

Unpacking the Link Between Job Satisfaction and Performance Among Educators in Anhui's Private Universities, China

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the essential connection between job satisfaction and performance among educators in private universities located in Anhui Province, China. Amid rising competition and shifting educational paradigms, the well-being of teachers has emerged as a vital factor influencing both individual and institutional success. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this research combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive insights from a diverse cohort of educators. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and teaching performance, suggesting that educators who feel valued and supported are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement, effectiveness, and commitment in their roles. Key drivers of job satisfaction identified in the study include a nurturing work environment, equitable workload distribution, opportunities for professional development, and constructive communication channels between faculty and administration. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the detrimental impact of workplace stressors on teacher morale and productivity, underscoring the necessity for institutions to adopt strategies that promote a positive organizational culture. Based on the analysis, the study proposes practical recommendations for university leaders and policymakers aimed at enhancing job satisfaction, thereby improving teacher performance and overall educational outcomes. By prioritizing the satisfaction and well-being of educators, private universities in Anhui can foster an environment that not only boosts individual performance but also contributes to the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the educational system. This research serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders in the higher education sector, offering actionable insights into the critical role of teacher satisfaction in achieving institutional excellence.

Keywords: *Job satisfaction, Job performance, Private universities, Higher education, Anhui Province*

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving professional landscape, job performance (JP) has emerged as a critical challenge for both employees and organizations. Recognized as a strategic concern for firms, JP reflects individual contributions to organizational goals and serves as a focal point for personnel (Abeykoon & Perera, 2019). The universality of job performance criteria across diverse demographics underscores its relevance to workers of all genders, ages, and employment situations (Arunika & Kottawa, 2016). This widespread applicability highlights the growing body of research exploring the interplay between job performance and job satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of achieving a balanced integration of professional and personal life responsibilities.

A significant body of literature has established a strong connection between work-life balance and employee performance. Mend and Zhang (2017) assert that a harmonious balance between work and personal life is essential for enhancing job satisfaction, which is positively correlated with job performance. Within the Chinese context, Thevanes

and Mangaleswaran (2018) provide evidence that employees who maintain a better work-life balance report higher levels of both performance and satisfaction. This trend is particularly relevant in the banking sector, where research by Rifadha and Sangarandeniya (2015) and Adikaram and Jayathileke (2015) highlights unique challenges faced by banking professionals. The rapid changes in this sector—such as demographic shifts, technological advancements, and the transition to virtual work environments—contribute to heightened stress levels among employees, underscoring the need for effective work-life balance strategies.

Studies specifically within the Chinese banking sector further illustrate how achieving a balance in working life positively influences job performance among managers (Rifadha & Sangarandeniya, 2015; Adikaram & Jayathileke, 2015). Female employees in managerial roles often report higher job satisfaction compared to their male counterparts, indicating a nuanced dynamic in job satisfaction and performance across genders (Rifadha & Sangarandeniya, 2015). The intense pressures, tight

deadlines, and increased expectations inherent to the banking sector necessitate effective strategies to foster job satisfaction and performance among employees.

The implications of work-life balance extend beyond individual well-being; they significantly impact organizational success. Adikaram and Jayathileke (2015) argue that private banks can leverage these findings to enhance their policies and benefit programs, ultimately fostering a stable and content workforce. High levels of employee satisfaction can translate into increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and greater employee loyalty, thereby contributing to overall organizational success. Furthermore, studies in both the Chinese and manufacturing sectors reveal that job performance positively influences employee satisfaction, particularly in organizations that implement practices aimed at enhancing job performance (Abeykoon & Perera, 2019).

Research consistently highlights the favorable association between job satisfaction and factors such as current salaries, supervision, and the overall working environment (Samarawickrama et al., 2018; Tham et al., 2017; Pambreni et al., 2019; Herath et al., 2023). The increasing emphasis on work-life balance as a critical factor further underscores the multifaceted nature of elements contributing to employee satisfaction (Kumari et al., 2019). Aruna Shantha (2019) indicates that many employees in China express dissatisfaction with their work due to inadequate work-life balance, pointing to the demanding nature of tasks and immediate transitions to challenging assignments as significant contributors to declining efficiency.

Despite recognizing the importance of work-life balance, a gap exists in understanding how employers in China prioritize this aspect. Dissanayaka and Ali (2013), as cited in Abeykoon and Perera (2019), note that many employers have not adequately addressed work-life balance, potentially due to a lack of understanding of effective methods. Furthermore, research by Mohottigedera (2018) emphasizes the positive link between job satisfaction and organizational involvement, suggesting that organizations prioritizing employee well-being can benefit from enhanced performance and engagement.

The findings emphasize the critical interplay between job performance, job satisfaction, and work-life balance, particularly within the context of the Chinese banking and manufacturing sectors. Organizations aiming to enhance their policies, benefits programs, and employment structures

should address the nuanced needs of employees and optimize work environments to improve overall satisfaction and productivity. The findings extend beyond organizational contexts to societal implications, particularly in government institutions, where employee satisfaction can lead to improved public services and social development outcomes (Shanthikumary & Nirushika, 2020).

While existing studies provide valuable insights into the associations between the working environment and job satisfaction, further exploration of these dynamics is needed, particularly in China's higher education sector. Research by Amarasena (2019) and Herath and Wijerathna (2019) suggests a positive correlation between working conditions and job satisfaction. However, other studies indicate inconsistent results, underscoring the complexity of these relationships. Therefore, this study aims to enhance understanding of the interplay between job performance, job satisfaction, workload, and working environment, specifically focusing on university academic administrators in private higher educational institutes in China. By addressing these complexities, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights to the existing literature and inform organizational practices that can enhance employee satisfaction and performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted phenomenon that has garnered considerable scholarly attention, resulting in diverse dimensions and interpretations from various research efforts. Locke (1976) characterizes job satisfaction as a pleasant emotional state arising from the evaluation of one's work experiences. This definition emphasizes the emotional aspect of job satisfaction, suggesting that positive feelings about one's job are intricately linked to personal experiences and perceptions. Expanding on this concept, Robbins (1993) defines job satisfaction as the overall attitude an individual holds toward their job, highlighting the positivity or negativity associated with employment. This broader perspective encapsulates a range of attitudes toward specific job aspects, indicating that satisfaction is not a monolithic concept but rather a composite of various feelings and opinions.

Spector (1997) further broadens this understanding by framing job satisfaction as individuals' global sentiments regarding their work and attitudes toward various job facets. He argues that job satisfaction is not merely an emotional state but also an evaluative process that encompasses different elements of the work environment. In continuation of this line of thought, Spector (2005) describes job satisfaction as an attitudinal variable that reflects people's overall

perceptions of their employment. Lu et al. (2005) contribute to the discourse by suggesting that job satisfaction can be viewed as a global feeling toward one's job or a set of attitudes toward different job dimensions. Weiss (2002) adds another layer to this understanding by emphasizing that workplace satisfaction is fundamentally an attitude characterized by positive or negative evaluations of the employee's working conditions.

Nasrallah (2017) positions job satisfaction within the context of occupational psychology, proposing that it involves an awareness of the relationship between performance and expectations. He notes that job satisfaction manifests as an employee's overall stance toward their job, shaped by various factors such as a comfortable work environment, good supervision, and effective mentorship. Furthermore, Nasrallah (2017) describes job satisfaction as a combination of pleasant sentiments arising from one's employment and the associated institution, reinforcing the notion that work can indeed be a source of genuine pleasure. He posits that employee satisfaction encompasses emotions and attitudes influenced by factors such as opportunities for growth, organizational policies, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships.

Several factors influence employee satisfaction levels, which can be categorized into social, organizational, and individual factors (Alias et al., 2018). Jayasena and Weligamage (2016) identify key determinants of job satisfaction, including pay, promotion opportunities, supervision quality, fringe benefits, and contingent rewards. Thiagaraj and Thangaswamy (2017) connect job satisfaction to personal factors, employment conditions, and management practices, illustrating the complex interplay of various elements in shaping employee attitudes. Harem (2015) notes that job satisfaction is a vital component of an employee's overall attitudes, indicating contentment and enjoyment. A satisfied workforce is likely to exhibit loyalty, actively contributing to organizational goals, which in turn influences employee retention, productivity, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Nasserallah (2017) underscores the importance of job satisfaction in promoting health, well-being, and organizational effectiveness. Satisfied employees demonstrate greater commitment and enthusiasm, achieving success in their professional pursuits. Job satisfaction is recognized as an indicator of organizational success, reflecting the effectiveness of management decisions. Employees with higher levels of job satisfaction are more committed to their organizations and are likely to deliver superior customer service. Thus, job satisfaction is not only a

subjective experience for individuals but also a critical determinant of organizational success, impacting productivity, employee retention, and overall customer satisfaction.

The work environment is a significant factor influencing employee satisfaction and motivation, encompassing the physical workplace, rules and regulations, available resources, organizational culture, and relationships with supervisors (Heath, 2006, as cited in Shanthykumary & Nirushika, 2020). Agbozo et al. (2017) emphasize the significance of an attractive and supportive work environment, highlighting key elements such as competitive salaries, trustworthy employee-management relationships, equity, fairness, and challenging yet achievable objectives. These elements collectively contribute to high levels of job satisfaction under optimal working conditions. In the context of Chinese government sector organizations, Shanthykumary and Nirushika (2020) note a general lack of attention to employees' working conditions and job satisfaction, while similar issues are evident in private sector organizations in developing countries, often resulting in lower levels of employee satisfaction (McNall et al., 2016; Wulandari et al., 2023; Ranawaka et al., 2023).

Yusuf and Metiboba (2012) categorize the working environment into three broad categories: technical, human, and organizational environments. The technical environment encompasses physical infrastructure, equipment, and tools, while the human environment focuses on interpersonal relationships among coworkers, employers, and employees. The organizational environment pertains to issues related to organizational procedures, rules, and values, all of which significantly influence staff attitudes and behavior. Agbozo et al. (2017) further delineate the working environment into physical, psychological, and social components, with the physical environment including tangible conditions like machinery and office layout. The psychological environment relates to elements that influence employee behavior, such as emotions and attitudes, while the social environment involves working relationships, communication styles, and teamwork dynamics.

Moreover, the workload plays a crucial role in employee satisfaction and performance. Syihabudhin et al. (2019) define employee workload as the burden of work and the capacity of employees to manage tasks effectively within the demands of their roles. Workload can be categorized into quantitative and qualitative dimensions (Koesomowidjojo et al., 2017). Quantitative

workload refers to factors such as working hours and work stress, particularly when the number of tasks exceeds capacity. In contrast, qualitative workload relates to the complexity of tasks, which can challenge employees' abilities to fulfill job requirements (Omar et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2023; Sudha et al., 2023).

Organizational structure significantly impacts workload distribution and task complexity, leading to variations among employees with similar roles based on education, skills, and specialization (Sravani, 2018). Rajan (2018) highlights the relationship between employee workload and productivity, noting that while insufficient workload may breed unproductivity, excessive workload can induce stress, burnout, and diminished performance. Maintaining a balanced workload is crucial for both employee satisfaction and overall organizational effectiveness. Excessive workload can also spill over into employees' personal lives, resulting in challenges that lower overall efficiency (Syihabudhin et al., 2019). Therefore, organizations must carefully manage workloads to promote employee well-being and performance.

In conclusion, job satisfaction is influenced by a multitude of factors, including individual attitudes, working conditions, and workload, which collectively shape employee experiences. Recognizing and addressing these factors is essential for organizations seeking to enhance employee satisfaction and improve overall performance. The complex interplay between job satisfaction, organizational dynamics, and employee well-being necessitates ongoing research and practical strategies to foster environments conducive to both employee happiness and organizational success.

The theoretical literature on job satisfaction and job performance, along with associated factors such as the working environment and workload, draws on several key theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of these constructs. Central to this analysis are the Spillover Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the Job Demand-Resource Model, and the Effort-Recovery Model (E-R model). Together, these theories offer valuable frameworks for exploring the complex interplay between job performance, job satisfaction, working environment, and workload.

The Spillover Theory has gained significant attention in recent decades, particularly in the context of work-life balance. It emphasizes that work and family, while distinct aspects of life, exert considerable influence on each other (Glaveli et al., 2013). Articulated by Edwards and Rothbard (2000)

and Zedeck (1992), the theory highlights how experiences, moods, satisfaction, values, and skills in one domain can affect the other. Such spillover effects can be both beneficial and detrimental, shaping individuals' experiences in their professional and personal lives (Morris & Madsen, 2007). The interconnected nature of work and family is critical, as influences manifest in various ways, impacting individuals' moods, satisfaction levels, and the importance assigned to both spheres (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Notably, individuals often transfer values cultivated in one domain to the other, reflecting a positive correlation between satisfaction in work and family contexts (Zedeck, 1992). The theory also discusses skill transfer, where competencies developed in one sphere enhance experiences in the other (Repetti, 1987). Importantly, Spillover Theory recognizes both positive and negative effects, with positive spillover enhancing corresponding aspects of individuals' lives, while negative spillover may stem from stress or dissatisfaction affecting the other domain (Morris & Madsen, 2007). Thus, the theory provides a framework for examining the intricate relationship between work and family life, acknowledging the complexities of achieving work-life balance.

The Effort-Recovery Model, proposed by Meijman and Mulder (1998), provides insights into the interaction between work and home life. The model delineates how various aspects within each domain can impact an individual's overall well-being (Geurts et al., 2003). According to the E-R model, effort exerted at work is linked to specific stress reactions, including psychophysiological responses such as changes in mood and hormonal secretion (Mostert & Oldfield, 2009). Importantly, these stress reactions are generally reversible, allowing for recovery when sufficient time is provided (Mostert & Oldfield, 2009). A significant aspect of the E-R model is its emphasis on the quantity and quality of recovery roles in an individual's life (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). The model posits that the ability to recover from both work and non-work activities is crucial for overall well-being, suggesting that excessive effort at work may hinder recovery during non-work periods and emphasizing the need for balance between effort and recovery to maintain well-being.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, developed by Abraham Maslow, presents a framework for understanding factors contributing to job satisfaction. The theory posits a hierarchy of human needs, including physiological needs, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Basic needs must be fulfilled before addressing higher-order needs. For instance, physiological needs, such as financial

compensation, are foundational, followed by safety needs that encompass a secure work environment and appropriate policies. Once basic needs are met, individuals can focus on belongingness and esteem, seeking positive relationships and recognition. At the pinnacle is self-actualization, where individuals strive for personal and professional fulfillment. Organizations can enhance job satisfaction by addressing these needs, fostering a supportive environment, and recognizing individual contributions.

Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory categorizes job factors into Hygiene factors and Motivational factors, illuminating the elements influencing employee contentment and performance. Hygiene factors, essential for job motivation, include pay, corporate policies, job security, and working conditions. While their presence prevents dissatisfaction, they do not contribute to long-term satisfaction. Conversely, Motivational factors actively enhance job satisfaction and motivation. These factors include recognition, achievement, responsibility, and meaningful work. Herzberg emphasized that organizations must address both categories to cultivate a satisfied and motivated workforce, ensuring Hygiene factors are present while actively promoting Motivational factors to create a conducive work environment where employees thrive.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is significant in studying job performance and satisfaction, examining job demands (e.g., workload) and resources and assessing their impact on outcomes like stress and absenteeism (Bakker et al., 2005, cited in Marzi, 2018). Initially conceptualized by Karasek, the JD-R model recognizes the influence of workplace demands and control on overall well-being, extending its application to family-work balance (Higgins et al., 2014). The model posits that excessive demands can lead to strain, while resources can buffer against this strain, highlighting the intricate relationship between job demands, resources, and various outcomes.

Empirical studies have extensively documented the relationship between working conditions and job satisfaction, revealing a multifaceted interplay that significantly impacts employees' overall well-being. Nyamubi (2017) emphasized the importance of working conditions in schools, identifying key factors such as the working environment, salary, social relationships with colleagues, and promotion policies as essential determinants of job satisfaction among teachers. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2015)

explored the workplace influence on job performance among teachers in private universities in Pakistan, finding that factors like freedom, coworker relations, employer-employee relations, employee involvement, and management policies significantly affect work satisfaction. Research in the manufacturing sector corroborates these findings, with Sukdeo (2017) demonstrating a substantial relationship between working conditions and job satisfaction among workers, underscoring the necessity of creating favorable working conditions to enhance job satisfaction in industrial settings. Additionally, Bhanu and Sai Babu (2018) highlighted the impact of workplace stress and conditions on employees in the IT sector, emphasizing the need to address these factors to improve job satisfaction. However, contrasting results emerged from Andrade et al. (2019), indicating a weak relationship between work conditions and satisfaction among Malaysian civil servants, with flexible scheduling emerging as a critical determinant.

The unprecedented shift to teleworking due to the COVID-19 pandemic has garnered research interest. Karácsony (2021) found that teleworking positively influenced job satisfaction among Slovakian employees, revealing improvements in manager-subordinate relationships and overall job performance. This evolving nature of work arrangements underscores the need for organizations to adapt to new working conditions to enhance employee satisfaction and well-being. Across various countries and industries, numerous studies consistently affirm the significant impact of the working environment on job satisfaction. Kurnianto et al. (2017) conducted research in Indonesia among university educational staff and found a substantial positive correlation between the working environment and job satisfaction. Similar positive relationships were established by Sims (2019) with secondary teachers in England and McNaughtan et al. (2018) with university officials and international center managers in the USA. In Jakarta's banking industry, Kasbuntoro et al. (2020) discovered that working hours, conditions, and pressure negatively affected job satisfaction while job changes and performance programs showed positive effects.

The relationship between workload and job satisfaction also emerges as a recurring theme. Mukhtar (2012) noted that teachers face significant workload pressures adversely affecting their work-life satisfaction. Holland et al. (2019) studied nursing professionals in Australia and found a direct link between perceived workloads and an increased desire to leave work. Chaaban and Du (2017) identified heavy workload as a major factor

contributing to teachers' dissatisfaction. Conversely, Naheed et al. (2018) found a positive impact of workload on job satisfaction among employees in private banks in Pakistan. An integrated approach by Liu and Lo (2017) in Taiwan examined workload, autonomy, burnout, job satisfaction, and intention to leave among reporters, emphasizing workload's importance in shaping perceptions of job satisfaction. Collectively, these findings underscore the critical role of workload in shaping employee satisfaction, suggesting that organizations should implement effective workload management strategies to enhance overall employee well-being. Furthermore, the intricate relationship between work-life balance, job performance, and job satisfaction has garnered attention. Garg and Yajurvedi (2016) stressed the significance of a well-balanced work and personal life in contributing to high productivity. Overall, these studies underline the connections between workload, work-life balance, job performance, and job satisfaction, emphasizing the necessity for organizations to implement policies and practices that foster employee well-being and balance between professional and personal life.

In Figure 1, the independent variables, working environment, and workload, are depicted as influencing the mediating variable, job satisfaction. This reflects the idea that the conditions of the work environment and the demands of the workload directly impact the satisfaction levels of academic administrators.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

The following section presents the research hypotheses developed.

H1: There is a relationship between working environment and job performance of teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.

H2: There is a relationship between workload and job performance of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institute in China.

H3: There is a relationship between working environment and job satisfaction of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institute in China.

H4: There is a relationship between workload and job satisfaction of teachers at the Private Higher Education Institutes in China.

H5: There is a relationship between job performance and job satisfaction of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.

H6: Job satisfaction has a mediating effect of working environment on job performance of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.

H7: Job satisfaction has a mediating effect of workload on job performance of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the impact of various factors on the job satisfaction and performance of academic administrators within Chinese private higher education institutes, focusing specifically on those in Anhui Province. The target population comprises 498 academic administrators across these institutes, providing a robust foundation for the sampling process. A comprehensive sampling frame, consisting of these academic administrators, is essential for ensuring a valid representation of the larger population, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. The appropriate determination of sample size is critical, as it influences both statistical precision and practical feasibility. In this study, the researcher seeks to strike a balance between obtaining a sufficiently large sample to yield meaningful insights while remaining manageable within the constraints of available resources and time. Employing stratified random sampling allows for a diverse and representative sample of various subgroups within the academic administrator population. By stratifying based on characteristics such as academic departments or years of experience, the study enhances its capacity to draw relevant conclusions. Moreover, the sampling strategy involves selecting nine universities from different provinces, prioritizing institutions with the highest number of academic administrators in instances where multiple universities exist within a province. This proportional stratified random sampling design guarantees that each selected sample accurately reflects the percentage representation of all academic administrators across the chosen institutions.

To address the diversity within administrative roles, five distinct grades of academic administrators are identified: Assistant Registrars/Bursars, Senior Assistant Registrars/Bursars, Deputy Registrars/Bursars, Registrars/Bursars, and Others. This categorization ensures representation from each category, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of academic administrators in the Chinese private

higher education context. The sample size determination utilized the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, recommending a size of 217 based on the total population of 498 academic administrators. To enhance the study's robustness and account for potential non-responses, the researcher aimed for a larger sample of 300 participants, guided by an anticipated response rate of 72.5% derived from similar studies. Questionnaire distribution across the nine selected universities was proportional to the number of academic administrators in each institution, ensuring accurate reflection of diversity within the academic administration population.

Instrument development is a vital phase in the research process, involving the creation of tools that yield high-quality and reliable data (Azam et al., 2021; Azam et al., 2023). This study employs structured questionnaires as the primary research instrument, comprising 50 closed-ended questions and eight demographic questions. Closed-ended questions assess key constructs such as job performance, job satisfaction, working environment, and workload, while demographic questions facilitate post-hoc analysis. Scaling plays an essential role in quantifying and analyzing the study's variables, with established scales utilized to measure these constructs. Adjustments were made to these scales to ensure appropriateness within the Chinese context. A pretest was conducted to refine the questionnaire, gathering feedback from superiors, subordinates, and peers. Modifications included wording adjustments, category additions, and consolidation of repetitive items, thereby improving clarity and minimizing measurement errors. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, aiming for high internal consistency across variables, while validity was established through content, criterion, and construct validity (Raziqa & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Fischer, Bulger & Smith, 2009; Hayman, 2005). Data collection was conducted via structured questionnaires administered in both hard copy and electronic formats. Ethical compliance was ensured through prior permission obtained from each university, and the decision not to translate questionnaires into other languages assumed respondents' proficiency in English. This dual approach to data collection aimed to facilitate higher response rates and enrich the dataset, accurately reflecting the experiences and perceptions of academic administrators in the context of Chinese private higher education institutes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents participating in the survey are crucial for understanding the context of this study. A total of 233 respondents provided insights into their

backgrounds, including university affiliation, designation, highest qualification, age, gender, years of service at the executive level, marital status, and parental status. The sample comprised academic administrators from various institutions, with Anhui Finance & Trade Vocational College and the University of Anhui Province representing the highest percentages of respondents at 14.6% and 18.0%, respectively. Conversely, Anhui Agriculture University had the lowest representation at 5.6%. This distribution indicates a balanced representation across the different universities in the sample. Regarding designation, most respondents held positions as Assistant Registrars/Bursars, which is the entry-level category in the university academic administrative service in China. Specifically, Assistant Registrars/Bursars constituted 36.9% of the sample, while Senior Assistant Registrars/Bursars accounted for 33.0%. This finding underscores the prevalence of junior and middle executive roles in university administration, reflecting the hierarchical nature of career advancement within this context.

The educational qualifications of the respondents revealed that 61.8% held a master's degree, while 37.3% had a bachelor's degree, indicating that most academic administrators possess the requisite qualifications for their roles. Notably, there were no respondents with doctoral degrees, emphasizing the rarity of such qualifications for positions within private universities in China. Age distribution revealed a predominance of middle-aged employees, with the largest age group (39.1%) falling within the 40-49 age range, while younger respondents (20-29 years) comprised only 10.3% of the sample. Gender distribution showed a slight majority of female respondents at 56.2%, consistent with the overall demographic of university administrative staff in China, where females comprise approximately 62% of such positions. Furthermore, the years of service at the executive level indicated that a significant portion of respondents (23.2%) had 15-19 years of service, suggesting a retention of employees within these roles despite limited upward mobility. Marital status data indicated that 89.3% of respondents were married, with a substantial majority (73.8%) having children, reflecting societal norms in this demographic. Overall, the demographic data provides a comprehensive understanding of the academic administrators' profiles within Chinese private higher education institutions.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a robust statistical technique that has become a standard method for testing complex relationships among multiple variables, particularly in social sciences, psychology, and behavioral research. SEM allows

researchers to investigate intricate relationships involving multiple dependent and independent variables, facilitating the assessment of both direct and indirect effects within a hypothesized model. In this study, SEM was employed to rigorously evaluate the research objectives and hypotheses outlined in the conceptual framework, which posits various relationships among constructs such as working environment, workload, job satisfaction, and job performance. Following a two-stage approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the first stage involved developing the measurement model through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which tests whether the data fits a hypothesized model grounded in theory or prior research. The initial CFA aimed to validate constructs by testing the fit of the hypothesized measurement model against the observed data, utilizing fit indices such as the normed chi-square (χ^2/df), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). In the initial measurement model for the working environment, fit indices indicated a poor overall fit. Although the normed chi-square and RMSEA scores were within acceptable ranges, the CFI value fell short of the recommended threshold. To address this, the model was revised by allowing correlations between certain error terms based on the modification indices provided by AMOS, ultimately improving the CFI value and leading to a valid and reliable measurement model for the study's constructs. Besides that, the initial measurement model was developed with the combination of 18 items related to the results of CFA models of variables. Some of the fit indices of the initial model

are poorly fit. Normed Chi-Square is acceptable as the score is below the desired level of 5.0. But the CFI and RMSEA scores are below the recommended level of 0.08 and 0.9 respectively.

The final measurement model demonstrated improved normed Chi-Square and RMSEA values, aligning with the recommended thresholds. However, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) remained slightly below 0.90, indicating a lack of reasonable fit for the hypothesized model (see Figure 2). Despite this shortcoming, the model should be accepted and verified, as goodness-of-fit indices provide statistical evidence only (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). It is crucial to consider theoretical and methodological justifications in social studies before dismissing a model based solely on statistical criteria. A widely recognized guideline for assessing model fit suggests that the normed Chi-Square should be less than 5, the CFI should exceed 0.90, and the RMSEA should have a threshold of 0.08 or lower. Importantly, researchers should not overly emphasize Chi-Square values, especially when sample sizes are 50 or more; a Chi-Square/df ratio of around 3 or less is typically acceptable. Furthermore, minor deviations from ideal CFI and RMSEA values should not be overly criticized. Instead, theoretical coherence and logical backing for the hypothesized relationships should be prioritized, as these fit indices serve primarily as statistical indicators, which may seem impractical in social science research (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Jacobucci, 2010).

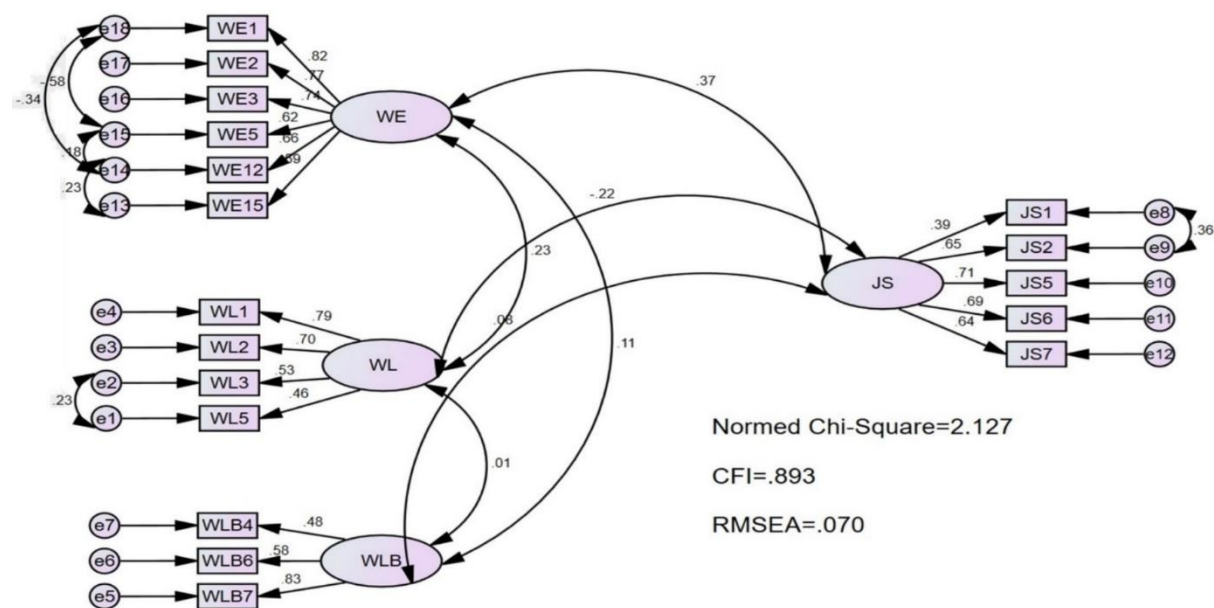


Figure 2: Final Measurement Model - Overall

The final measurement model was evaluated for goodness of fit using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) before transitioning into a full structural model to investigate causal relationships among the latent constructs and test the proposed hypotheses. While the normed Chi-Square and RMSEA values met the recommended thresholds, the CFI value was below the acceptable level of 0.90, suggesting that the structural model required respecification for improved data fit. An analysis of the modification indices indicated that the covariance of error terms

could not be adjusted, as these terms were associated with different constructs. Therefore, the final structural model was accepted, despite some indices remaining suboptimal. Goodness-of-fit indices are primarily statistical indicators (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010), and theoretical and methodological considerations must also inform the acceptance of models. Figure 3 shows that the initial model sufficiently fits the data, indicating no need for further modifications.

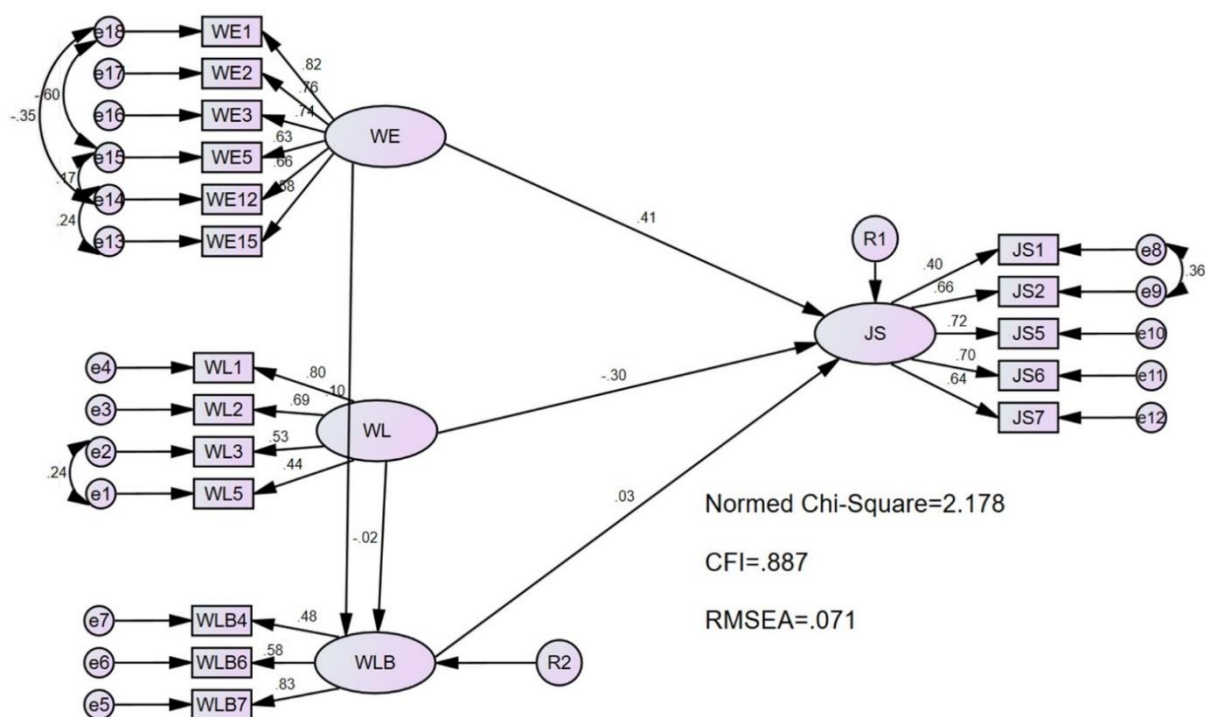


Figure 3: Final Structural model

The final scores of Normed Chi-Square and the RMSEA are 2.178 and 0.071 respectively. The RMSEA and Normed Chi-Square are at the recommended value of less than 0.08 and less than 3 respectively. However, the CFI score is slightly less than 0.9. Anyhow this model shall be accepted and verified since goodness of fit indices provides statistical evidence only (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Bryne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). Further there are theoretical and methodological justification in social studies needs to be considering before declining a model Hence it is not recommended to solely depend on the statistical justification (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Bryne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010)

In social science research theses fit indices are only statistical fitness and theses fit indices seemed impractical or seems unrealistic (Bentler & chow, 1987; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Jacobucci, 2010)

Figure 3 and Table shows the goodness of fit indices and describes that the data of initial model fitted in the model and these variables adequately represent and measure the constructs of the overall measurement model. Therefore, this model is considered as the final best fitted model.

Therefore the 18 items in the final structural model adequately fit with the data, emphasizing that all the items made a comparable contribution to the operationalization of each construct. The composite reliability measure for the final structural model was above the acceptable level of 0.6. However, the average variance extracted of the final structural model constructs were less than the acceptable level of 0.5. But this can be accepted as according to Fornell and Larcker (1981) if AVE is less than 0.5, but composite reliability is higher than 0.6, the convergent validity of the construct is still adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The final structural

model in this study was rigorously tested for its goodness of fit using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) before being transformed into a full structural model designed to test the hypotheses concerning the causal relationships among the latent constructs. The process of validating the structural model is crucial in ensuring that it accurately reflects the underlying conceptual framework of the study and provides a reliable basis for hypothesis testing.

The developed hypotheses are addressed in this section. The study's final model, which was created by the final structural model, was used to test the hypotheses.

The regression weights of the maximum likelihood provide the significance of hypotheses at the 95%

confidence level. The significance of the direct and indirect effects between the variables were also identified.

The direct effects explained the direct relationships of the variables. It showed that the direct relationship between working environment and job satisfaction and workload & job satisfaction are significant. The results further showed that the direct effects between working environment & job satisfaction, workload & job performance and job satisfaction & job satisfaction are not significant.

The indirect effects explained mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between working environment & job satisfaction and workload & job satisfaction. According to the results all indirect effects are not significant.

Table 1: Direct effects between the constructs as per the structural model

	Direct Effect	Significance (5% level)	Significance
Working Environment to Job satisfaction	0.104	0.188	Not Significant
Workload to Job satisfaction	(0.015)	0.861	Not Significant
Working environment to Job Satisfaction	0.407	0.000	Significant
Workload to Job Satisfaction	(0.3)	0.004	Significant
Job satisfaction to Job Satisfaction	0.032	0.681	Not Significant

Table 2: In direct effects between the constructs as per the structural model

	Indirect Effect	Significance (5% level)	Significance
WE - WLB - JS	0.030	0.628	Not Significant
WL - WLB - JS	0.001	0.967	Not Significant

According to the final structural model the hypotheses developed as per the conceptual framework discussed.

Table 3: Results of the hypotheses testing.

Hypothesis	Significance	Correlation	Findings
H1: There is a relationship between working environment and job performance of teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.	Significant	Weak positive correlation	Supported
H2: There is a relationship between workload and job performance of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institute in China.	Significant	Negative correlation	Supported
H3: There is a relationship between working environment and job satisfaction of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institute in China.	Not Significant	Weak positive correlation	Not Supported
H4: There is a relationship between workload and job satisfaction of teachers at the Private Higher Education Institutes in China.	Not Significant	Negative Correlation	Not Supported
H5: There is a relationship between job performance and job satisfaction of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.	Not Significant	Weak Positive correlation	Not Supported
H6: Job satisfaction has a mediating effect of working environment on job performance of the	Not Significant	Weak Positive correlation	Not Supported

teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.			
H7: Job satisfaction has a mediating effect of workload on job performance of the teachers at Private Higher Education Institutes in China.	Not Significant	Weak Positive correlation	Not Supported

Table 3 indicates a significant positive relationship between the working environment and job satisfaction among teachers at Higher Educational Institutes in China, thereby supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1). Additionally, Hypothesis 2 (H2) is confirmed, as the data reveal a significant negative relationship between the workload of academic administrators and their job satisfaction. However, Hypotheses 3 (H3) and 4 (H4) are not supported, as there is no significant relationship found between working environment and job satisfaction, nor between workload and job satisfaction among teachers in these institutions. Furthermore, Hypothesis 5 (H5) is not supported by the data, indicating that job satisfaction does not significantly relate to the job performance of academic administrators in Higher Educational Institutes in China. Lastly, Hypotheses 6 (H6) and 7 (H7), which examine the mediating effects of job satisfaction, are also not supported, as job satisfaction does not mediate the relationships between working environment and job performance or between workload and job satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A favourable working environment and manageable workload are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction among teachers in higher education institutions in China. This positive correlation emphasizes the need for these institutions to implement various strategies aimed at improving job satisfaction, which, in turn, can enhance their competitiveness within the academic sector. Recent research findings provide valuable insights and recommendations that address issues surrounding teacher job satisfaction, making it essential for educational leaders to consider these implications in their operational and strategic planning.

One primary recommendation is that the authorities of private higher education institutions should prioritize the improvement of the working environment for teachers. A supportive and conducive atmosphere is vital for fostering job satisfaction, motivating educators, and driving institutional performance. By creating an environment that addresses teachers' professional and personal needs, institutions can enhance job satisfaction and elevate overall organizational effectiveness. This aligns with existing literature that suggests a significant influence of the work environment on employee morale and productivity,

which ultimately impacts the institution's success (Bryne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010).

Moreover, allocating adequate funding to improve the physical working environment is critical for enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. Research indicates that the physical workspace directly affects job performance, suggesting that institutions should invest in upgrading facilities and resources to create a comfortable and productive environment for educators. Such investments not only demonstrate a commitment to staff well-being but also assist in attracting and retaining talented educators. Improved facilities can foster collaboration and creativity among faculty members, further enhancing their satisfaction and engagement (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Jacobucci, 2010).

In addition to physical improvements, it is essential to create a supportive environment for interactions among staff. Higher education institutions must actively address relationship issues among officers, their superiors, peers, and subordinates. Effective conflict resolution and the promotion of positive working relationships contribute to a harmonious work atmosphere, enhancing job satisfaction and overall organizational performance. Institutions can facilitate this by implementing team-building activities, mentorship programs, and open communication channels that encourage collaboration and camaraderie among staff members.

Furthermore, organizing programs focused on safety, occupational stress, well-being, and workload prioritization is crucial. These programs can equip staff with strategies to manage their workload and cope with stress, ultimately improving their working conditions and job satisfaction. By providing resources and support for stress management and task prioritization, institutions can help staff maintain a healthy work-life balance, particularly in the high-pressure environment of higher education, where workloads can often become overwhelming (Hair et al., 2010).

Equitable workload distribution among administrative officers is another critical area that institutions should address. Ensuring that workloads are evenly assigned among officers at the same level and reducing the burden on junior staff compared to their senior counterparts can significantly motivate

staff engagement and productivity. This equitable distribution promotes fairness, reduces resentment, and fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to the institution's mission (Byrne, 2010).

Additionally, developing policies for rotating academic administrative staff across different divisions can prevent stagnation and facilitate even workload distribution. Rotation policies enhance job satisfaction by providing employees with varied experiences and preventing burnout. This approach allows staff to develop new skills and perspectives, fostering a dynamic and engaged workforce. Moreover, such policies can mitigate the challenges associated with role monotony and the psychological effects of long-term assignments to a single division.

Creating a calendar with appropriate gaps between significant annual events is also a recommended strategy. Overloading administrative officers with continuous tasks can lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased stress. By strategically scheduling events and allowing time between major tasks, institutions can prevent overload and ensure a more manageable workload. This careful planning enables educators to better allocate their time and resources, ultimately enhancing their job satisfaction and performance.

The implications of this study are significant for both academic administrators and policymakers. The findings underscore the importance of addressing workload and working environment issues to foster greater job satisfaction among teachers in higher education institutions. As institutions strive for efficiency, conflicts may arise between the demands of academic performance and staff well-being, making initiatives to enhance the working environment and manage workloads essential for building job satisfaction among educators (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Jacobucci, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings extend to policymakers and regulators, emphasizing the need for private universities, relevant ministries, and university grants commissions to implement policies related to teacher job satisfaction. Policies ensuring transparent transfer procedures, timely job rotations, flexible working hours, and manageable workloads are crucial for enhancing teachers' productivity and job satisfaction. Additionally, universities should establish policies recognizing the needs of academic staff for job satisfaction, such as flexibility in working arrangements and resources to support their work.

In conclusion, improving job satisfaction in higher education institutions requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes working environment enhancement, workload management, and support through various programs and policies. By implementing these recommendations, institutions can improve staff retention, elevate job performance, and ultimately drive better organizational outcomes, positioning themselves as leaders in the higher education sector.

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