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Is the Productivity of Faculty Members Sustainable? The Perspective of Faculty Members

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Abstract: In the global economic landscape, a nation's ability to secure a prominent position is intricately linked to its capacity for knowledge augmentation and technological innovation. This correlation underscores the pivotal role of universities and academicians, whose importance directly reflects a country's level of development. The effectual execution of educational, research, and innovative pursuits within university settings necessitates the presence of qualified, productive, and dedicated academicians. As key contributors to academic, social, and humanitarian spheres, academicians bear responsibilities spanning research, teaching, societal enlightenment, and problem solving within higher education. The scholarly productivity of researchers is commonly gauged through metrics involving scientific publications and academic engagements. Notably, in many countries, advancements and appointments within academic institutions are contingent on the demonstrated productivity of academicians. Aligning with this global trend, Turkey accordingly structures its promotion and appointment procedures within academia. This study aims to ascertain faculty members' perspectives regarding academic productivity after their associate professors' and professors' appointments in Turkey. Furthermore, we endeavor to identify the underlying factors contributing to this decline and increase academic productivity. Our findings emphasize the intricate interplay of various factors influencing academic productivity and sustainability. These include the significance of institutional support, economic stability, intrinsic motivation, and challenges such as bureaucratic processes and gender-related issues, which collectively shape the academic landscape and faculty members' ability to produce impactful research over time. The research study group comprised 20 faculty members working at a public University in Turkey in the 2022–2023 academic year. This study was prepared using a qualitative research model. This study used the interview technique, one of the data collection techniques used in process-based evaluation applications. Furthermore, the obtained data were analyzed using the content analysis technique used in qualitative research methods.

Keywords: higher education; faculty members; academic productivity; qualitative research

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1. Introduction

With enormous scientific and technological developments, higher education institutions face rapid structural, social, and technological changes because universities are considered essential centers of talent development and knowledge production and sharing for countries [1]. The importance of higher education in the world and Turkey has been increasing recently. Today, the view that a new social order, the information society, has emerged is frequently expressed. One of the most important institutions of this society is the university, an essential institution where knowledge is produced [2]. While universities fulfill the essential information function of a modern state, they are among the essential functions of teaching and disseminating this information. The university communicates knowledge as culture with knowledge as science. In this sense, it is an institution that provides and demonstrates more substantial progress in an academic career with such a

structure [3]. Faculty members have many academic, social, and humanitarian duties and responsibilities, such as researching, teaching, enlightening society, and solving problems. To fulfill these duties and responsibilities more healthily, academicians must positively perceive their institutions, professions, titles, and themselves [4]. The importance of scientific productivity in the academic community is increasing daily, and research productivity is becoming one of the essential concepts in academia [5]. Academic staff is one of the essential resources of higher education institutions [6]. Universities must use their resources effectively and efficiently, thus increasing overall performance. Universities, which conduct research, produce science, and provide high-level education, are expected to train qualified human resources to meet the country's needs. Raising quality human resources is only possible with faculty members who do their job lovingly, willingly, and are satisfied. Faculty members are expected to show high performance and work efficiently. Considering the expectations from the academic profession, it will be necessary to talk about quite complex tasks, such as scientific studies, education, management services, consultancy career planning, and scientific issues. One or more of these duties are expected in the branches [7]. Universities assume a crucial role in nation building by facilitating academic research their faculty members undertake [4].

Publication records significantly influence academic careers, as they are crucial in faculty performance assessments, research grant allocations, and decisions related to promotions and salaries. The expression "publish or perish" effectively emphasizes the crucial significance of research productivity in this context [8]. Abramo and D'Angelo [9] defined productivity as the quintessential efficiency indicator in any production system. It seems it has become a norm in bibliometrics to define research productivity as the number of publications per researcher, distinguishing it from impact. Academicians are expected to continue their scientific productivity throughout their careers. Activities generally referred to as scientific publications, such as scientific research, books, articles, compilations, and presentations, form the basis of academic productivity and emerge from a specific process. It is known that there are many factors influencing this process.

On the other hand, numerous studies have demonstrated that various factors, including gender differences among academicians, the average age of academicians, academic staff's theoretical knowledge and skills, the technical and infrastructural capabilities of institutions, and academic incentives, affect academic productivity [10]. According to research, academicians in Turkey face various difficulties. These difficulties can be shown as factors that cause a decrease in the productivity of academicians. These include the dependence of academic promotions on publications in international indexes and the obligation to publish to receive a title. Additionally, access to university facilities varies depending on academic titles. It is cited that faculty members have insufficient economic income, and many do not have enough time for their research. Additionally, academicians believe that academic publications are made primarily to gain titles, which draws attention to a systemic problem. It creates economic difficulties experienced by academicians. Although faculty members have access to university facilities, differences in benefits based on titles persist and contribute to perceived inequities. In addition, academicians have cited high course loads as a significant concern and dissatisfaction with the selection process for administrative positions and perceived lack of merit [11–14].

In this context, it is essential to investigate the continuation of the scientific productivity of faculty members working in universities. Academic titles obtained through postgraduate education and scientific studies in higher education indicate academicians' scientific competence and academic position. The academic profession and title phenomenon come to the fore with the legal regulations related to higher education from time to time, giving academic and legal rights to academic staff and also imposing some responsibilities in Turkey. In particular, the function of the title phenomenon, which is constantly discussed, is shaped within the university structure.

In addition, the title is an essential criterion in universities. For this reason, working conditions are shaped based on one's title in Turkey. However, academic titles should

be a measure of scientific competence. In this case, faculty members attribute different meanings to titles, indicating that scientific and intellectual accumulation and academic titles are becoming tools for various purposes. It is stated that [15] the development of a critical perspective in higher education institutions is related to the academic title, promotion, and appointment processes. In various nations, advancements and appointments within academic institutions are contingent upon the demonstrated productivity of faculty members. The procedures governing promotions and appointments in academic settings are codified by law in Turkey. Within this framework [16], a nation's capacity to attain a favorable standing in the global economy is intricately linked to its ability to augment knowledge and innovate technologies. Legislative measures have been implemented in Turkey to bolster science, the academic labor market, and university educational pursuits.

In the relevant literature [17–23], measuring the productivity of associate professors and professors through datasets is more prevalent. What makes our study important is obtaining and evaluating the direct opinions of associate professors and professors on this subject. This allows them to articulate their thoughts clearly and with greater elaboration. This research seeks to ascertain faculty members' perspectives regarding academic productivity after their associate professors' and professors' appointments in Turkey. Furthermore, this study discusses academic research to identify the underlying factors contributing to this decline and increase academic productivity.

2. Academic Development Process of Faculty Members in Turkey

Abramo, D'Angelo, and Soldatenkova [24] discussed the proliferation of institutional models, such as the entrepreneurial university and world-class university, and competitive tools, such as university ranking systems, for direct university administrators to recruit academics with high research productivity and encourage productivity through internal upgrades. For these reasons, expectations for academicians to be more productive researchers have increased in many countries. An academic career can be defined as rich with possibilities, including, among them, the opportunity to discover and share knowledge and to prepare students to be lifelong learners who contribute to society [25]. Academicians must know current developments, new theories, and methods to succeed [26]. In this sense, faculty members who work in educational organizations where management is essential bear the most significant responsibility for the success or failure of their respective organizations [6]. Academicians have a wide field of study, such as seniority, faculty and university variables, and management, and they go through a long-term process [19]. In Turkey, many universities have been established to meet the increased demand for higher education due to the large population of young people, the need to balance the development discrepancies across regions, and the increase in employment [16]. Akciğit and Tok [16] discussed that the rise in student numbers has surpassed the growth in the count of academicians. Particularly noticeable was the disparity after the expansion of university student quotas during the 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 academic years. Hence, this process has detrimentally impacted the academic productivity of researchers. The discrepancy between student enrollment and academic staffing levels, exacerbated by the expansion of university quotas, has greatly impeded researchers' ability to produce work.

University faculty members contend with various challenges in meeting their academic responsibilities. Within daily scholarly pursuits, various factors significantly influence the production of research papers and the undertaking of research projects. These encompass environmental and organizational dynamics, avenues for career progression, and personal characteristics, such as marital status, age, teaching workload, and the availability of resources.

Additionally, gender variables play a role alongside considerations, financial support, opportunities for international collaboration, institutional and collegial attitudes, recognition by administrative leadership, individual scholarly interests, engagement in societal endeavors, adherence to institutional policies, financial standing, academic rigor, and levels of job satisfaction [15]. As Polat [27] defined, in different areas of the world,

higher education institutions carry out the scientific activities of the countries and create the needed workforce quality. The academic situation of these institutions, which highlight the development of different countries, varies within the scope of current national characteristics, difficulties, and opportunities. With these characteristics of countries, wages, statuses, workloads, recruitment procedures, career models, and promotion rules vary in academic labor. Faculty members must meet the score requirements of the university to which they wish to be appointed through their activities in academic promotion and reappointment [28].

Universities in Turkey operate with a central management model, reporting to the Council of Higher Education. The primary legal regulation regulating academic appointments is Higher Education Law No. It is 2547 [29]. With the changes in 2018, the title of associate professor was changed to doctoral faculty member, and the 12-year term limit was abolished. Academic titles are not directly related to personnel appointments, but they are effective in appointments. The Council of Higher Education Personnel Law determines personnel categories, such as doctoral faculty members, associate professors, and professors. Those with a doctorate can be appointed as doctoral faculty members, while those with the title of associate professor can be appointed accordingly. To obtain the title of associate professor, specific criteria must be met, and a jury may make an evaluation. After an associate professorship, promotion to a professorship can take five years, but this requires meeting specific qualifications and university criteria through academic research. Academic titles involve rigorous evaluation and meeting specific criteria and represent academic advancement through the pipeline to full professor [30].

After acquiring the associate professor title, the pathway to professorship follows a more standardized trajectory. After holding the associate professor title, individuals may become eligible for promotion to professorship within five years. However, ascending to a professorship requires conducting scholarly research that meets specific qualifications and aligns with university criteria. Academic titles often involve rigorous assessments, adherence to institutional and legal frameworks, and the demonstration of scholarly merit. Each stage represents a progression within the educational hierarchy, culminating in attaining professorship through sustained academic contributions and the fulfillment of prescribed criteria.

Professorship in higher education is the highest academic title. Most of the professors in Turkey tend towards management duties in higher education beyond academic work. This situation pushes professors, the highest-level scientists, to have a background in conducting scientific studies and raising scientists. For faculty members' appointment and promotion processes, the Interuniversity Board was established by Law No. 2547, and the Interuniversity Board Presidency by Article 11 of the Higher Education Law No. 2547 [31]. In addition to the criteria, each university is also subject to additional criteria [31]. Therefore, these criteria, which constitute the focus of our study, cause associate professors and professors to experience professional problems such as engaging in academic activities only for specific periods, causing stagnation in the academic activities of appointed personnel for promotion. The Turkish higher education system is mainly centralized, with the Council of Higher Education playing a pivotal role in university governance and regulation. This leads to significant variations in academic titles, evaluation criteria, and employment conditions across countries. Additionally, the criteria for academic promotion can vary significantly between countries and institutions.

3. Materials and Methods

We employed a qualitative approach in this research to assess the sustainable productivity of faculty members, adopting the phenomenology pattern as its study design framework. As Creswell [32] described, phenomenology delves into understanding familiar phenomena that lack in-depth comprehension. Phenomenology studies unveil individual experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with a particular phenomenon. To enhance the relevance of information gathered from a limited sample size, we utilized

easily accessible case sampling and purposive sampling [33]. This method ensured that participants possessed significant knowledge related to the investigated phenomenon. The interview questions were initially developed through a literature review. Subsequently, they were refined based on the feedback of two expert faculty members in higher education to ensure content validity. Following adjustments based on expert opinions, pilot testing was conducted with two faculty members. This process led to finalizing the interview protocol for the main study. The interview questions were e-mailed to the faculty members, beginning with inquiries into demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, academic title, and professional experience. This study included an equal number of participants in the research sample group. This enabled us to conduct a comparative analysis between associate professors and professors and increased the power of the analyses, thus making the results more reliable. Additionally, the research design requires a certain balance and equality. Additionally, this study included 20 faculty members from a public university, purposively selected based on their positions as associate professors and professors and their willingness to participate. Also, this sample set of 20 faculty members, consisting of associate professors and professors, was purposefully chosen for this qualitative investigation, considering their years of experience, age, and gender at a public university in Turkey during the 2022–2023 academic year.

Table 1 provides the demographic characteristics of 20 participants. The table indicates an equal distribution of participants with associate professor and professor titles. Ten professors and ten associate professors took part in the research. Both professor and associate professor groups include participants with diverse ranges of experience. All ten participants had over 21 years of experience as professors, while for associate professors, the experience ranged from 6 to 15 years. There is a notable similarity in age distribution across the two groups. Participants in both groups predominantly fall within the 46- to 55-year-old range. Additionally, it is worth noting that the age range for the professor group is labelled as "56 and over," suggesting that all participants in this group are 56 years of age or older. There is an even gender distribution within each title category, with five women and five men in both the professor and associate professor groups.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants.

Participant (*n* = 20)	Title	Experience	Age	Gender
5	Professor	21 years over	56 or over	Women
5	Professor	21 years over	56 or over	Man
5	Associate Professor	6–15 years	46–55	Women
5	Associate Professor	6–15	46–55	Man

4. Data Analysis

Before initiating data collection, the researchers sought ethical approval from the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Ethics Committee in Turkey. Upon receiving approval, semi-structured interviews were distributed to participants via e-mail. The research methodology involved gathering data through e-mail responses. Academicians' views were then transcribed into textual form, which helped to facilitate a structured analysis of the collected information. Subsequently, the gathered data underwent organization into codes, sub-themes, and overarching themes. This systematic analysis elucidated the dataset's commonalities, consistencies, and underlying meanings.

The qualitative research approach of content analysis was employed to examine faculty members' perspectives. Through a comparative analysis of themes identified by the researchers, both consensus and divergence among the themes were identified. To ensure the credibility of the research, significant attention was given to validity and reliability [34]. An independent researcher conducted a review to verify the validity and reliability of the results, seeking correlation with participants' viewpoints. Research reports were sent to participants for validation, and their feedback was crucial in confirming the study's authenticity [35]. The interviewed academicians meticulously scrutinized the obtained texts

on research validity and reliability, with the research findings shared when participants' input was deemed essential. For clarity in presenting the results, each participant in the Section 5 was assigned a code (e.g., P1. . .P20 for faculty members). This study involved the collaboration of two researchers and an expert for evaluation, ensuring the cross-referencing of their assessments. In formulating interview questions, consultation with two education experts, who are also academicians, was undertaken [33]. The interviews comprised four questions and were conducted via e-mail after clearly elucidating the research objectives. The interview questions were as follows.

1. When do you think faculty members are most productive scientifically?
2. To what extent do you think faculty members' scientific productivity decreases due to their appointment as associate professor or professor? What factors may be effective in reducing productivity?
3. Which factors can you say are effective in increasing academic productivity?
4. Can you explain your suggestions on how to maintain a faculty member's scientific productivity during their academic career?

5. Results and Discussion

The data obtained from four open-ended questions in the structured interview form were coded with an appropriate inductive approach, and sub-themes and main themes were created. The four main themes in this part of the study were examined in detail. The first question on the interview form to determine the opinions of faculty members regarding the period in which academic productivity was most intense is as follows:

Q1. When do you think academics are most productive scientifically?

Table 2 gives the sub-themes, codes, and number of participants created for the post-doctoral and associate professor themes.

Table 2. The period when academic productivity is most intense.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	*n*
Post-Doctoral	Staff Criteria	Appointment procedures	20
	Quantitative Criteria	National and international publication criteria	20
Associate Professor	Publication Pressure	Academic goals	20
	Financial Recovery	Assurance	20
	Status	Motivation, curiosity and desire for research	18

The findings in Table 2 reveal valuable insights into the opinions of faculty members regarding the peak periods of academic productivity among participants. Two distinct themes, post-doctoral and associate professor, emerged from the analysis. These themes shed light on crucial phases in academic careers, where productivity tends to be most intense. Regarding staff criteria, appointment procedures garnered the highest rate, underscoring their significance in shaping academic productivity. This highlights the pivotal role of institutional support and recognition in facilitating and fostering an academic career. Within the quantitative criteria sub-theme, national and international publication criteria emerged with the highest rates. This emphasizes the importance of research output and scholarly contributions nationally and globally. The emphasis on publication criteria suggests that faculty members value the dissemination of knowledge and academic impact as critical indicators of productivity. The publication pressure sub-theme within academic goals signifies the challenges and expectations associated with scholarly output. This sheds light on the pressure participants may feel to consistently produce high-quality research, reflecting the competitive nature of academia. The financial recovery sub-theme underlines the role of assurance in academic productivity. This suggests that participants view financial stability and support as crucial factors enabling them to focus on their academic pursuits without undue stress. Motivation, curiosity, and research desire emerged as critical elements under the status sub-theme. This suggests that intrinsic factors play

a significant role in driving academic productivity. Pursuing knowledge, coupled with a genuine passion for research, is a driving force among participants.

Regarding the first question, the relevant participants expressed their opinions as follows.

> *Post-doctoral and associate professorships are the most scientifically productive periods. Five years of intensive scientific studies are carried out to complete the criteria for becoming an associate professor after doctoral education and the requirements for promotion to the professor after becoming an associate professor. Academic staff appointments are an influential factor in increasing productivity. P2*
>
> *If it is carried out properly, the doctoral thesis process is the most productive period for an academician. The doctoral thesis period is when curiosity, enthusiasm for learning and research, and excitement for interpretation and analysis are at their highest. Since knowledge is systematically acquired in this process and interpretation and analysis are applied to a comprehensive body of knowledge, equipment and formation acquisition occur in this period. When this process is carried out in this way, as it should be, postdoctoral studies are built on this knowledge, the ability to relate analyses and scientific formation. However, the research conducted for the associate professorship can be considered as the second productive period. If the doctoral thesis process is carried out in a different quality, as I explained above, it will not be possible for an academician to gain the benefits of the doctoral process later. P15*
>
> *Academicians' productivity increases when submitting files to meet the institution's criteria during appointment and promotion. However, these are quantitative increases rather than quality. They work according to the rules of the system. P9*

In support of our research findings, Eti suggested that [36] academicians' titles are the most influential factor in academic productivity and the main criterion of difference. It has been observed that associate professors are more productive than research assistants and lecturers.

Additionally, a study conducted in Turkey revealed that [14] the most significant factor motivating faculty members to publish is meeting the criteria for an associate professorship. Simultaneously, faculty members believe that the academic incentive system will also influence the quality of publications. Furthermore, this study argues that emphasis should be placed on the quality, i.e., the originality, rather than the quantity of publications. Academic promotion and appointment criteria reward faculty members who produce more work, which can overshadow the importance of publication quality, societal benefit, and pursuit of academic titles. This study aligns with academic perspectives regarding the impact of promotion criteria on faculty members' motivation to publish in Turkey.

Since scientific publications are considered the main outputs of academic research, institutional regulations also focus on publication productivity. The essential elements of current laws regarding academic research are compelling rules or incentives to increase the publication productivity of universities or academics and methods to monitor and evaluate productivity [37].

Also, Bauldry [38] defined that the determinants of a researcher's performance depend on numerous personal and organizational variables. These variables influence the level of competencies, the resources and time available, and the individual's motivation and reputation, which are the basis of the performance. As collaborative research across disciplines becomes increasingly prevalent, it is crucial to consider its impacts. This allows academicians from diverse fields to work together. Through such collaborations, academics can address complex problems more comprehensively, positively impacting their productivity through synergy. With the growth of interdisciplinary collaboration, team members engage in a broader range of academic interactions, conflict resolutions, and shared responsibilities [39].

From a different perspective, as seen in the findings of Abramo et al. [17], highly productive scientists are those whose output endures consistently over time. This select group, irrespective of whether they receive support from the structural features of the

scientific system, is characterized by sustained high productivity in their work. This includes utilizing mechanisms that contribute to accumulating advantages over an extended period within their scientific domain. It can be said that academicians' productivity during appointment and promotion periods introduces a critical perspective. The assertion that productivity increases are often quantitative and driven by institutional criteria raises questions about genuine intellectual contributions versus the strategic pursuit of accolades. This observation prompts reflection on the balance between meeting institutional expectations and maintaining the quality of academic work in Turkey.

The second question on the interview form, to determine the opinions of faculty members regarding the decline in scientific productivity, is as follows:

Q2. To what extent do you think faculty members' scientific productivity decreases due to their appointment as associate professor or professor? What factors may be effective in reducing productivity?

The sub-themes, codes, and number of participants used for the decline in scientific productivity theme are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Decline in scientific productivity.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	*n*
Decline in Scientific Productivity	Gender	Academicians who are mothers,	18
		Marital status	10
	Age	As age increases, productivity decreases	8
	Academic Relaxation	Completion of appointment and title processes,	20
		Completion of quantitative criteria	20
	Post -Professorship	Completion of Appointment to Staff criteria,	20
	Institutional	Burnout,	10
		Workload,	12
		Mobbing	18
	Individual	Health,	10
		Family Problems	7

The findings in Table 3 reveal faculty members' opinions and provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to the decline in scientific productivity. The identified sub-themes—gender, age, academic relaxation, post-professorship, institutional, and the individual—offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of this decline. The high rates associated with completing appointment and title processes and fulfilling quantitative criteria are noteworthy within the academic relaxation sub-theme. This suggests that factors related to bureaucratic processes and meeting specific quantitative expectations significantly affect academic relaxation. It implies that the administrative burden associated with appointments and titles and the pressure to meet quantitative criteria may contribute to a decline in scientific productivity. In the post-professorship sub-theme, the observation that the completion of appointment criteria for personnel is high indicates that the transition to a post-professorship stage may introduce challenges in maintaining scientific productivity. This could be attributed to a higher academic rank's increased responsibilities and expectations. The gender sub-theme reveals a concerning trend, with high rates of mobbing, particularly among female academicians and mothers. This underscores gender-related challenges in academia, potentially leading to a decline in scientific productivity. Addressing issues of mobbing and creating a supportive and inclusive environment for female academics are crucial for fostering a healthy academic atmosphere. Under the individual sub-theme, the high rates of mobbing further emphasize the personal nature of challenges faced by faculty members. This suggests that interpersonal conflicts or challenges unique to individuals contribute to a decline in scientific

productivity. Addressing such issues and promoting a positive work environment can play a vital role in mitigating the negative impact on academic output.

Regarding the second question, the relevant participants expressed their opinions as follows.

> *There may be a decrease in the scientific productivity of academics due to their appointment to associate professor or professor, but this is not the case for every academician. This may vary depending on many factors. Some measures can be taken to prevent or mitigate this decrease. It is important to maintain a good balance. After becoming an associate or professor, academics must balance their scientific work with teaching, administrative duties, and other academic responsibilities. This requires them to manage their time and energy efficiently. P6*
>
> *I certainly think that there may be a possibility that academics may experience a decline in their scientific productivity after being appointed to associate professor or full professor positions. I can say that a 50% reduction occurs. Meeting the conditions for appointment as a professor after associate professorship is effective in this decrease. P1*
>
> *Research also shows that the scientific productivity of academics appointed to the position of associate professor, especially professor, decreases significantly. On this subject, I can only state my observations in my field. Suppose academics in the field of art still need to complete their doctoral process in scientific formation with a natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, which is, unfortunately, why theses in the field of art are far from offering new propositions. In that case, they produce texts like compilation information, and therefore, art practices remain purely formal, not artistic propositions. For this reason, academicians who work for or in associate professor and professor positions aim to be promoted by making purely quantitative publications. Very few publications are actual research that can be referenced. Therefore, since most of the studies at the doctoral level in the field of art are dataless, inefficient, and have poor formation and equipment, the studies carried out later on proceed similarly, being seen as predominantly quantitative gains and proceeding with the same inefficiency. Since the aim is generally to obtain the staff, the number of studies produced in quantitative terms decreases when the numerical total that will receive the staff is obtained and assigned to the staff. Since it would be necessary to assume that the work done is qualified, that is, productive, to describe this as a "decrease in productivity," I do not find it correct to express it as a "decrease in productivity." The correct statement is that there is a decrease in studies. P3*

According to a study that supports our findings, considering titles, such as promotion and appointment, gender factors, freedom to publish scientific publications, participating in research and projects, and engaging in professional development activities, academicians constitute one of the occupational groups with the most career barriers [19].

In this context, it can be understood that academics affected by systems that prioritize many publications as appointment criteria, administrative pressures, difficulties during the academic transition, and gender-related problems experience decreased scientific productivity. Here, it is essential to apply standards that measure quality and impact and metrics based on specific criteria. Hence, a one-size-fits-all perspective should be avoided. Such an approach promotes a balanced environment that prevents excessive restrictions on academics and ensures that quantitative and qualitative aspects are considered when assessing productivity.

In addition, Yıldız [40] stated that female academicians experience problems due to sexist approaches. These issues may stem from gender-based workplace differences and societal expectations and responsibilities assigned to women. Gender roles impose responsibilities on female academicians in their professional lives, such as competing with male colleagues, and in their personal lives, where they are expected to take on fundamental duties, from household chores to meal preparation. In this context, female academicians juggle roles, such as spouse, mother, and researcher. The intermittent or continuous conflict between these roles appears to be inevitable.

According to the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (SHE figures 2021—Gender in research and innovation—Statistics and indicators)

reports [41], there is a notable trend in the representation of women researchers across different age groups within the Higher Education Sector (HES) and Government (GOV) sector. Notably, women researchers are better represented in the 35–44 age group than men, a pattern observed in most EU-27 Member States and Turkey. This report indicates a significant presence of women in mid-career research positions in Turkey, potentially reflecting advancements in gender inclusivity and opportunities for women in academia and research. However, it is essential to note that Turkey and several other countries do not exhibit a higher proportion of women researchers in the oldest age group (55+), suggesting ongoing challenges in retaining women in senior research positions. This underscores the need to address gender disparities and promote women's advancement in Turkey's research and academic leadership roles. Female academics often face academic challenges later in their careers due to marital obligations. The productivity trajectory of female academics typically exhibits an initial increase during the early career stages, followed by a gradual decline in subsequent years.

In their report, Akcigit and Tok [16] claimed that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between academic age and productivity in Turkey. While researchers' productivity rises in the first twelve years of their academic life, it flattens in the twelfth year, when they obtain the title of associate professor. A rapid decline in productivity starts in the 17th year when full professorship is achieved after five years of experience as an associate professor. This observation emphasizes the significance of considering career milestones and their potential influence on academic productivity trends.

Additionally, in our study findings, academics stated that excessive workload and course load at the institutional level are negative factors, decreasing productivity. In this case, universities can increase their productivity by giving academics a fair workload and more research space. They can also make arrangements regarding course hours so that academics are less affected by their workload. In addition, Mengi and Schreglmann defined that [42], among the factors influencing productivity, the academic environment does not adequately support productivity in the university publication environment, peer support, and work intensity.

Moreover, Güler [43] defined that academicians' general problems—negativities in the physical working environment, heavy course loads, lack of adequate support and regulation to encourage participation in domestic and international scientific studies, problems, constant changes in appointment and promotion criteria, and injustice in the distribution of academic titles—are factors that reduce job satisfaction in Turkey.

Regulations on educational titles, academic promotion, and appointment processes significantly affect job satisfaction in academic life because the rules on these subjects can negatively affect the expectations of academicians in terms of university and academic activities. Academicians can move to permanent staff from associate professorship. However, they come this far in fear and anxiety. The contract of the instructor whose contract has expired may not be extended for various reasons. In this case, the person remains unemployed. They are creating a new job situation for a research assistant who has completed their specialization or doctorate [3].

In their study, Önder and Erdil [44], from different perspectives, mentioned the extent to which universities are inclined to abandon their old understandings, adopt new regulations, and revitalize them in their organizational practices (for example, in appointment decisions), which might vary systematically depending on their age or size. It can be argued that old and well-established universities will be less adaptable to new regulations aimed at increasing publication productivity due to their established cultures and interest groups and, therefore, will be less likely to force or support the academics they employ to increase their publication productivity. Consequently, the publication productivity of academics at older and larger universities is predicted to be lower.

Toutkoushian and Webber [45] discussed that an institution's research output can be evaluated based on the volume or the caliber of research. In certain domains, the total external funding a faculty member receives over a specific period is considered a quality

measure, with more funding implying higher quality. However, this approach may only sometimes accurately reflect research quality. Some efforts have been made to distinguish research output by quality, such as differentiating between peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed publications or establishing criteria to classify journals based on rigor. While these initiatives are more prevalent in specific disciplines like business and law, they are yet to be widely adopted. Despite the intuitive preference for assessing institutional research productivity based on the quality of research, many existing metrics predominantly rely on quantitative measures.

According to Eti's [36] study, gender is effective in academic productivity among lecturers. The analysis concludes that male lecturers are more productive than female lecturers. Female faculty members have more responsibilities and workload within the family, leading them to spend their time outside their academic lives in this direction.

The third question on the interview form to determine the opinions of faculty members regarding factors that are effective in increasing academic productivity is as follows:

Q3. Which factors can you say are effective in increasing academic productivity?

The sub-themes, codes, and number of participants created for the factors that are effective in increasing academic productivity are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Factors that are effective in increasing academic productivity.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	*n*
Increased Productivity	Economic	Cost-of-living expenses	20
	Scientific Promotion	Research and development support,	20
		Technical and financial support	14
	Institutional Support Factors	Project and Congress support,	20
		Academic mobility, encourage national and international cooperation	18
	Individual Factors	Motivation,	20
		Awards	18
		Academic Competition	17

The findings in Table 4 reveal that faculty members' opinions on the factors influencing increased academic productivity reveal four significant sub-themes: economic factors, scientific promotion factors, institutional support factors, and individual factors. Examining participant opinions within these sub-themes provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics fostering heightened academic productivity. Within the economic factors sub-theme, the high rates associated with research and development underscore the critical role of financial investments in driving academic productivity. This suggests that adequate funding for research initiatives and developmental activities significantly contributes to generating impactful scholarly output. It highlights the importance of economic resources in creating an environment conducive to academic excellence. Similarly, in the scientific promotion factors sub-theme, the elevated rates for research and development support reaffirm the pivotal role of financial backing in facilitating scientific advancement. This emphasizes allocating resources to support research initiatives, projects, and other activities contributing to academic progress and productivity. In the institutional support factors sub-theme, the high project and congress support rates indicate that institutional backing, mainly supporting research projects and facilitating participation in academic conferences, is crucial in enhancing academic productivity. This reflects the significance of institutions actively promoting and investing in scholarly activities to elevate the academic standing of their faculty members. The emphasis on high motivation levels stands out in the individual factors sub-theme. This suggests that personal drive and enthusiasm are central to increasing academic productivity. Faculty members who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in research, teaching, and other academic pursuits with dedication and passion, contributing to enhanced productivity.

Regarding the third question, the relevant participants expressed their opinions as follows.

To revive research interest, taking measures such as seeking new projects and collaborations, managing competitive pressures, and focusing on collaboration opportunities could be considered. P10
After being promoted to professorship, academics often engage in activities such as providing consultancy to private companies or establishing consultancy firms. They are legally entitled to pursue such endeavours. In such cases, they may transition to a part-time work schedule instead of working full-time. For academics working in this manner, conducting research or maintaining and increasing productivity becomes challenging. The system should introduce different options, such as focusing solely on research, teaching only, or part-time work outside the institution. Additionally, if such preferences arise due to economic conditions, it is crucial to identify and address this issue. These factors that contribute to a decline in productivity are significant. P13
Individuals can prioritize scientific research to meet the criteria for appointment. Appointment criteria play a role in increasing productivity. Additionally, in recent times, supporting international projects has become a source of prestige and motivation among academics. Furthermore, academic incentive funding has also contributed to increased productivity. P6
Faculty members should visit and cooperate with unfamiliar but qualified environments, events, and educational institutions rather than in environments they are comfortable with and already familiar with and events organized by people. Workshops, conferences, panels, etc., are organized by inviting academics who are experts abroad. By organizing and organizing such events, academics should be positively motivated to improve themselves. Although it is essential to have individual participation in these activities, it is necessary to carry out them in groups and present a report to all department staff and students upon return, thus disseminating the information they have obtained. P16

In a parallel view to our economy sub-theme, Kwiek [20] expressed that well-paying positions in higher education remain restricted. Globally, most academics find it challenging to maintain a middle-class lifestyle solely relying on academic salaries. The sensitivity of academic salaries to context is evident, with the frame of reference over the past fifty years primarily centered around the professional category. The author defines a conventional perspective that suggests that academics often balance their work's 'monetary' and 'non-monetary' aspects or prioritize the 'non-monetary advantages' of academic endeavors over their 'monetary drawbacks.'

Önder and Erdil [44] defined some elements of the recent regulation of academic research for example, issues related to recruitment and promotion, relevant rules, or monetary reward practices are directly related to increasing the productivity of academics in individual publications. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the developments in publication productivity at the individual level and the changes at the higher education system or discipline level. Examining publication productivity in this way makes it possible to simultaneously explore its antecedents at different levels (e.g., university, departmental, and individual).

The fourth question on the interview form to determine the opinions of faculty members regarding sustainable academic productivity is as follows:

Q4. Can you explain your suggestions on how to maintain a faculty member's scientific productivity during their academic career?

The findings in Table 5 reveal valuable insights into faculty members' opinions regarding the sustainability of academic productivity, delineating four crucial sub-themes: economic factors, motivation, continuous learning, and institutional factors. Analyzing participant opinions within these sub-themes provides a detailed understanding of the elements contributing to the long-term viability of academic productivity. In the economic factors sub-theme, the prominence of financial comfort as the highest-rated factor emphasizes the critical role of economic stability in sustaining academic productivity. This

suggests that when faculty members feel economically secure, they are better positioned to focus on their scholarly pursuits without undue financial stress. Adequate financial resources contribute to a conducive environment for sustained productivity. Within the motivation sub-theme, the high rates associated with academic assurance, individual curiosities, and desires underscore the intrinsic motivations driving long-term academic productivity. Faculty members who feel assured in their academic pursuits and are driven by personal curiosity and passion are more likely to sustain their commitment to scholarly activities over time. This emphasizes the importance of fostering a sense of academic security and encouraging individual interests within the academic community. In the continuous learning sub-theme, the focus on support and reward for qualified research as a high-rated factor indicates that recognizing and rewarding quality research efforts contribute to the sustainability of academic productivity. This emphasizes the importance of institutional acknowledgment and support for faculty members who consistently produce valuable and impactful research, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. In the institutional factors sub-theme, the emphasis on support and reward for qualified research aligns with the recognition that institutional backing is crucial for sustaining academic productivity. When institutions actively support and reward high-quality research, faculty members are motivated to maintain and enhance their scholarly output, contributing to the long-term vitality of academic productivity.

Table 5 gives the sub-themes, codes, and number of participants used for the sustainable academic productivity theme.

Table 5. Sustainability of academic productivity.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	*n*
Sustainability of Academic Productivity	Economic	Financial comfort	20
	Motivation	Academic Assurance Individual curiosities and desires	18
	Continuous Learning	Encourage Academic Mobility and information sharing	15
	Institutional	Support and reward for qualified research	17

Regarding the fourth question, the relevant participants expressed their opinions as follows.

Qualitative criteria should be implemented instead of quantitative evaluation and promotion criteria. Thus, promotion based on pure quantity should be eliminated, and it should be ensured that faculty members who are genuinely academics receive the value they deserve for their qualified work and are promoted. P8

The phenomenon of guaranteed staff should be abolished. When a professor or associate professor is appointed, they are guaranteed until retirement. However, it must prove its efficiency through both its work and the consultancy services it carries out. However, this should be based on quality rather than quantity. In particular, the conditions for faculty members who cannot be promoted to remain in their positions should be tightened. As I explained, staff changes need to be carried out quickly with new staff who are appropriately developed starting from the doctoral level so that faster changes can be made with a domino effect and qualified staff can carry out qualified theses. Otherwise, since well-trained staff cannot find the positions they deserve due to unfilled positions, they lose confidence in educational institutions, and their productivity decreases. P9

Temporary positions need to be made attractive. Under current conditions, finding a position at a university is challenging for someone who has completed his doctorate. During this transition period, universities should be allowed to advertise 1-year or 2-year temporary positions. In this way, the person whose productivity will decrease while waiting for a position announcement can both maintain his productivity and increase the interaction between institutions and people, thus enabling information production and sharing, healthy competition, vision development, etc., to have the opportunity to develop. P1

Furthermore, Altbach [18] argued that evaluating academic productivity within research-intensive universities and among academics in such institutions is a complex and challenging endeavor. In our findings, academicians expressed that the multifaceted nature of academic productivity, encompassing research and teaching responsibilities, makes the measurement process intricate. Notably, assessing teaching quality, a pivotal component of academic roles, is particularly elusive, primarily due to the inherent difficulty in gauging teaching effectiveness. This complexity is further compounded by the need for more widely accepted parameters to capture the variations in teaching quality comprehensively. Hence, the intricate nature of academic productivity measurement poses a significant challenge for universities and the academicians working in this field.

Supporting our findings, Önder and Erdil's [44] study found a relationship between academic titles and publication productivity. Associate professors' and professors' publication productivity is higher than assistant professors. In this regard, the workload of assistant professors is generally higher than other faculty members. Therefore, they may devote less time to scientific research and publication than others. Another possibility is that faculty members who received their doctorates before our observation period and had high publication productivity were included in our sample as associate professors or professors. In evaluating research productivity, a uniform standard is not universally applicable. Also, measuring articles published in well-established scientific journals is comparatively more straightforward than assessing contributions in books or publications available online and through open access platforms [18].

From the perspective of our data, Melguizo and Strober [46] discussed the relationship between institutional prestige and faculty salaries in academia as intricate, as scholars who enhance their institution's reputation receive elevated remuneration. This recognition is manifested through the higher salaries attributed to increased publications in prestigious journals, authored books in renowned outlets, the acquisition of prestigious research grants and patents, and other notable achievements.

Even though this research did not directly pose a question related to the finances and economics of academics, responses from faculty members indicate that economic conditions were discussed as contributing to both a decrease and an increase in productivity. A comprehensive study of financial conditions and academic living expenses is needed. The augmentation of institutional prestige ultimately translates into higher individual salaries. In this framework, institutions acknowledge and reward scholarly output with the currency of prestige, considering faculty salaries as dividends from the cultivation of institutional reputation. In Turkey, when calculating the total monthly salaries of academic staff, various factors are taken into account, including additional lesson fees, university allowance, administrative duty allowance (for those holding administrative positions, such as rectorship, vice rectorship, deanship, vice deanship, department chairmanship, institute directorship, etc.), development allowance, education teaching allowance, base salary, additional indicator, position allowance, representation allowance, housing allowance, foreign language allowance, and payments made from revolving funds, among other variables.

6. Conclusions

This research provides a comprehensive examination of the various factors influencing academic productivity among faculty members in Turkey. Higher education institutions aim to be the leading institutions in science and technology and pioneers in education. However, to achieve all these, it is essential to have academic staff who ensure scientific competence. Passion for learning and science is one of the most crucial factors that directs academicians toward research. This situation is prompted by the requirements imposed by professional progress or reasons, such as appointment to a position, academic promotion, and reputation. Based on the findings, setting minimum publication targets for the title of associate professor and the criteria to become a professor increases the number of publications but needs to be more compelling. Also, incentive programs should be created for qualified scientific output instead of targeting regulations.

This research emphasizes the multifaceted factors influencing the academic productivity of faculty members in Turkey. It is evident that academic productivity is intricately linked to various factors, such as organizational dynamics, career advancement opportunities, personal responsibilities, and institutional support. The research highlighting faculty members' challenges, including benefit inequalities, high workloads, and economic constraints, underscores the need for systemic changes to promote a more supportive and equitable academic environment. Moreover, our study emphasizes academic publications as a measure of productivity, and the impact of promotion criteria on research outputs highlights the importance of aligning incentives with high-quality scientific outputs rather than solely focusing on quantitative measurements. This study addresses gender inequalities, provides adequate institutional support, and fosters an environment conducive to research and professional development. Academicians have defined economic factors and financial investments as collectively contributing to creating an environment that encourages increased scientific output through scientific promotion, institutional support through project and congress support, and individual motivation. Therefore, recognizing and addressing these factors can help develop strategies to promote and sustain academic excellence among faculty members. Providing equal conditions for all researchers involved in scientific production can be seen as one of the necessary conditions for increasing the quality and quantity of scientific publications. These are crucial to enhancing higher education institutions' academic productivity and sustainability. Hence, solutions should be sought to increase academic efficiency and develop a supportive academic environment for faculty members in Turkey.

It is recommended that policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and addressing gender-related challenges in academia should be implemented. Moreover, adequate institutional support should be provided, including funding opportunities, mentorship programs, and professional development resources, to academicians. Also, studies must be conducted to explore the impact of economic conditions on academic productivity and living expenses and inform policy interventions to support academicians financially. At this point, providing a conducive environment, fostering a supportive atmosphere, and implementing effective managerial practices may be crucial for enhancing academics' productivity. Furthermore, universities can play a vital role at the institutional level by aiding academics in enhancing their qualifications. This can be achieved through offering personal and professional development opportunities, improving conditions for multicultural skill development to facilitate international collaborations, and providing networking opportunities to enhance efficiencies. Such initiatives serve as motivating factors for academics and contribute significantly to advancing research and productivity.

In further research, while focusing on maintaining academic productivity, examining the impact of higher education management on this productivity, academic inbreeding, and organizational culture is essential. Future studies should contribute to revealing the relationships between these elements and understanding the subject from a deeper perspective. In particular, what role university management profiles play and the impact of organizational culture on academic productivity may be the focal points of future research. In this way, a more comprehensive understanding should be developed for practical strategies and increase efficiency in the academic world.

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