

## The degree of exercise of academic freedom and its relationship to job satisfaction: Al-Yarmouk University model

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### ABSTRACT

Academic freedom in Jordanian universities is the subject of debate and research, due to the policies of university education imposed within the country. However, academic freedom has been researched in Jordan for more than two years. This study aimed to find out the level of academic freedom practiced by faculty members at Yarmouk University and its relationship to job satisfaction from a point of view, as there was recently a difference in views on the exercise of academic freedom or the imposition of educational policies in Jordanian universities according to the views of academics. About 317 members of the university were selected in a simple random way. The correlational descriptive approach and a two-part questionnaire were used: the first part measures the degree of academic freedom exercised by faculty members in three areas (freedom of expression, research, and teaching). The second part measures the level of job satisfaction. The results indicated that the degree of academic freedom exercised by faculty members was high, as well as the level of job satisfaction, as it was found that faculty members were significantly satisfied with their jobs. There was also a correlation between the degree of academic freedom exercised by faculty members and the level of job satisfaction of faculty members. These results shed positive light on the policies adopted in the country to educate university students in order to continue to keep pace with global developments and global trends in university education and work to amend some university education policies with the concerned authorities.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophers from ancient times began to seek freedom in their minds and thoughts about the nature of the human soul, the universe and other matters, which led to different and disparate ideologies, all of which influenced the concept of freedom in general [1]. Plato linked his conception of freedom to the commitment of each individual to the role assigned to him, dividing citizens into three classes (the free class, the Greeks, foreigners of the non-Greek race, and slaves) and granting them varying degrees of freedom according to their human nature, he did not believe in absolute freedom, but made it dependent on the status of the individual and his position in the state, taking into account the conditions and laws he enacted [2], [3]. The beginnings of academic freedom began to emerge with the founding of the University of Leiden in the

Netherlands in 1575, which gave teachers and students some freedom at the beginning of its creation. The concept of freedom developed and expanded in the VII-XVIII centuries in German universities, especially those of Leipzig and Göttingen. In conjunction with the creation of the University of Berlin in 1811, under the presidency of the philosopher Gottlieb, freedom came to mean freedom of teaching and learning [4]. Academic freedom in the twentieth century was influenced by international tensions and ideological wars. In World War I, as is happening now especially in the Middle East, some professors were accused of disloyalty to their countries, and professors at American universities felt the need to defend their freedom, so they founded the American Association of University Professors in 1915. This association has fought for academic freedom since its inception [5].

In order for the university to play a leading role in society, it is necessary to rely on the teaching staff as the cornerstone and effective element in the educational process. The university's success and progress depend primarily on its highly qualified faculty, who can be relied upon to disseminate knowledge and apply it efficiently and perfectly [6]. The university is the primary employer for the production and development of ideas, and the only preferred environment for the freedom to express, exchange, transfer and discuss opinions and ideas in an atmosphere of transparency, freedom, and openness. Lacking this, it loses the reality of its creative role, becoming a dilapidated workshop that reproduces old, outdated and fossilized ideas [7]. Out of awareness of the role of job satisfaction in raising the effectiveness of the job performance of faculty members, and adding quality to the outputs of the education system in general and the university in particular, an influential motivation must be formed for many human phenomena in the educational environment, where lack of interest in developing positive motives towards work leads to the emergence of some negative phenomena among workers, perhaps the most important of which is the phenomenon of job dissatisfaction. Although there are many work-related trends, job satisfaction is the most important phenomenon that has received great attention from researchers and behavioral scientists [8], [9].

Job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept, as researchers studied the topic from different angles, and found a difference in views on the relationship of academic freedom and job satisfaction practiced by academics in universities, but they agreed that satisfaction in general refers to a set of positive emotional feelings that an individual feels towards his work, which expresses how satisfied the individual is with the job he performs. Therefore, the more an individual feels that his needs are met, the more positive his feelings about his work become, that is, more satisfied with the academic work he performs, especially since satisfaction in psychology is the feeling resulting from the removal of stress and distress [10].

From this standpoint, the study sought to show the degree of academic freedom practiced in Jordanian universities and its relationship to job satisfaction, where Yarmouk University was chosen as a community for study. The recommendations reached will also be presented to the relevant authorities, namely the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in addition to the university presidency to work on granting academic freedom to university professors to build an educational system that rises to the level of developed countries or work to amend it if it needs to be modified, after the results showed that the exercise of academic freedom at Yarmouk University came at a high level and keep pace with scientific progress at the present time, and it is hoped that this experience will be generalized to all Jordanian public and private universities. Especially in light of the turbulent conditions in the Middle East in general and the tensions in Jordan in particular, and there has been no study for more than two years conducted in Jordan that examines academic freedom in universities and the extent to which university professors are satisfied with their teaching jobs.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature relevant to the research topic and explains the existing literature on issues related to the field to help build cognitive consistency and relevance to studies that have addressed the topic. With a review of the findings of studies in a number of Arab and foreign environments, and based on the literature and its results and confirmation of the results reached by researchers in this study, the following part discusses the extent to which academic freedom is exercised and the degree of its impact on job satisfaction within the country and its keeping pace with international methods in university teaching.

### 2.1. Academic freedom and job satisfaction in Jordan for the purposes of progress and development in teaching

The literature indicates that the degree to which academic freedom is exercised in Jordanian universities has given them the right to teach university students what they find appropriate and keep pace with scientific progress, especially with regard to freedom of expression and participation in academic decision-making and scientific research [11], [12]. This freedom is exercised to varying degrees in universities within the country, where policies raise the level of university education to keep pace with global developments [13]. Academic freedom is also linked to social responsibility and an individual's sense of importance as part of the community in terms of community management, as well as ethics, environmental

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health and belonging [13]. While research and teaching activities at universities vary in some countries, such as the University of Pristina in Kosovo, there has been proven to be a low degree of academic and cultural freedom of expression as a result of the country's political transformation, exchange of views, and institutional independence [14].

## **2.2. The relationship between job satisfaction and education quality**

Job satisfaction is also affected by several variables such as gender, education, experience, and type of college, we find that males are distinguished in most Arab countries from women due to social personality, customs and traditions in Arab countries [15]. Faculty satisfaction is influenced by a faculty member's age, monthly income, and career advancement [16]. Out of awareness of the role of job satisfaction in raising the effectiveness of faculty members' performance, to provide high-quality educational outcomes, several motives are formed that affect the educational environment, as lack of interest in developing positive motivations towards work leads to negative phenomena. Although there are many work-related trends, job satisfaction is the most important phenomenon that has received great attention from researchers and behaviorists [17]. Job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept, as the researchers studied it from different angles depending on the research method used, but they agreed that satisfaction in general refers to a set of positive emotional feelings that an individual feels towards his work, which expresses the extent to which the job achieves for the individual. Therefore, the more an individual feels that his needs are met, the more positive his feelings become towards his work, that is, satisfaction with the work he performs, especially since satisfaction in psychology is the feeling arising from the removal of stress and distress [18].

It increases the importance of job satisfaction for individuals and communities, as it is an indicator of various aspects of life, as many studies agree that employees' sense of satisfaction and happiness with their jobs has positive effects that are reflected in their achievements at work [19]. Dissatisfaction leads to disruption of production and increased loss, in addition to the fact that discomfort leads to increased stress, psychological, and organic diseases. One study found that there is a strong correlation between deaths from heart disease and job dissatisfaction caused by work stress and boredom [20]. On the other dissatisfaction contributes to frequent absenteeism, being late for work and leaving too often, which exacerbates occupational problems, which in turn leads to low productivity and what is known as job deviation [21].

## **3. METHOD**

The following section describes the methodology of the study. This includes the research approach and design, the sampling method, the instrument, and the data collection procedures. It is believed that the type of research can determine the research approach and design, which should support the research methods and data collection to achieve the objectives of the study.

### **3.1. Research methodology and design**

The study adopted the descriptive and analytical approach to measure the relationship between the independent variable (academic freedom) and the dependent variable (job satisfaction). The relationship between independent and dependent variables works to determine the methods used to increase job satisfaction and avoid psychological pressures that may lead to a decline in scientific productivity in universities in the future [22]. The results of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the exercise of academic freedom and the level of achievement of job satisfaction were discussed.

### **3.2. Sampling technique and participants**

The study was conducted on all (1,110) faculty members at Yarmouk University, according to the statistics of the Department of Human Resources at Yarmouk University for the 2023 academic year. They were selected from the study population in a simple random way to ensure that the sample represents the population from which it was taken, which numbered 317 faculty members. In order to develop a study tool to reveal the degree of availability of academic freedom at Yarmouk University among faculty members and its relationship to their job satisfaction. Reference is made to the theoretical literature and previous studies related to the subject of the current study [23], [24].

To verify the study tool, it was presented to a group of experts and specialists in the field of education and its origins, measurement and evaluation in a number of Jordanian universities, numbering 10 arbitrators in order to express their opinions on the paragraphs of the study tool in terms of wording, clarity of meaning and suitability for the field to which it belongs, and all observations were taken as two paragraphs of academic freedom were deleted and the rest of the paragraphs were reformulated, and three paragraphs were deleted from the field of job satisfaction, and the data collection tool in its final form consisted of 25 a paragraph distributed in three parts; the first represents personal data and the second measuring the degree of

exercise of academic freedom among faculty members at Yarmouk University, where a questionnaire consisting of 24 items distributed over three areas was reached. The first field is expressing an opinion and it contains 9 paragraphs. The second area is freedom of research and it contains 6 paragraphs. The third field is freedom of teaching, which contains 6 paragraphs. The last part of the study tool: to measure the level of job satisfaction among faculty members, a questionnaire consisting of 25 items was developed.

### 3.3. Structure validity

The study tool was applied to a survey sample consisting of 30 faculty members, from outside the targeted study sample, in order to calculate the corrected correlation coefficients for the relationship between the paragraphs and the study tool, as shown in Table 1. Notably, all correlation coefficients were acceptable and statistically significant; therefore, none of these items were deleted [25]. Regarding freedom of expression, arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Correlation coefficients that measure the level of exercise of academic freedom

Item	Correlation coeff.		Item	Correlation coeff.		Item	Correlation coeff.	
	Domain	Scale		Domain	Scale		Domain	Scale
1	0.83**	0.84**	9	0.82**	0.78**	17	0.75**	0.86**
2	0.89**	0.79**	10	0.85**	0.85**	18	0.92**	0.87**
3	0.93**	0.87**	11	0.91**	0.87**	19	0.89**	0.83**
4	0.91**	0.86**	12	0.81**	0.78**	20	0.90**	0.75**
5	0.91**	0.81**	13	0.70**	0.69**	21	0.91**	0.74**
6	0.86**	0.83**	14	0.94**	0.89**	22	0.86**	0.75**
7	0.87**	0.77**	15	0.92**	0.87**	23	0.85**	0.76**
8	0.69**	0.74**	16	0.86**	0.77**	24	0.81**	0.91**

Table 2. Arithmetic means and standard deviations in the field of (freedom of expression)

Degree	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Paragraph text	Paragraph	Range
High	0.91	3.98	I present my own ideas and opinions in accordance with the law and public morals	1	1
High	1.18	3.62	I express my opinion without concern in different media in accordance with academic norms	4	2
High	1.23	3.62	I express my opinion freely in the management of the university's affairs, programs, and activities	5	2
High	1.12	3.60	I practice free critical thinking	2	4
High	1.17	3.60	I discuss various issues freely with university officials	9	4
High	1.21	3.60	I vote in the department council freely and I am not under pressure	8	4
High	1.23	3.59	I discuss social problems and various controversial issues with my colleagues without worrying	6	7
High	1.23	3.54	I express my opinion freely in the Department Council and the College Council	7	8
High	1.23	3.48	I participate with my colleagues in intellectual dialogue meetings	3	9
High	0.44	3.62	Total		

The results indicated that the arithmetic circles of the field of (freedom of expression) have been classified according to their arithmetic circles within a high score, perhaps due to the fact that the laws, legislation and the university environment gave freedom of expression great importance to achieve the university's mission towards students and society. The university also trusts the faculty members with their degree and their awareness of what is happening around them. Committees that specialize in academic and social topics also encourage faculty members to communicate and hold intellectual dialogue meetings among them [26]. Regarding freedom of research, Table 3 shows the arithmetic averages of the degree of freedom of research available to faculty members.

The results indicated that the degree of academic freedom at Yarmouk University for the field of (freedom of research) has all been classified according to their arithmetic circles within a large degree. The reason for this is that the university allows faculty members this freedom and absolutely by allowing them to publish in scientifically refereed fields with a high scientific reputation. The university gives them the freedom to publish what they want within their fields and specializations freely and smoothly. The university also encourages faculty members to carry out scientific research, allows them to determine the topics of these researches, gives them financial support, for their confidence in their scientific abilities, and sets instructions and everyone adheres to them and does not conflict with the freedom of faculty members [27]. Table 4 shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the field of (teaching freedom) for faculty members.

Table 3. Arithmetic mean and standard deviations for the field of (freedom of research)

Degree	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Paragraph text	Paragraph	Range
High	1.13	3.83	I choose my research topics freely	10	1
High	1.07	3.74	I publish the results of my research without any interference from the university administration	11	2
High	1.21	3.69	View the scientific journals offered by the university	15	3
High	1.21	3.58	I choose the topics of the books I study without administrative obstacles	12	4
High	1.26	3.55	I get financial support for my research from the university without restrictions	14	5
High	1.29	3.42	Conduct scientific exploratory research inside and outside the university without worrying about its research fields	13	6
High	0.48	3.63	Total		

Table 4. Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the field of (freedom of teaching)

Degree	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Paragraph text	Paragraph	Range
High	1.14	3.71	I speak freely on topics related to the subject I teach in the lecture	16	1
High	1.18	3.67	I choose the teaching method in line with the students' abilities and preparations	18	2
High	1.21	3.65	I discuss with students in topics related to the scientific material without restrictions	19	3
High	1.13	3.64	I accept students' opinions about the lecture method	23	4
High	1.21	3.63	I allow students to express their different opinions in the lecture freely	22	5
High	1.13	3.61	Choosing the content of the course I study without restrictions	17	6
High	1.21	3.57	Choose the content of the scientific material in line with the students' thinking	21	7
High	1.17	3.53	I publish the scientific material as I see fit	20	8
High	1.18	3.52	Convey students' views to the relevant department council	24	9
High	0.42	3.61	Total		

The results indicated that the degree of academic freedom at Yarmouk University for the field of (freedom of teaching) has all been classified according to their arithmetic circles within a large degree. The reason is that the university gives academics the freedom to choose teaching materials because they are highly informed by virtue of their scientific specializations. Therefore, they are the most able to choose the appropriate references and sources for teaching in addition to giving them the freedom to choose the appropriate teaching method, and they work within one goal, which is to advance educational and academic work, they are ultimately keen to deliver information to their students and promote the teaching and learning process [28].

In addition to the aforementioned, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the relationship between the domains and the scale, in addition to computing the intermediate Pearson correlation coefficients between the domains among each other, as shown in Table 5. It is observed that all correlation coefficients were acceptable and statistically significant, and therefore, none of these items were deleted [29].

Table 5. Correlation coefficients between items and the total score of the questionnaire to measure the level of job satisfaction

Item	Corrected coeff. with the tool	Item	Corrected coeff. with the tool	Item	Corrected coeff. with the tool
1	0.61	10	0.76	19	0.75
2	0.58	11	0.71	20	0.86
3	0.80	12	0.75	21	0.75
4	0.82	13	0.76	22	0.59
5	0.68	14	0.73	23	0.74
6	0.58	15	0.77	24	0.77
7	0.60	16	0.87	25	0.68
8	0.67	17	0.72		
9	0.74	18	0.75		

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the questions of the study, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the areas of the axis of the degree of exercise of academic freedom among faculty members at Yarmouk University were calculated, taking into account the order of the fields in descending order according to their total arithmetic mean, through the fields.

#### 4.1. Study instrument correction criterion

In order to make judgments on the arithmetic means of the two study tools, their fields and the paragraphs that follow them. The five-scale was used to correct the two tools, by dividing the range of numbers 1-5 into five categories to obtain the range of each level, i.e.  $(0.80=5/1-5)$ . Therefore, the levels will be as: from 1 to less than 1.8 is very few; from 1.8 to less than 2.6 few; from 2.6 to less than 3.4 medium; from 3.4 to less than 4.2 large; and from 4.2 and more is very large [30].

#### 4.2. Discuss the results of the first question, “What is the degree to which faculty members at Yarmouk University are exercised from their point of view?”

In Table 6, the results showed that the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the study sample's estimates of the degree of academic freedom practiced by faculty members at Yarmouk University, arranged in descending order according to their arithmetic averages, that the exercise of academic freedom at Yarmouk University was at a high level according to their point of view, and the fields were in the following order: freedom of research in the first place, freedom of expression in second place, and finally freedom of teaching, all of which were to a large degree. The reason for this is that the university's policy grants academic freedom to faculty members and is consistent with state policy and global policies, unlike what was previously in force, where the teacher can choose the references he deems appropriate in the teaching courses and participate in scientific meetings and dialogues with members of the rest of the university members [31]. This leads to learning outcomes that keep pace with global developments [32], [33].

Table 6. Arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the study sample estimates for the degree of academic freedom exercised by faculty members at Yarmouk University

Rank	Domain	Domain	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
1	2	Freedom of research	3.63	0.48	High
2	1	Freedom of expression	3.62	0.44	High
3	3	Freedom to teach	3.61	0.42	High
		Overall	3.62	0.37	High

#### 4.3. Discuss the results of the second question, “What is the level of job satisfaction among faculty members at Yarmouk University from their point of view?”

In Table 7, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample estimates were calculated to reveal the level of job satisfaction among faculty members at Yarmouk University. The results of the answer to the question showed that the arithmetic mean of the paragraphs of the level of job satisfaction among faculty members at Yarmouk University all came to a large degree, and arranged in descending order according to the arithmetic mean, and the reason why faculty members believe in the importance of job satisfaction, and their sense of comfort in terms of working conditions, incentives, and promotions, especially in light of the circumstances that our society is going through and what the country is going through, of wars, and delays in paying wages and salaries. This shows, in agreement with the results of the previous table, that the satisfaction of faculty members teaching was high, given that they were granted academic freedom in the undergraduate education of students [34].

#### 4.4. Discuss the results of the third question, “Is there a statistically significant correlation ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the degree of academic freedom practice among faculty members at Al-Yarmouk University and their level of job satisfaction?”

Table 8 shows the values of the correlation coefficients between the degree of academic freedom practiced by faculty members at Yarmouk University and their level of job satisfaction together. In conjunction with the previous tables, the results of the survey revealed a statistically significant positive relationship, with a significant level ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), between the extent to which faculty members exercise academic freedom at Yarmouk University and their overall job satisfaction. These findings can be attributed to the fact that academic freedom fosters an environment that contributes to increased job satisfaction among faculty [34]. It contributes to high individual and organizational productivity, facilitates the investment of human resources to achieve educational goals, and seeks to unleash the potential of faculty members by stimulating their aspirations to provide service [35], [36]. This, in turn, confirms that one way to increase job satisfaction among faculty members is to give them academic freedom. Therefore, the more faculty exercising freedom, the greater their job satisfaction [37].

Table 7. Arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the estimates of the study sample for the level of job satisfaction among faculty members at Yarmouk University

Rank	Item no.	Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
1	1	I maintain the reputation of my university	4.01	1.10	High
2	8	I respect the views of others even if they conflict with my point of view	3.78	1.20	High
3	16	I maintain the public properties	3.75	1.12	High
3	22	The tasks and duties I perform are clear	3.75	1.15	High
5	25	My work allows me the opportunity to achieve accomplishments	3.74	1.12	High
6	6	Job security and stability are provided for me at the university	3.73	1.14	High
6	12	My work at the university allows me to assume leadership positions in the future	3.73	1.22	High
8	23	The salary I receive is commensurate with the effort I exert	3.71	1.15	High
9	19	There is a link between promotion and work proficiency	3.70	1.15	High
10	2	Methods of gratitude and appreciation are commensurate with the levels of excellence of faculty members	3.69	1.06	High
11	11	The principle of equal opportunities is achieved in the promotion process	3.68	1.22	High
12	13	The salary is paid on time	3.67	1.20	High
13	5	There is harmony, respect, and appreciation among the faculty members	3.66	1.20	High
14	21	Colleagues appreciate the effort I exert	3.65	1.19	High
14	15	There are friendly relationships among colleagues outside of work	3.65	1.25	High
16	17	Colleagues collaborate to solve work problems	3.64	1.15	High
17	18	Faculty members are keen to exchange experiences among themselves	3.63	1.30	High
18	7	Colleagues cooperate in solving their personal problems	3.62	1.28	High
19	20	There is an atmosphere of friendliness and friendship between the faculty members and the department head	3.58	1.18	High
19	10	The department head appreciates the efforts I exert at work	3.58	1.19	High
19	14	The department head applies the principle of justice and equality among the faculty members	3.58	1.22	High
22	24	The department head understands the special circumstances of the faculty members	3.57	1.21	High
23	9	I control my emotions in critical situations	3.54	1.26	High
24	4	I believe that community development is the responsibility of everyone	3.52	1.26	High
25	3	I feel moral responsibility towards my colleagues	3.50	1.29	High
Total			3.62	0.37	High

Table 8. Values of correlation coefficients between the degree of academic freedom practiced by faculty members at Yarmouk University and their level of job satisfaction

Relationship	Statistic	First scale	Freedom of expression	Research freedom	Teaching freedom
Level of job satisfaction	Correlation coefficient	0.71	0.53	0.54	0.70
	Significance level	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Sample size	317	317	317	317

## 5. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the results, it was found that the degree of availability of academic freedom at Yarmouk University among faculty members as a whole came to a large degree according to the order of the fields, which means that the educational policy followed in Jordanian universities came in line with the principle of democracy and freedom in line with the changes that occur in the world and keep pace with scientific progress, especially in light of the circumstances that the Middle East region suffers from in particular and the wars taking place in it, and this gives faculty members a great degree of job satisfaction and supports their development and cognitive growth. It enables them to measure the abilities of university students to ensure the quality of educational outcomes to correct them in the event of weakness or deviation from what is planned. The university administration also encourages faculty members to conduct scientific research in their disciplines, and provides them with financial support in the field of scientific research. This is what the university, represented by its administration, is working on by holding intellectual dialogue meetings with faculty members to encourage them to share their experiences with their colleagues in various universities inside and outside the country to increase and enhance job performance and benefit from the experiences that have been researched and developed in the future.

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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There are no other conflicts of interest.

## INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researchers declare that the research was conducted within the journal's ethical procedures and scientific framework.

## DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and its supplementary materials. The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [KMAA], upon reasonable request.

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