organizations because it induces high-performance management through the use of employees; by enhancing their levels of customer’s service, productivity, growth, profits and quality control (Armstrong, 2000). Separate interconnected activities, roles, processes and other aspects are aimed to attracting, maintaining, and developing the firm HR activities in contemporary organizations, such as: 1) planning; 2) recruitment and selection 3) training; 4) performance management; 5) benefits and rewards; 6) compensation; 7) career development (Robbins and Coulter 2002). The University examines business challenges to deliver practical and results-based learning. HR department works at the intersection of social science and business practice to build individual and organizational capability. Human capital development includes training an individual after he/she is first hired, providing opportunities to learn new skills, distributing resources which are beneficial for the employee’s tasks, and any other developmental activities (Adelman 2010).

To foster a positive work environment, Almaty Management University (ALMA University) organizes events that stimulate personnel to initiate new projects and develop mutual understanding and teamwork among staff members. One such project includes annual summer schools for teaching staff. During these events, participants work on building a better team, training staff, developing their potential, calling for new challenges of young members, creating a pool of talents, finding new perspectives in the organization’s improvement, revealing poor zones in structure effectiveness, and setting new goals for managing the team. To attain its institutional and public goals, the university has to recruit, retain, and support a diverse and dynamic workforce on campus and in all communities both local and global.

The university implements policy of Talents development and HiPo retention, which can be described as the following: “Our people are our most precious asset. Respect for people, their ideas and differences, is the only path to our sustainable long-term growth” (Subramony 2009).

Superior-subordinate communication has an important influence on job satisfaction in the workplace since the way a subordinate perceives a supervisor’s behavior can positively or negatively influence on job satisfaction. Nonverbal messages play a central role in interpersonal interactions with respect to impression formation, deception, attraction, social influence and emotional expression.

Human resources department elaborates a set of projects for personnel development to support good working environment. In 2014, the Rector and the HR Department launched the project ‘Healthy Life Style’ to improve the medical care of all staff, moral and physical support in sport clubs and relaxation rooms. The new project is aimed at developing a more wholesome area for the teaching staff, administration and students.

4 Job satisfaction as a notion

According to the Oxford Handbook of Work and Aging,

“job satisfaction can be defined as the feelings that one holds about his or her job based on evaluation of its characteristics. Organizational scholars have identified five characteristics of the job that make up overall job satisfaction: the work itself, pay, promotion, satisfaction with coworkers, and satisfaction with a supervisor” (Hedge and Borman 2012).

In this survey we attempt to analyze an interrelation of job satisfaction of university scientists and teachers with: 1) socio-demographic features like a) gender, b) age, c) academic degree; d) position in the research team; e) material and moral incentives of the scientific work; f) stimulation system; g) perception of own input to the university research work.

We have reason to believe that all of the abovementioned aspects of job satisfaction can be described and measured and particularly through the notion of research potential of professors and teaching staff of the university as the main part of its intellectual capital.

Unfortunately, we do not use here in this article a rich concept of cultural capital although we share an approach to the modern society analysis made by some authors from Denmark (Prieur, Rosenlund and Skjott-Larsen, 2008).

The next issue of how to characterize the intellectual capital of a separate organization without focusing on innovations is neatly addressed by Subramaniam and Youndt when they argue that ‘human, organizational and social capital and their interrelationships selectively influence on incremental and radical innovative capabilities (Subramaniam and Youndt 2005).

5 Presentation of Key Research Findings

5.1 Job satisfaction

An employee’s satisfaction is that individual’s satisfaction as a professional person. That is, an individual has an effect on his/her attitude. In ALMA University, job satisfaction of employees is measured regularly by the Human Resources Department in order to meet the requests of unsatisfied employees and to prevent personnel outflow. Three times per year, HR conducts a longitudinal survey in order to evaluate the quality of inner business processes. The survey consists of performance appraisal, training policy, organization of corporate events, internal procedures, job satisfaction, staff recommendations about workflow processes, etc. The chart below from 2014 shows a likely positive trend.

Table 1. Satisfaction chart

Survey stage Sample size	Job functions	Management	Corporate events	Colleagues	Documentation flow	Performance appraisal
May 2014 60 respondents	Satisfied 43 71,7% Unsatisfied 17 28,2%	Satisfied 47 78,3% Unsatisfied 13 21,7%	Satisfied 58 96,7% Unsatisfied 2 3,3%	Satisfied 59 98,3% Unsatisfied 1 1,7%	Satisfied 40 66,7% Unsatisfied 20 33,3%	Satisfied 27 45,0% Unsatisfied 33 55,0%
October 2014 86 respondents	Satisfied 70 81,4% Unsatisfied 16 18,6%	Satisfied 73 84,9% Unsatisfied 13 15,1%	Satisfied 77 89,5% Unsatisfied 9 10,5%	Satisfied 84 97,7% Unsatisfied 2 2,3%	Satisfied 66 76,8% Unsatisfied 20 23,2%	Satisfied 39 45,4% Unsatisfied 47 54,6%

As for the group who responded “Partly satisfied”, comments included recommendations such

as “To find out another staff evaluation methods”, “Make performance assessment three times a year”, “To decrease the volume of documents verification”, “Make more frequent monitoring procedures”, “Automation of office processes”, “Fair internal rotation of staff”, etc.

Additional information is collected by the University’s monitoring unit to analyze the quality of all business processes as a whole.

5.2 Research Potential and Remuneration

Findings of the survey presented in this article are not on a large scale. Rather, they illustrate a characteristic pattern for the involvement of faculty members in the research activities in Almaty Management University. The idea of this survey appeared as a part of our research interests devoted to competitiveness of scientific works of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the world, with a specific focus on intellectual capital, human resources development and job satisfaction of higher education system’s personnel.

The survey ‘**The Involvement of the Teaching Staff in Research**’ was conducted in March 2014. One of the authors of this article developed a questionnaire made of 10 questions and administered it using the “Survey Monkey” platform (see Appendix 2) .

Profile of the respondents

In total, 30 people were interviewed, comprising 16.4% of all faculty members of the university for that time (183 people). Gender composition of the sample included 20 females and 10 males. 56,67% of respondents were at the age of 35-50 years, 30,0% - over 50 years, and 12,33% at age of 22-34 years. 60% of all respondents held degrees of Doctor or Candidate of sciences, 10 per cent held a Ph.D degree and 30 per cent held no degrees.

Table 2. Sample characteristics

Variable	Number	Frequency (%)	Variable	Number	Frequency (%)
<i>Research position</i>			<i>Educational level</i>		
Head of laboratory	11	36.67	Doctor	5	16.67
Middle-level faculty	16	53.33	Candidate	13	43.33
Non-researcher	3	10.00	PhD	3	10.00
			Non-degree	9	30.00
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Department</i>		
Female	20	20.00	Finance	2	7.90
Male	10	10.00	IT	1	3.45
			Management & Marketing	13	44.83
<i>Age</i>			Econ. & Logistics	2	6.90
22-34		12.33	Eval., Account & Audit	3	10.34
35-50		56.67	Business Administr.	2	6.90
51+		30.00	General Education	6	20.69

Among job satisfaction factors the following ones can be selected: gender, age, position in research structure of the university (such as head of research laboratory/center and middle-level staff).

Taking into account the previous research on U-shaped patterns (see Franek, Mohelska, Zubr, Bachmann and Sokolova 2014) where job satisfaction of personnel was investigated in relation to age and position in organization, we applied this pattern to the situation at Almaty Management University.

5.3 Hypothesis

To achieve the research objective, a series of hypotheses were developed.

H1. There is no direct correlation between research potential and job satisfaction of university staff.

H2. Job satisfaction is significantly impacted by corporate culture, interpersonal communication in the workplace.

H3. Job satisfaction increases with the evaluation of faculty’s research results by the top-management of University.

H4. There are no age-related differences in job satisfaction although U-shaped pattern with the minimum satisfaction at the age of 40 age fits to our survey data.

Our objective is to highlight the following questions: Why do many of the experienced university faculty members prefer teaching as their main professional activity? Why is research a hard job for them? Why do many of them not prefer to do only research? To demonstrate this, we should look at Table 3.

Table 3.

Question 'If you had a choice between teaching and research, what would you prefer now?'

#	Variable	Number	Frequency (%)
1.	Only teaching	2	6,9
2.	Mainly teaching and little research	14	48,2
3.	Little teaching and mainly research	9	31,0
4.	Only research	2	6,9
5.	Other	2	6,90
6.	Total	29	100

The survey data showed that about a half of respondents (48.28%) currently are focused on teaching more than on research activities. At the same time a large percentage of faculty members (31,03%) tends to engage in scientific research, collaborates in projects, carries out business and society-oriented studies and offers consulting.

The next question was devoted to overall evaluation of the research policy at the university and how it encourages and supports faculty in their wish and needs to do research.

Table 4.

Evaluation of the Research System in ALMA University

#	Variable	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Difficult to answer	Number
1.	Financial incentives to perform research	18,18% 4	31,82% 7	40,91% 9	4,55% 1	4,55% 1	22
2.	Moral encouragement of research	22,73% 5	22,73% 5	40,91% 9	9,09% 2	4,55% 1	22
3.	Communicating scientific conferences in Kazakhstan and abroad	13,64% 3	63,64% 14	22,73% 5	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	22
4.	Informing about research grants and contests	13,64% 3	40,91% 9	40,91% 9	0,00% 0	4,55% 1	22
5.	Informing about the possibilities of student research	19,05% 4	47,62% 10	28,57% 6	0,00% 0	4,76% 1	21
6.	Funding for participation in conferences in Kazakhstan and abroad	9,09% 2	27,27% 6	45,45% 10	9,09% 2	9,09% 2	22
7.	Developing skills in publication of scientific papers in ranking journals	9,09% 2	27,27% 6	50,00% 11	9,09% 2	4,55% 1	22
8.	Developing skills to use	9,09% 2	36,36% 8	45,45% 10	4,55% 1	4,55% 1	22

9.	international scientometric databases Web of Science and Scopus Increasing awareness of the scientific achievements of university's faculty staff, development of personal profiles in Google Scholar	13,64% 3	27,27% 6	45,45% 10	4,55% 1	9,09% 2	22
10.	The ability to publish articles and monographs through university	4,55% 1	31,82% 7	31,82% 7	18,18% 4	13,64% 3	22
11.	Total	29	78	86	13	13	

From our data, we are not able to determine whether excellent and good marks to the overall system of research in the university correlates directly with self-assessment of the teaching staff in terms of academic excellence and research achievements.

In our view, however, one can see the linkages between positive evaluations of management system and the job-satisfaction measurement.

Table 5.
Assessment of the Effectiveness of the University System to Promote Teachers and Staff to do Research

#	Material incentives for...	Fully satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	Difficult to answer	Number
1.	Articles in Kazakhstani journals	21,43% 6	53,57% 15	7,14% 2	17,86% 5	28
2.	Articles in international journals	28,00% 7	48,00% 12	4,00% 1	20,00% 5	25
3.	Monographs	16,00% 4	44,00% 11	4,00% 1	36,00% 9	25
4.	Presentations at conferences	20,83% 5	45,83% 11	8,33% 2	25,00% 6	24
5.	Articles in journals with impact factor	40,00% 10	16,00% 4	8,00% 2	36,00% 9	25
6.	Supervision of student research	16,67% 4	33,33% 8	20,83% 5	29,17% 7	24
7.	Patents	12,00% 3	44,00% 11	24,00% 6	20,00% 5	25
8.	Organizing events to attract students to research	8,00% 2	24,00% 6	4,00% 1	64,00% 16	25
9.	Doing research	19,23% 5	38,46% 10	19,23% 5	23,08% 6	26
10	Total	46	88	25	68	

Regarding the assumption that material incentives for publication and other scientific achievements are important, our survey gives little support for the argument that money is the only and the strongest stimulus for scientific work.

From a sociological perspective, more important is the fact that the workload of university professors and other teaching staff and their willingness and ability to carry out fundamental or applied

research projects is strongly interrelated. These findings seem to support Jain, George and Maltarich, who wrote that “scientists take active steps to preserve their academic role identity even as they participate in technology transfer” (Jain, George and Maltarich 2009).

Table 6.
Assessment of the Work of Scientific Laboratory

#	Variable	Number	Frequency (%)
1.	Work in the laboratory is conducted regularly and informally	9	31,03
2.	Head of laboratory skillfully organizes group work, clearly poses employees purpose and objectives of the study, represents a realistic timeline and brings to completion the work of the group\	7	24,14
3.	Our laboratory conducts interesting research	5	17,24
4.	Our laboratory organizes round table discussions, seminars, student research competitions useful both for our university and for other universities and organizations	10	34,48
5.	If our laboratory has a comfortable room, our work would be much more productive	8	27,59
6.	If our laboratory has a separate budget for the year, we would have worked effectively	11	37,93
7.	To work in our laboratory has been more effective, it needs a leader freed with a salary not lower than professor’s one	7	24,14
8.	Head tries to organize the work of the laboratory, but s/he lacks the tools to engage colleagues in the group work	11	37,93
9.	Works only head of the laboratory, the others watch from the side	2	6,90
10.	Work in the laboratory is conducted formally	3	10,34
11.	Head only collects applications for promotion and requires reports for the half of year and a year	5	17,24
12.	I am not in the laboratory/center	3	10,34

When it comes to the self-assessment of a respondent’s input to research activities of the university, it becomes evident that many of them (about 40%) are supposed to participate in important decisions on the laboratory work. A smaller portion of the group positions themselves as ordinary staff with no access to the decision-making process.

It is not a secret that interpersonal communication inside a small group like a research laboratory can lead to positive or negative performance. Lack of trust of the head of research collective from the side of its members can demotivate them from being active in the scientific project. Our survey showed moderate significance of this factor; it is also influenced by the academic environment and willingness for close collaboration.

Table 7.
Self-assessment of the respondent’s contribution to laboratory collaboration

#	Variable	Number	Frequency (%)
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1.	I participate in important decisions on laboratory work	11	39,29
2.	I am middle-level research member, important decisions are made without me	9	32,14
3.	I am officially in the lab, but I'm not interested or do not have time to collaborate in lab	1	3,57
4.	I am officially in the lab, but I do not like the head	3	10,71
5.	I do not belong to any laboratory/center	3	10,71
6.	I have a positive attitude towards research, but because of age, health status, family circumstances I am not able actively do research	2	7,14
7.	Other (specify)	0	0

5.4. Additional Qualitative Information from Conversations

In daily communications with ALMA university's faculty (doctor, candidates of sciences, and non-degree faculty), we receive additional and more nuanced information on why their job satisfaction depends on the possibility to carry out research. There is a set of obstacles which are challenging faculty on the path to conducting scientific work. The first and the largest concern is the overload from reports and information gathering by the demands of administration (to meet requests of ministry of education and science, national accreditation agency, dean's office, own department, etc.). The second concern of the faculty is a lack of time to prepare themselves for lectures due to high workload. The third concern is involvement of teachers in organizational problems, staff meetings, working groups, and social life in the university. As a result, time for doing research is extremely limited, and those who are motivated to do research or write academic articles can find time to pursue these aims mostly on the weekends or at night.

This research, however, was not focused on the issue of whether academics who hold administrative positions were more satisfied with their job comparing to others. Out of the sample of 30 persons, 11 faculty members mentioned that they participated in important decisions on laboratory work (Table 7, line 1), and this is equal to the number of respondents holding the position of the head of research laboratory, as it is seen from Table 2. All of them were completely satisfied with their role in formulating tasks and organizational policy inside the lab. On the other hand, 9 persons mentioned their modest role in the group decision-making and own middle input to the group research.

Also, we can confirm that in ALMA University, job satisfaction of academics who are actively involved in research increases with age. The average age of the head of laboratory is 50-55 years. On par with teaching, science is a key criterion of their professional success.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusion to be derived from our study is that the research potential – job satisfaction distinctions in university exist in practice. In general, the study confirmed the main hypotheses and ideas expressed at the beginning of the article. The first hypothesis, which stated that there is no direct correlation between research potential and job satisfaction, received confirmation. The second hypothesis was also verified by the survey data: job satisfaction is significantly impacted by corporate culture, interpersonal communication on the workplace. Our study gave some support to the third hypothesis that job satisfaction increases with the evaluation of faculty's research results by the top-management of university. The study did not find support for the view that there are no age-related differences in job satisfaction. Similarly, we have neither confirmed nor rejected the assumption that male faculty members are more satisfied with their jobs than females. Our survey data also did not support nor refute the previous researchers' assumption on the U-shaped pattern describing the minimum job satisfaction at the age of 40 years age.

7 Limitations

It must be recognized that our research had several limitations. Firstly, the respondent sample was not large enough to make deeper generalizations on the university research and HR development strategies. Secondly, the data was collected in a limited time period and the sample lacks representatives of several departments. The third limitation of this study is that it did not include assessment by respondents of the teaching - research dilemma. Hence, not all work-related factors were analyzed. Despite these limitations, our research provides necessarily information for improvement of the HR system and research management in a Kazakhstani university.

8 Declaration of No Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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