



Faculty of Economics and Business

**The Influence of Talent Management on Employee Performance
through Job Engagement in Universities in Jinan**

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The Influence of Talent Management on Employee Performance
through Job Engagement in Universities in Jinan

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

University counselors' role are important in the education support system, and thus prioritizing and optimizing counselors' talent management are seen as the key link to ensuring better learning and support for students. This study investigates the intricate relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance of university counselors across multiple universities in Jinan, Shandong Province, China. The sample comprises 181 counselors from various universities in the region. Employing a quantitative research methodology, the findings reveal that talent management significantly enhances job engagement and employee performance. Additionally, job engagement positively influences employee performance. Furthermore, job engagement partially mediates the relationship between talent management and employee performance. By thoroughly analyzing these interconnected variables, this research aims to offer valuable insights into the dynamics of talent management strategies and their effects on job engagement and employee performance within the specific context of Jinan. The study enhances understanding of how effective talent management boosts job engagement and employee performance in the local academic context.

Keywords: Talent management, job engagement, employee performance

Pengaruh Pengurusan Bakat Terhadap Prestasi Pekerja Melalui Penglibatan Kerja di Universiti di Jinan

ABSTRAK

Peranan kaunselor universiti adalah sangat penting dalam sistem sokongan pendidikan, dan oleh itu, keutamaan dan pengoptimuman pengurusan bakat kaunselor dianggap sebagai faktor utama untuk memastikan pembelajaran dan sokongan yang lebih baik untuk pelajar. Pengajian ini mengkaji hubungan kompleks antara pengurusan bakat, penglibatan kerja, dan prestasi pekerja dalam kalangan kaunselor universiti di beberapa universiti di Jinan, Wilayah Shandong, China. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada 181 kaunselor dari pelbagai universiti di kawasan tersebut. Menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kuantitatif, hasil kajian menunjukkan pengurusan bakat meningkatkan penglibatan kerja dan prestasi pekerja dengan ketara. Selain itu, penglibatan kerja mempunyai kesan positif terhadap prestasi pekerja. Tambahan pula, penglibatan kerja bertindak sebagai pengantara separa dalam hubungan antara pengurusan bakat dan prestasi pekerja. Dengan menganalisis pembolehubah yang saling berkaitan ini secara mendalam, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pandangan berharga tentang dinamik strategi pengurusan bakat dan kesannya terhadap penglibatan kerja dan prestasi pekerja dalam konteks Jinan. Kajian ini meningkatkan pemahaman tentang cara pengurusan bakat yang berkesan meningkatkan penglibatan kerja dan prestasi pekerja dalam konteks akademik tempatan.

Kata kunci: *Pengurusan bakat, penglibatan kerja, prestasi pekerja*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TM	Talent Management
JE	Job Engagement
EP	Employee Performance
HRM	Human Resource Management
SET	Social Exchange Theory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly introduces the background of the research, introduces the research and development trends of talent management, job engagement, and employee performance in recent years. It provides a detailed problem statement for the current related research. In addition, this chapter proposes research subjects and research questions to make meaningful contributions to relevant research subjects and industries in further research. The scope of the research will also be mentioned in this chapter, and definitions of the main research variables will also be provided. The main purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance of university counselors.

1.2 Research Background

In China, university counselors are a crucial part of the education support system, and their job responsibilities cover multiple aspects. Firstly, they are responsible for providing psychological counseling and counseling services to college students, helping them solve academic, life, and emotional problems (Zhou & Chen, 2022). In addition, university counselors also undertake guidance for student development and growth, helping them plan their future career paths and life goals (Lin, 2020). In terms of campus management, they were also involved in the management and guidance of student affairs, contributing to the promotion of harmony and stability across the campus (Zhou & Chen, 2022).

Becoming a university counselor usually requires a relevant background in psychology or education, and obtaining relevant certificates through relevant qualifications or training (Lin, 2020). In some universities, personnel serving as counselors may also need to have certain work experience and professional skills to ensure they are competent in this important position (Chen & Yue, 2020). These experiences often include prior involvement in student affairs, mental health support, or academic advising, while the required professional skills may encompass communication, crisis intervention, career guidance, and organizational management (Zhang & Chen, 2022). Such qualifications enable counselors to effectively support students' academic, emotional, and social development, thereby contributing to overall institutional effectiveness and student success (Wei, 2020).

Counselors play an important role in universities, not only focusing on students' academic performance, but also on their personal growth and development (Li, 2023). By providing various support and services, counselors can help improve the overall quality and comprehensive abilities of students, promote their growth and success (Chen & Yue, 2020). Studying university counselors helps to understand the key roles in the field of education and their impact on student development. Understanding the work environment and performance factors of university counselors can help formulate more effective education policies, improve employee performance, and promote higher education management and talent development.

In this regard, the present study focuses on three key constructs: talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. Talent management refers to the development and implementation of a series of strategies and practices by universities aimed at effectively attracting, cultivating, and retaining outstanding talents to promote the long-

term success of the institution (Akter et al., 2022). Job engagement represents the degree of active involvement and concentration demonstrated by university employees in their daily work, encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Ahmed et al., 2020). Employee performance refers to the actual work results achieved by university staff in areas such as teaching, research, and administrative duties, as well as their contribution to the broader institutional goals (Darmawan et al., 2020). However, limited empirical research has explored how these three constructs interact within the specific context of university counselors. This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of talent management on employee performance and investigating the mediating role of job engagement in this relationship.

In this regard, the present study focuses on three key constructs: talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. Talent management refers to a strategic approach to recruiting, developing, retaining, and utilizing individuals with high potential to meet organizational goals. It includes practices such as training, performance appraisal, career development, and succession planning. Job engagement reflects an employee's emotional and cognitive commitment to their work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Employee performance encompasses the extent to which individuals effectively fulfill their job duties and contribute to organizational success. However, there is a lack of empirical research exploring the interplay among these constructs within the context of university counselors. This study addresses this gap by investigating how talent management influences employee performance and the mediating role of job engagement in this relationship.

In the context of China's rapidly changing higher education environment, university counselors are confronted with multiple complex challenges that significantly affect their professional roles and responsibilities. Rising student expectations for individualized academic guidance, psychological support, and career planning require counselors to provide increasingly tailored and diversified services (Zhang & Chen, 2022). Moreover, the integration of advanced technologies in educational management and student affairs demands that counselors continuously update their digital competencies to effectively communicate with and support students (Li, 2023). Intensified institutional competition pressures universities to improve overall student satisfaction and retention rates, thereby placing additional demands on counselors to contribute to institutional performance and student development outcomes (Chen & Yue, 2020). In addition, limited staffing and growing student populations exacerbate counselors' workloads, often leading to high levels of stress and reduced capacity to address students' needs comprehensively (Wei, 2020). These interconnected challenges underscore the critical role of counselors in supporting students' holistic development while navigating the demands of a competitive and dynamic academic environment.

In terms of teaching staff, many universities prioritize faculty members' research productivity and teaching competencies, often underestimating or overlooking the role of counselors in educational development (Zhang & Liu, 2022). This neglect is partly due to the perception that counselors mainly handle administrative or routine student affairs rather than contributing directly to academic outcomes (Chen et al., 2021). As a result, their work is frequently undervalued in institutional performance assessments and policy planning, despite their essential contributions to student engagement, psychological well-being, and campus stability.

According to data released by the Jinan Municipal Government Press Office, there are currently 77 vocational colleges in the city, enrolling approximately 324,000 students (Zhang, 2022). The Jinan Municipal Education Bureau (2024) reports that these institutions collectively employ around 3,900 full-time counselors (class teachers). Based on the guideline issued by the Ministry of Education of China, which recommends one full-time counselor for every 200 students (Bulletin of the State Council, 2017), the current staffing level generally meets the basic requirement. However, despite meeting the quantitative standard, counselors still face considerable work pressure in practice (Zhang & Liu, 2022). This is primarily because, in addition to managing students' daily affairs, counselors are also responsible for ideological and political education, psychological counseling, career guidance, and crisis intervention (Chen & Yue, 2020). Given the large student population and increasing demands for personalized educational support, the current counselor workforce remains overburdened (Chen et al., 2024). Challenges such as heavy workload, limited professional development opportunities, and insufficient incentive mechanisms continue to hinder their effectiveness in fulfilling educational and developmental responsibilities.

However, university counselors currently face a number of issues and challenges that may compromise their work effectiveness and performance. One critical concern is the increasing prevalence and complexity of mental health issues among university students (Sheldon et al., 2021). As higher education institutions witness rising rates of anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders, counselors are increasingly tasked with providing not only academic and career guidance but also professional psychological support and crisis intervention (Chen & Yue, 2020). These responsibilities demand advanced knowledge in mental health, emotional resilience, and immediate responsiveness, thereby

intensifying the cognitive and emotional demands of their role (Gan & Zhang, 2022). In such a high-pressure environment, a counselor's ability to perform effectively becomes central to student well-being and institutional stability. As a result, it is imperative to systematically examine the job performance of counselors to ensure they are adequately equipped and supported to meet these evolving mental health challenges. Without such evaluation, the quality of student support may decline, potentially leading to broader negative impacts on student retention, campus safety, and overall institutional reputation.

Although vocational college counselors in China shoulder increasingly complex responsibilities, their professional development remains insufficient. Many institutions have not incorporated counselor training into overall faculty development plans, and lack systematic mechanisms such as regular training, practical rotations, and long-term career development strategies (Ren & Guo, 2023). Existing training programs are often outdated, narrowly focused on routine student management, and delivered using traditional, passive teaching methods that fail to meet current educational needs (Liu & Shu, 2023; Yang, 2023). Additionally, limited emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary knowledge in areas such as psychology, sociology, and philosophy, which constrains counselors' capacity to provide effective ideological and developmental support to students (Ma, 2024).

In addition, some universities may lack effective counselor evaluation and management mechanisms, resulting in some counselors not receiving appropriate support and motivation, which affects their work efficiency (Zhou & Chen, 2022). Ma (2024) highlighted persistent deficiencies in the construction of comprehensive career development systems for counselors, noting that mechanisms related to recruitment, incentives, performance appraisal, and promotion often fail to function as intended.

Similarly, Li et al. (2024) reported that the incentive and professional training systems for counselors in higher vocational institutions remain underdeveloped, limiting their capacity for continuous improvement. These structural inadequacies not only hinder the optimal deployment of counseling talent but may also negatively influence counselors' engagement, job satisfaction, and long-term performance within blended teaching environments (Achmada & Soetjipto, 2022).

In response to the issue of talent management for university counselors, universities need to strengthen training and development support for counselors, improve their professional level and work ability (Chen et al., 2021). At the same time, establishing a sound evaluation and incentive mechanism for counselors, stimulating their work motivation and enthusiasm, can help improve the work efficiency of counselors (Zhou & Chen, 2022). The most important thing is that universities need to fully recognize the importance of university counselors in the education support system, and prioritize and optimize talent management as a key link to ensure better learning and life support for students (Chen & Yue, 2020).

1.3 Research Gap

Research on talent management, job engagement, and employee performance presents conflicting findings, indicating the need for further investigation. While some studies support the positive impact of talent management on job engagement and performance (Kadiri & Jimoh, 2021; Kamel, 2019; Li & Jia, 2021), others show different conclusions (O'Connor et al., 2019). Similarly, research on the relationship between job engagement and performance yields mixed results (Al-Hussaini et al., 2019; El Masri & Suliman, 2019; Achmada & Soetjipto, 2022). Additionally, discrepancies exist regarding

the mediating role of job engagement between talent management practices and performance (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Pasaribu et al., 2021). Therefore, further research is needed to clarify these relationships and guide practice.

Although previous research has highlighted the general importance of talent management in improving organizational outcomes (Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Pasaribu, Absah, & Sinulingga, 2021), limited empirical studies have examined how specific dimensions such as talent attraction, retention, career management, and learning and development contribute to job engagement and employee performance in the context of higher education. Many existing studies treat talent management as a single, undifferentiated construct (Salimi & Chandrasekar, 2023; Sopiah et al., 2020), making it difficult to understand the distinct effects of each component. Similarly, while prior research has emphasized the significance of job engagement in enhancing employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Jung et al., 2021; Ozyilmaz, 2020), few studies have explored how its specific dimensions such as physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement individually influence performance outcomes in higher education settings. Most existing studies conceptualize job engagement as a global construct (Aman, Rafiq & Dastane, 2023; Noercahyo et al., 2021), overlooking the potential differential impacts of its components. In addition, the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance remains underexplored, particularly among university counselors whose responsibilities span student support, academic services, and institutional operations. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how different dimensions of talent management affect employee performance and by examining whether job engagement, in its physical, emotional, and cognitive forms, mediates this relationship within the specific context of university counselors.

1.4 Problem Statement

The work of a counselor is directly related to the development and stability of universities and the healthy growth of students. However, currently, universities in China face significant challenges in managing counselor talent. Universities need to attract and retain excellent counselor talents, but they face problems such as poor recruitment channels and fierce competition in talent recruitment and training (Gan & Zhang, 2022). In addition, counselors need to have effective communication with students, faculty, and management to understand their needs and provide support and guidance. However, there may be issues with poor information transmission, insufficient communication channels, and low participation, which may affect the work efficiency and service quality of counselors (Jia, 2021). If these performance-related issues persist, they could lead to decreased student satisfaction, increased psychological distress among students, and lower retention rates of counseling staff.

This study is grounded in Human Resource Management (HRM) theory, which emphasizes the strategic role of talent acquisition, development, and performance evaluation in achieving organizational goals. Additionally, Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a complementary perspective by suggesting that when counselors perceive fair treatment, organizational support, and reciprocal trust, they are more likely to demonstrate higher commitment and performance. These theoretical foundations offer a structured lens through which to examine the relationship between counselor management practices, job engagement and their job performance in the context of Chinese universities.

It is understood that current university counselors face significant work pressure, and they need to simultaneously deal with students' personal issues, emotional distress, and

academic pressure, which may have an impact on their mental health (Deng, 2020). a national survey by Mantra Health (2021) found that 93% of college mental health counselors reported experiencing burnout, and over 65% indicated increased workloads and extended hours compared to the previous academic year. Additionally, research of Liang and Yin (2025) highlights that repetitive tasks and high workloads contribute to elevated levels of occupational burnout among counselors, which in turn reduces their enthusiasm and depletes psychological resources. Universities need to pay attention to the workload of counselors, provide relevant support and resources to ensure their work performance and mental health (Jia, 2021). These findings suggest that unmanaged work-related stress can negatively impact counselors' job engagement and overall job performance. From a HRM and SET perspective, a failure to implement adequate support systems, incentive mechanisms, and professional development pathways may hinder the retention and productivity of counseling professionals. Therefore, effective talent management strategies are essential not only to safeguard counselors' mental health but also to enhance their engagement and performance outcomes within the higher education sector.

In terms of reward mechanisms, most universities currently have an incomplete evaluation system, which cannot comprehensively and objectively evaluate the work performance of counselors. There is a lack of effective incentive mechanisms, resulting in low work enthusiasm and investment of counselors (Gan & Zhang, 2022). For instance, in vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, counselor training is primarily evaluated based on participation in skill-based courses and ideological development, which do not accurately reflect real training outcomes or improvements in job performance (Yang, 2023). Moreover, the absence of effective incentive structures such as performance-based recognition, career advancement, and professional development weakens counselors' work engagement (Liu &

Shu, 2023). Without clear links between training, evaluation, and rewards, counselors may lack motivation, leading to reduced job satisfaction and lower service quality. These issues underscore the need to improve talent management strategies to build a more committed and high-performing counseling workforce in universities.

It is crucial to conduct reasonable talent management research on university counselors. University counselors play an important role in the mental health and personal development of students. Talent management refers to a strategic and systematic approach to attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining skilled and high-potential employees in alignment with organizational goals (Akter et al., 2022). Through talent management research, it can be ensured that counselors have sufficient professional abilities and skills to effectively support students' mental health and emotional stability, thereby promoting their academic success (Li, 2023). In addition, the quality of counselors directly affects the reputation and competitiveness of universities. By conducting research on talent management, universities can develop effective recruitment, training, and retention strategies, attract and retain excellent counselors, and enhance their competitiveness and performance (Chen & Yue, 2020).

The field of higher education is facing a range of evolving challenges, including a notable rise in student mental health concerns. Recent studies indicate that mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and academic burnout have become increasingly prevalent among university students, particularly in the post-pandemic era (Akram, Bhutto & Chughtai, 2022; Farfán-Latorre et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2024). In response to these dynamic challenges, talent management research becomes essential in enabling institutions to continuously update the training and development strategies for university counselors,

ensuring that they are adequately equipped to address students' changing psychological and academic needs (Jia, 2021). Effective talent management refers to the strategic process of attracting, developing, and retaining key personnel. It can support universities in allocating human and financial resources more efficiently and in enhancing the overall quality and responsiveness of counseling services (Gan & Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, talent management research enables institutions to identify best practices for optimizing counselor performance and promoting long-term organizational effectiveness.

More importantly, the participation and performance of counselors are critical to the success of student development and institutional stability. Talent management refers to a strategic and systematic approach to attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining skilled and high-potential employees in alignment with organizational goals (Akter et al., 2022), plays a fundamental role in ensuring that university counselors possess the necessary competencies and motivation to perform effectively. Through talent management research, universities can better understand the career aspirations and developmental needs of counselors and provide targeted training and career progression opportunities. This, in turn, promotes job engagement, which refers to the level of emotional and cognitive commitment employees invest in their work, including vigor, dedication, and absorption (Ahmed et al., 2020). Increased job engagement is strongly associated with improved job performance, typically defined as the extent to which employees effectively fulfill their job responsibilities and contribute to organizational goals (Darmawan et al., 2020). Therefore, by strategically managing talent, universities can enhance counselor engagement and ultimately improve their job performance, leading to better support for students and stronger institutional outcomes (Abdullahi et al., 2022; Khairina & Games, 2022; Sopiah et al., 2020; Wickramaaratchi & Perera, 2020).

There are also practical problems in the talent management, job engagement, and employee performance development of current university counselors. Firstly, talent management has not developed personalized training plans based on the specific needs and career development goals of counselors, making it difficult for counselors to improve their professional skills and qualities (Long, 2024). The narrow promotion channels also deprive counselors of opportunities for upward development (Dai, 2020). Secondly, due to the long-term exposure of counselors to high-intensity and high-pressure work environments, coupled with a lack of effective motivation and support, job burnout may be more common (Ho, 2021). Fatigue can directly weaken the work engagement of counselors, reduce their enthusiasm and work motivation. Finally, counselors may have invested a lot of time and energy in dealing with student issues, but due to the shortcomings of the job performance evaluation mechanism, their efforts have not been fully recognized, resulting in the phenomenon of "high investment, low return" (Zhuang & Xiong, 2020).

Although there have been many studies on the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, different research results make further research more necessary. The study by Kadiri and Jimoh (2021) confirms that talent management has a positive impact on job engagement. The study by Li and Jia (2021) also confirms this conclusion. Kamel's (2019) study also reached a consistent conclusion. However, O'Connor and Crowley Henry's (2019) study found that in the process of talent management, if employees feel unfair treatment, it is possible to reduce job engagement. The study by Jung, Jung and Yoon (2021) also mentioned that employees without high levels of job engagement, enthusiasm, and focus tend to have higher turnover intentions. Further high turnover rates will have a negative impact on talent management (Guzeller & Celiker, 2020). These conflicting research findings demonstrate the importance of further

research on the relationship between talent management and job engagement.

There is a close relationship between talent management and employee performance, and many studies have confirmed that talent management has a positive impact on employee performance (Al-Hussaini et al., 2019; El Masri & Suliman, 2019; Sopia et al., 2020; Wickramaarachchi & Perera, 2020). However, there have also been studies that have yielded different conclusions. Al Aina and Atan (2020) found that talent attraction and retention have no impact on sustainable organizational performance in different dimensions of talent management, while learning and development as well as career management have been found to have significant positive effects. Achmada & Soetjipto (2022) also found that talent management does not directly impact employee performance. Further research on the direct impact of talent management on job performance is necessary.

The research on the relationship between job engagement and employee performance has also received industry attention. Fidyah and Setiawati's (2020) study confirmed the positive impact of job engagement on job performance. Perangin Angin et al. (2020) also found a positive impact of job engagement on employee performance. The study by Ngwenya and Pelser (2020) and Kim et al. (2019) also supports this conclusion. However, the conclusions of some studies are inconsistent. The study by Noercahyo, Maarif and Sumertajaya (2021) showed that although job engagement has a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction, it does not significantly affect organizational performance. Not only that, they also found that organizational engagement does not have a significant impact on organizational performance. Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) also found that job engagement has no direct positive or significant impact on employee performance. This indicates that the relationship between job engagement and employee

performance may have different outcomes under different research backgrounds.

Abdullahi et al. (2022) found that job engagement does not play a mediating role between talent management practices and employee performance. Talent management practices exhibit a positive yet statistically insignificant impact on employee performance when mediated by job engagement (Khairina & Games, 2022). However, Pasaribu et al. (2021) found that job engagement plays a mediating role between talent management practices and employee performance. Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) similarly discovered that talent management does not exert a direct influence on employee performance but rather operates indirectly through the mediation of job engagement. The inconsistent research findings indicate the necessity of further studying the relationship between job engagement as an mediate role in talent management and employee performance.

Counselors play a vital role in supporting students' mental health, academic progress, and campus stability, and their responsibilities often involve high levels of emotional labor and interpersonal interaction (Knight, 2024; Liang & Yin, 2025; Yang, 2023). Job engagement is recognized as a crucial psychological mechanism linking organizational practices to employee performance (Abdullahi et al., 2022; Fidyah & Setiawati, 2020). According to HRM theory, effective talent management practices such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems can enhance employee capability and motivation (Fang, 2021). SET further suggests that when organizations provide support and resources, employees are likely to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023). Therefore, job engagement is not only a pathway through which talent management influences job performance, but also a key factor in improving the effectiveness and commitment of counselors. This study examines

job engagement as a key mediator between talent management and counselor performance.

Although previous research has highlighted the general importance of talent management in improving organizational outcomes (Ogbeibu et al., 2022; Pasaribu, Absah, & Sinulingga, 2021), limited empirical studies have examined how specific dimensions such as career management or learning and development contribute to job engagement and performance in the context of higher education. Many existing studies view talent management as a single, undifferentiated construct (Salimi & Chandrasekar, 2023; Sopiah et al., 2020), failing to clarify the distinct effects of its components. Previous research has emphasized the significance of job engagement in enhancing employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Jung et al., 2021; Ozyilmaz, 2020). However, there is a lack of empirical studies that investigate how its specific dimensions such as physical engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement individually influence performance outcomes in the context of higher education. Many existing studies tend to conceptualize job engagement as a holistic or global construct (Aman et al., 2023; Noercahyo et al., 2021), overlooking the potential differential impact that each engagement component may have on various aspects of employee performance.

In addition, the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance remains underexplored, particularly among university counselors whose responsibilities span student support, academic services, and institutional management. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how different aspects of talent management affect employee performance and by thoroughly examining whether job engagement, in its physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, mediates this relationship.

In conclusion, although numerous studies have explored the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, the findings have been inconsistent, highlighting the need for further research. While some studies confirm the positive impact of talent management on job engagement and employee performance, others suggest that factors such as perceived fairness and specific aspects of talent management, like learning and development, play a more nuanced role. The mediating role of job engagement between talent management and employee performance remains unclear, with conflicting results across different contexts, highlighting the need for further in-depth investigation.

1.5 Aim of Study

This study aims to investigate the relationship between talent management, job engagement and employee performance among university counselors, and also to determine the mediating effect of job engagement.

1.6 Research Questions

This study is guided by four research questions which are formulated based on the gap highlighted in the problem statement and the corresponding aim of the study:

RQ 1: What is the relationship between talent management and job engagement?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between talent management and employee performance?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between job engagement and employee performance?

RQ 4: To what extent do job engagement mediate the relationship between talent management and employee performance?

1.7 Research Objectives

Based on the above research questions, four comprehensive research objectives are carefully formulated to provide a structured framework for this study.

RO1: To examine the relationship between talent management and job engagement.

RO2: To identify the relationship between talent management and employee performance.

RO3: To investigate the relationship between job engagement and employee performance.

RO4: To determine the mediating effect of job engagement on the relationship between talent management and employee performance.

1.8 Research Scope

The core variables of this study are talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, each representing a critical aspect of human resource development and organizational effectiveness, particularly within the context of higher education institutions.

This study selects Jinan City as the research area for several key reasons. First, Jinan City is the provincial capital of Shandong Province, known for its rich history and culture, which makes it a representative location for studying university counselors in the

region. Additionally, Jinan is the educational hub of Shandong Province, home to numerous higher education institutions, including universities and colleges. This concentration of educational institutions allows for a focused examination of university counseling work within a specific geographic context, facilitating the collection and analysis of relevant research data.

Regarding the scope of the study, the research will specifically focus on university counselors, who play a critical role in student support and development. Counselors are in direct contact with students, providing academic guidance, emotional support, and career counseling. This central role makes counselors an ideal subject for understanding the broader educational support system at universities. By focusing on university counselors, the study aims to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of the counseling and support system, which is essential for promoting the holistic development of students.

The methodology used in this study is quantitative research, which is appropriate for collecting and analyzing numerical data to draw objective conclusions. A survey-based approach will be employed to gather data from university counselors, providing a comprehensive understanding of their roles, challenges, and impact on student outcomes. The study will be limited to university counselors, excluding other types of educational institutions such as colleges, as the research aims to focus specifically on the counseling system in universities. This choice allows for a more detailed and accurate understanding of university-level counseling practices and their effects on student development.

In summary, the decision to select Jinan as the research area is based on its status as an educational center with a concentration of universities, which enables a focused and comprehensive study. The study's scope is further narrowed to university counselors to

explore their impact on student development, using a quantitative research methodology to ensure objective and reliable results.

1.9 Significance of the Study

By conducting a focused survey of universities in Jinan, the study aims to provide regionally specific insights into the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. This type of local research helps to understand how local culture, organizational environment, and other specific factors affect these relationships, providing a foundation for developing practical strategies applicable to universities in the region.

By analyzing the situation of universities in the Jinan region, this research aims to provide targeted recommendations for university management, academic staff, and policymakers. These suggestions may involve optimizing talent management practices to improve job engagement and employee performance. The research findings are expected to serve as practical guidelines for formulating and adjusting talent management strategies, which will help universities address the unique challenges and opportunities in the region. Additionally, the study could be valuable for other stakeholders, including educational administrators, counselor training institutions, and government agencies, who are involved in the development and implementation of education policies and support systems. These stakeholders can use the research findings to enhance counselor support systems and ensure more effective resource allocation in university settings.

The research objectives include exploring the relationship between talent management and job engagement, as well as the relationship between talent management and employee performance. This helps to gain a deeper understanding of the interactions

between these key variables and provides a deeper understanding for developing more effective management strategies. In addition, this study further investigates the mediating role of job engagement between talent management and employee performance. By revealing this intermediary relationship, research can help clarify the mechanism by which job engagement affects employee performance in talent management, and provide more targeted intervention measures for universities.

Given the inconsistent research conclusions on these relationships in different contexts, in-depth research in specific regions can help fill existing knowledge gaps. By conducting research targeting specific backgrounds, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive and new insights for the academic community and practice. Overall, the significance of this study lies in providing actionable suggestions for universities in Jinan region, delving into the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, and providing practical guidance for university management decision-making by revealing mechanisms such as intermediary roles.

1.10 Operational Definition

The following are the detailed operational definitions of some key terms and concepts used throughout the course of this study to ensure clarity and consistency in interpretation.

Talent management: The development and implementation of a series of strategies and practices by universities, aimed at effectively attracting, cultivating, and retaining outstanding talents to promote the sustainable long-term success of the school (Akter et al., 2022).

Job engagement: The degree of active involvement and focus demonstrated by university employees in their daily work, encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Ahmed et al., 2020).

Employee performance: The actual work results achieved by university employees in their teaching, research, and management responsibilities, as well as their contribution to the overall goals of the universities (Darmawan et al., 2020).

1.11 Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 explores talent management, job engagement, and employee performance links in Jinan universities, emphasizing the unique context. The background highlights talent management's complexity and its impact on organizational dynamics. Identifying research gaps, the problem statement justifies the study. Research objectives focus on relationship examination and mediating effects exploration. The study offers tailored recommendations for Jinan universities, addressing knowledge gaps, while the definitions section ensures operational clarity.

In Chapter 2, the literature review will synthesize existing research on talent management, job engagement, and employee performance in educational settings, providing a comprehensive background for the study.

Chapter 3 will detail the research methodology, explaining the chosen approach, sampling methods, data collection, and analysis procedures, ensuring transparency and replicability of the study.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis and discussion of the data, including an examination of population characteristics and the verification of relationships between

variables. The chapter interprets the findings in the context of the study's objectives and explores their implications for understanding the key variables.

Chapter 5 offers a concise summary of the study, highlighting the research implication and addressing its limitations. It also provides recommendations for future research and practical improvements, suggesting areas where further exploration and refinement could enhance the study's contributions and impact.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter mainly reviews the research results and related discussions on the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. The theoretical basis on which this study is based will also be discussed, and on this basis, the research framework of this study will be proposed. After discussion and analysis, this chapter proposes relevant research hypotheses to provide direction for further research.

2.2 The Concept and Dimensions of Talent Management

Talent management is a comprehensive strategic human resource management approach aimed at effectively attracting and retaining talent within the organization (Hongal & Kinange, 2020). The purpose of talent management is to meet strategic goals and business needs (Al Aina & Atan, 2020). Talent management is committed to building strong teams and enhancing the overall quality of employees (Hongal & Kinange, 2020). In addition, the process of talent management also includes promoting organizational innovation and adaptability to achieve long-term success and sustainable development (Harsch & Festing, 2020).

There is currently no unified consensus on the core concept of talent management, and different researchers have divided it into different dimensions. Gupta (2019) identified eight dimensions of talent management, including talent review and retention. Akter et al. (2022) focused on three dimensions, such as career development. Jayaraman et al. (2018) highlighted four dimensions, including competence training.

Among the various models proposed by scholars on talent management dimensions, the framework developed by Al Aina and Atan (2020) is considered to possess both strong theoretical value and practical applicability. Compared to the more complex model proposed by Gupta (2019), which includes eight dimensions, Al Aina and Atan's model maintains a balance between comprehensiveness and manageability, making it more suitable for empirical research and organizational implementation. Their model comprises four key dimensions: talent attraction, talent retention, learning and development, and career management, which align closely with the strategic needs of modern organizations in managing human capital. Furthermore, the inclusion of learning and development as well as career management emphasizes continuous employee growth and long-term career planning, which are crucial for enhancing job engagement and improving organizational performance. As a result, the model by Al Aina and Atan (2020) has been widely adopted in academic studies, demonstrating its adaptability in both research and practice.

Table 2.1: Various Dimensions of Talent Management

Researcher	Dimensions of TM	Number of Dimensions
Gupta (2019)	Talent review process, strategy, staffing, talent engagement, talent acquisition, talent deployment, talent development, talent retention, and performance management	8
Jayaraman et al. (2018)	Identifying critical positions, competence training, development, and reward management	4
Akter et al. (2022)	Career development, rewards and recognition, and training and development	3
Al Aina & Atan (2020)	Talent attraction, talent retention, learning and development, and career management	4

This study adopts the classification by Al Aina and Atan (2020), which includes talent attraction, retention, learning and development, and career management. Table 2.1 compiles these dimensions.

The research results indicate that there are key factors in different aspects of talent management. In terms of attracting talent, building a company brand, adopting diverse recruitment channels, and providing a competitive compensation system are key to success (Hongal & Kinange, 2020). Regarding employee retention, research has found the importance of leadership (Yamin, 2020). The company provides abundant career development opportunities and policies that balance work and life for employees, which can better attract them (Kumar, 2022). The research findings on training and development emphasize the importance of adopting diverse training methods and providing career development opportunities (Alam & Mohanty, 2023). As for career management, the results emphasize that developing effective career plans and transparent career development paths are key factors in promoting employee career development (Okolie et al., 2020).

These research findings provide a profound theoretical basis for organizations to develop more effective talent management strategies. In the context of university counsellors, these dimensions are particularly relevant. Attracting competent counsellors requires not only competitive salaries but also a supportive institutional culture that values student guidance (Liang & Yin, 2025). Retention depends heavily on the presence of empathetic leadership and a work environment that acknowledges the emotional demands of the role (Li et al., 2024). Continuous training is essential for counsellors to stay current with evolving student needs, mental health issues, and educational policies (Knight, 2024). Furthermore, clear career progression paths and recognition of professional contributions

can significantly enhance motivation and job satisfaction among counsellors (Ren & Guo, 2023). Therefore, applying these talent management dimensions can directly contribute to improving the effectiveness, engagement, and long-term commitment of counselling professionals in higher education institutions.

2.3 The Concept of Job Engagement

Job engagement refers to the level of wholehearted dedication and dedication of employees to their work experience (Rich et al., 2010). It includes enthusiasm for work tasks, attention to work goals, and investment in the work itself (Ozyilmaz, 2020). Job engagement typically manifests as employees exhibiting a positive attitude and a high level of engagement in their work (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Job engagement typically involves an employee's sense of identification, engagement, and pursuit of work achievement (Ozyilmaz, 2020). In addition, job engagement also includes positive emotional experiences towards the work environment and organization (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020).

2.3.1 Current Research on Job Engagement

The concept of job engagement is related to the investment of an employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional energies into job performance (Robbin et al., 2015; 2021). Job engagement is often seen as a multidimensional concept that includes several key dimensions: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, physical engagement, social engagement, etc (Borst et al., 2020; Rich et al., 2010; Taipale et al., 2011). These dimensions are usually interrelated and together constitute the overall job engagement. The specific research and measurement tools may vary slightly, but these dimensions usually comprehensively reflect the level of job engagement in their work. A

multidimensional understanding of job engagement helps organizations to comprehensively evaluate job engagement and take measures to promote and maintain positive job engagement (Byrne, 2022).

According to Rich et al. (2010), job engagement consists of physical engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Physical engagement emphasizes the physical investment of employees in their work, including active participation in work tasks and active engagement in their work (Gil-Beltrán et al., 2020). Emotional engagement refers to the degree to which employees are emotionally invested in their work (Nguyen et al., 2021). This includes passion, excitement, satisfaction towards work, and emotional connection to the organization (Ozyilmaz, 2020). Cognitive engagement refers to the employee's investment and focus on work tasks, including understanding, thinking, and analyzing the job content (Rich et al., 2010). This dimension emphasizes the level of cognitive participation and concentration of employees towards their work, highlighting how deeply they engage with the complexity of the tasks at hand.

One key advantage of Rich et al.'s model is its foundation in Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement, which emphasizes the physical, emotional, and cognitive energies individuals bring to their roles. This theoretical grounding offers a more comprehensive understanding of how employees engage with their work. Moreover, the three dimensions identified by Rich et al. specifically capture the internal psychological states that drive individual work behavior. In contrast, Borst et al., (2020) and Schaufeli et al. (2002)'s model, while widely used, focuses more on general feelings of enthusiasm (vigor), involvement (dedication), and immersion (absorption), which may be more applicable to studies of overall well-being rather than task-specific engagement. For university

counsellors, whose work demands focused attention, emotional resilience, and sustained mental effort, Rich et al.'s model provides a more precise and applicable framework. Additionally, the model has been empirically validated across various occupational contexts, further supporting its reliability and relevance in organizational research.

These dimensions are highly relevant to the work of counsellors, whose roles require a combination of mental focus, emotional sensitivity, and active involvement in client-related tasks (Denk, 2023; Greenan, 2024). Cognitive engagement is essential as counsellors must assess, analyze, and respond to diverse student needs using sound judgment and critical thinking (Hanafi et al., 2021). Emotional engagement plays a central role as counsellors need to express empathy, build trust, and maintain a strong emotional presence while managing students' concerns (Tursi, Sellers & Marquis, 2022). Physical engagement is also important, as the job involves maintaining energy and attentiveness during sessions, workshops, and consultations. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how counsellors invest themselves in their roles and contribute meaningfully to student development and well-being.

2.4 The Concept of Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the level of efficiency and achievement demonstrated by employees in their job responsibilities and tasks (Na Nan et al., 2018). This includes the results achieved by employees in their work and the quality of tasks completed (Darmawan et al., 2020). In addition, different companies also have some differences in performance evaluation, some of which include work efficiency and the ability to achieve goals (Murphy, 2020). In some cases, employee performance also involves team collaboration and overall performance (Darmawan et al., 2020). This

reflects the collaborative and collaborative abilities of employees in a team context (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Employee performance is a key indicator for organizations and managers to evaluate their contributions to organizational goals and job performance.

Employee performance can usually be evaluated from multiple dimensions to gain a comprehensive understanding of their performance at work. Common employee performance dimensions include quality of work, work efficiency, team collaboration, innovation, communication skills, career development, leadership, and management skills etc. (Berber et al., 2020; Jankelová & Joniaková, 2021; Saffar et al., 2020). These dimensions can be adjusted and customized according to the specific needs and business context of the organization to ensure the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of the assessment.

The two-dimensional framework of job performance proposed by Andrade, Queiroga, and Valentini (2020), which includes task-oriented and context-oriented performance, is particularly appropriate for this study as it captures both the technical and relational aspects of employee contributions. Compared with Na Nan et al. (2018)'s classification, which focuses on work quality, quantity, and time to emphasize measurable output and efficiency, the task-context model offers a more comprehensive and context-sensitive perspective. It accounts not only for the execution of core duties but also for the broader psychological and social behaviors that support organizational functioning (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002).

These dimensions of Andrade et al. (2020) is especially relevant to university counsellors, whose roles extend beyond routine task completion. Task performance includes core responsibilities such as providing academic guidance, managing student

records, and offering accurate information, requiring both technical competence and adherence to institutional standards. Context performance reflects the counsellor's ability to demonstrate empathy, foster student trust, initiate problem-solving, and contribute to a supportive educational environment. These relational and proactive behaviors are crucial for enhancing students' academic success and emotional well-being. Thus, by adopting this dual-dimensional framework, the study can more accurately assess the multifaceted nature of counsellors' job performance.

2.4.1 The Current Research on Employee Performance among Counselors

The research on the relationship between talent management and counselor performance is receiving more attention. Investigating the relationship between talent management and counselor performance is essential due to the increasingly complex and demanding nature of counselors' roles in higher education institutions. As universities face rising student populations, mental health concerns, and academic pressures, counselors are expected not only to perform administrative duties but also to provide emotional, psychological, and academic support (Knight, 2024; Liang & Yin, 2025; Luo et al., 2024). In this context, optimizing their performance becomes a strategic priority. Talent management practices such as targeted recruitment, continuous training, performance evaluation, and career development can directly influence counselors' motivation, capability, and commitment (Dai, 2020; Lin, 2020). However, despite the importance of counselors to institutional functioning and student success, there is a lack of targeted research exploring how structured talent management interventions affect their performance outcomes. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing evidence-based human resource strategies that enhance counselor effectiveness and contribute to the overall

quality of student services.

Research has shown that effective talent management practices can significantly improve the performance level of counselors (Dai, 2020; Wang, 2020). This includes recruiting and selecting counselors with appropriate skills and traits, providing them with development opportunities and training, as well as establishing incentive mechanisms and promotion paths. In addition, further research has found that the participation of counselors is closely related to their performance. Highly engaged counselors are often more motivated and creative, resulting in better performance levels (Liang, 2021).

Beyond talent management and employee engagement, contemporary research increasingly delves into performance management, pioneering work frameworks, and ideological cultivation tailored for counselors (Chen et al., 2024; Zhuang & Xiong, 2020). There's a growing emphasis on exploring innovative methods to enhance counselor effectiveness and refine their professional practices (Wei, 2020). Moreover, universities are progressively prioritizing counselors' long-term career trajectories, recognizing the pivotal role they play in shaping student experiences and outcomes (Tian & Guo, 2021). This shift underscores a broader commitment to fostering a supportive and dynamic counseling environment conducive to both counselor growth and student success.

These research findings provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the importance of talent management and employee engagement on counselor performance, which helps to improve the effectiveness of counseling services.

2.5 Talent Management, Job Engagement and Employee Performance

The study on the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and

employee performance has also attracted considerable attention in various countries. Different countries have given positive conclusions about their close ties. It is undeniable that there are also some inconsistent research results that will be further discussed in the development of further hypotheses.

Empirical studies across various sectors have shown a consistent positive relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. Kadiri and Jimoh (2021), Li and Jia (2021), and Nawangsari and Sutawidjaya (2019) reported that effective talent management is positively associated with job engagement in Nigeria, Malaysia, and Indonesia, respectively. Similarly, talent management was found to enhance employee performance in Pakistan's telecommunications sector (Al Hussaini et al., 2019), Sri Lanka's banking industry (Wickramaaratchi & Perera, 2020), and the Malaysian education sector (MPU Malaysia). Job engagement has also been linked to better performance, as evidenced by studies in South Korea (Kim et al., 2019), Indonesia (Perangin Angin et al., 2020), and Zimbabwe (Ngwenya & Pelsner, 2020).

In the higher education context, the implementation of talent management practices is gaining recognition as universities compete to attract and retain skilled staff (Musakuro, 2022). Musakuro and De Klerk (2021) found that strategic talent management in universities enhances staff motivation and institutional innovation. Similarly, in the education sector, career development opportunities and supportive leadership have been linked to improved employee satisfaction and performance (Aboramadan, Dahleez & Hamad, 2021). Yet, there remains a lack of studies that disaggregate which specific talent management practices such as talent attraction versus career management are most impactful in academic environments, particularly among university counselors whose roles

encompass academic, administrative, and psychological support.

Job engagement has also been widely studied as a predictor of performance, but most findings derive from general workforce populations (e.g., Jung et al., 2021; Ozyilmaz, 2020). In contrast, research specific to academic staff shows that engagement is often influenced by factors such as institutional autonomy, workload, and role ambiguity (Jiang & Tanaka, 2022; Naidoo-Chetty & Du Plessis, 2021). A study by Liu, Ma and Chen (2024) in a university of China found that emotional engagement had a stronger impact on performance outcomes than physical or cognitive engagement, suggesting that the nature of engagement may be context-specific.

Although numerous studies have explored the relationships among talent management, job engagement, and employee performance across various sectors, limited research has specifically examined these dynamics within the context of university counselors in China's higher education system. Most existing studies tend to focus on corporate or general public sector employees (Kim et al., 2019; Li & Jia, 2021; Wickramaratchchi & Perera's, 2020), overlooking the unique roles and challenges faced by counselors who must balance administrative responsibilities with student-centered services. Furthermore, current research often investigates talent management or job engagement as isolated predictors of performance (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ngwenya & Pelsner, 2020), with few studies adopting a comprehensive framework that examines both direct and mediated effects. This study addresses these gaps by simultaneously analyzing the influence of talent management on employee performance through the mediating role of job engagement, offering a more integrated and context-sensitive perspective. By targeting university counselors as the focal group, the study contributes new insights into how tailored human

resource practices can support performance in professional service-oriented roles, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness in the higher education sector.

2.5.1 Current Research in China

In China, research on talent management, job engagement, and employee performance is also receiving increasing attention. It is worth noting that even in other regions of China, there have been numerous studies related to this topic. However, in the Jinan region of China, there is still a need for greater academic attention and focus on research regarding the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance.

A study in Yunnan, China confirmed that there is a strong positive correlation between talent management and employee performance (Zhang & Thippayana, 2022). Moreover, a study on Chinese and Russian employees further confirms that talent management has a certain impact on the overall performance of companies (Latukha & Veselova, 2019). Fang (2021) emphasized the importance of improving human resource management courses for college students in research conducted by multiple universities, including Jinan University.

A study involving 270 Chinese employees affirmed the positive influence of job engagement on job performance. In their research on nurses in Jinan, Liu et al. (2015) identified work engagement as a crucial predictor of organizational citizenship behavior, emphasizing the need for nursing managers to address professional practice environments, resource allocation, and employee training to enhance nurse engagement and subsequent organizational citizenship behavior, thereby improving nurse job performance.

Research involving 298 employees and 54 supervisors at a luxury hotel in southern China indicates that work engagement mediates the relationship between leader-member exchange and employee performance. Additionally, consistent human resource management enhances the effect of leader-member exchange on work engagement (Li et al., 2012). Similarly, a study in Jinan confirmed the mediating role of job engagement, with Lv et al. (2022) finding that work engagement partially mediates the link between authentic leadership and innovative behavior.

While international research on talent management, job engagement, and employee performance tends to emphasize individual autonomy, strategic alignment, and flexible performance-driven mechanisms (Caligiuri et al., 2024), studies conducted in China often reflect a stronger influence of institutional policies, administrative control, and collectivist cultural norms. For example, in many Western contexts, talent management practices focus on identifying and developing high-potential individuals through personalized career paths and transparent advancement systems (Abid & Polo, 2025). In contrast, Chinese studies highlight the bureaucratic nature of talent management in higher education, where administrative intervention and centralized planning frequently limit the effectiveness of personalized strategies (Dingge, 2024).

Similarly, job engagement in Western literature is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive involvement driven by intrinsic motivation and meaningful work (Ahuchogu, Sanyaolu & Adeleke, 2024; Pincus, 2023). However, in the Chinese context, engagement is often shaped by organizational loyalty, social expectations, and hierarchical relationships, which may lead to high surface-level engagement but limited innovative behavior (Li & Jia, 2021). In terms

of employee performance, Western frameworks typically include both task performance and extra-role behaviors such as creativity and proactive problem-solving (Waheed et al., 2025), whereas Chinese research often emphasizes measurable outputs, such as teaching load, publication counts, or administrative compliance, in line with state-imposed evaluation systems (Liang & Yin, 2025). These differences underscore the need to contextualize models of talent management and job engagement when applying them to Chinese higher education settings, particularly for university counselors who navigate complex responsibilities involving academic support, student development, and institutional service.

Jinan presents a valuable context for examining the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance due to its distinct regional characteristics as the political, economic, and educational hub of Shandong Province. While studies from other parts of China, such as Yunnan and southern regions (Zhang & Thippayana, 2022), have confirmed positive associations among these variables, regional differences in organizational culture, policy execution, and workforce dynamics suggest that their findings may not fully apply to Jinan. Although several studies conducted in Jinan, such as those by Fang (2021) and Liu et al. (2015), have addressed related topics, they focus on specific sectors like healthcare and emphasize constructs such as authentic leadership or organizational citizenship behavior. These studies do not offer a comprehensive examination of the integrated impact of talent management and job engagement on counselor performance in public institutions. Therefore, this study is significant as it fills a gap in the existing literature by providing a context-specific analysis that contributes empirical evidence tailored to the unique conditions of Jinan.

2.6 Underpinning Theories

This study adopts Human Resource Management (HRM) Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET) as its core theoretical frameworks to investigate the relationships among talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. HRM Theory emphasizes the strategic role of talent-related practices in enhancing individual and organizational outcomes (Jackson & Schuler, 1995), making it well-suited for examining how specific talent management practices influence job engagement and performance. SET provides a robust lens to understand how perceived organizational support through talent management initiatives fosters reciprocal behaviors such as higher engagement and improved performance (Ahmad et al., 2023).

However, the selection of these two theories was made with consideration of several alternative frameworks. For instance, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model is frequently used to explain job engagement, positing that job resources (e.g., support, autonomy, development opportunities) lead to greater engagement and improved outcomes (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023). While valuable, the JD-R model focuses more on job characteristics than organizational practices like talent management. Similarly, the Psychological Contract Theory offers insights into employee-employer expectations, but it lacks a clear structural link to strategic HR practices (Stephen, 2023). The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes intrinsic motivation, is more commonly applied in studies centered on individual psychological needs rather than organizational-level interventions (Zampetakis & Arvanitis, 2024).

Compared to these alternatives, HRM Theory and SET offer more comprehensive explanatory power for this study's focus on institutional strategies (talent management),

employee attitudes (job engagement), and behavioral outcomes (performance), particularly in the context of university counselors, where formal HR structures and relational exchanges are highly relevant.

2.6.1 Human Resource Management Theory

The theory of human resource management involves how organizations effectively recruit, train, motivate, and retain employees to achieve organizational goals (Jackson & Schuler, 1995). The scope of this theory includes employee recruitment, training and development, performance management, and other aspects, aiming to ensure that organizations can fully tap into the potential of their human resources, thereby improving overall performance and competitiveness (Wood, 1999). The theory of human resource management is crucial for the success of an organization, as it focuses on the management and development of the most important resources within the organization.

The development of human resource management theory can be traced back to the early 20th century, when it mainly focused on employee management in industrial organizations (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009). Over time, this field has gradually evolved into a broader discipline that involves the full lifecycle management of employees. Some key developments include a focus on job engagement, diversity, and inclusive management (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). In the mid-20th century, human resource management began to be seen as a strategic management function closely related to organizational strategic goals (Kaufman, 2012). The 'matching' model, developed by researchers at the Michigan Business School, introduced the idea of strategic human resource management, highlighting the close connection between HRM policies and the development and implementation of strategic corporate or business objectives (Devanna et al., 1984, p34). Beardwell and

Claydon (2007) based on this constructed the model diagram showed in figure 2.1.

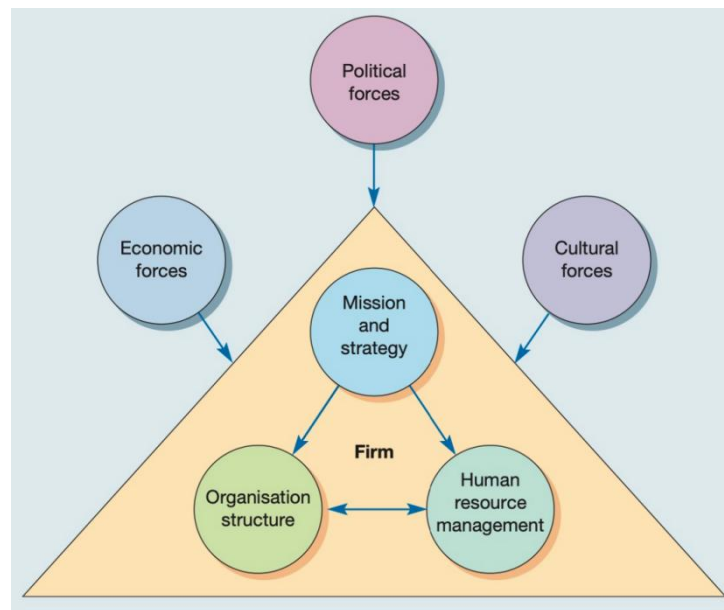


Figure 2.1: The Matching Model of HRM

The research focuses on talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, and the importance of human resource management theory lies in providing effective management frameworks for these key areas. By deeply understanding and applying human resource management theory, research can explore how organizations can stimulate employee job engagement through scientific talent management practices, thereby improving employee performance. The comprehensive approach of human resource management theory can help organizations gain advantages in talent attraction, retention, learning and development, career development, and performance management.

In the field of organizational studies, HRM serves not only as a set of management practices but also as a theoretical foundation that explains how strategic approaches to managing people can enhance employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009). As the theoretical underpinning of this study, HRM theory

emphasizes the systematic implementation of talent-related functions such as recruitment, selection, training, development, motivation, and retention. These practices are designed to foster employee engagement and improve performance outcomes. HRM theory integrates perspectives from social exchange theory, human capital theory, and the resource-based view, highlighting the strategic role of employees as valuable organizational assets and the importance of reciprocal relationships between employers and employees (Ahmed et al., 2018). In the context of university counselors, HRM provides a robust explanatory framework for examining how talent management practices can stimulate job engagement and subsequently influence job performance. Its comprehensive and integrative nature makes HRM particularly suitable as the theoretical basis for this research.

2.6.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a theory that explains interpersonal relationships and organizational behavior. The social exchange theory suggests that people tend to prefer reciprocity in communication, which means there is a balance between giving and receiving (Ahmad et al., 2023). In the organizational environment, employees will respond positively to the resources and support provided by the organization (Stafford & Kuiper, 2021). The social exchange theory suggests that participants will evaluate whether the resources and rewards obtained from participating in the exchange are equivalent (Meira & Hancer, 2021). These resources and rewards can be material or intangible, such as support, recognition, and development opportunities.

The social exchange theory emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships in the exchange process (Ahmad et al., 2023). The social relationships within an organization can affect the level of employee engagement in the organization, as well as

their loyalty and commitment to the organization (Meira & Hancer, 2021). The exchange behavior of participants is often influenced by their expected level of participation in the exchange (Ahmad et al., 2023). If participants feel that the return they receive is lower than expected, they may become dissatisfied with the organization or seek other exchange relationships. Davlembayeva and Alamanos (2023) condensed the social exchange process into a two-step behavior model (Figure 2.2). It begins with either positive or negative treatment: positive actions benefit the target, while negative actions cause harm. The target responds in kind, with positive behavior leading to positive reactions and negative behavior to negative ones. Consistent positive exchanges foster long-term cooperation and commitment.

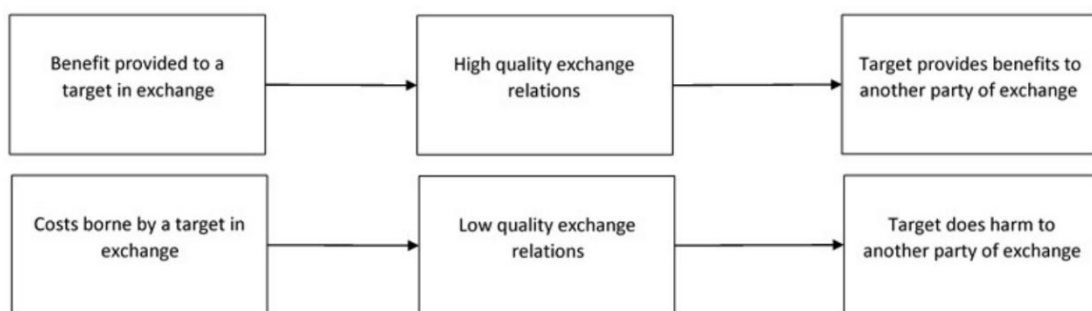


Figure 2.2: Social Exchange Theory

SET posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process in which individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In the context of human resource management, this theory helps explain how favorable organizational practices can elicit positive employee attitudes and behaviors in return (Meira & Hancer, 2021). Applying SET to this study provides a theoretical basis for examining the dynamic relationships between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. Specifically, when organizations invest in talent management practices such as development opportunities,

recognition, and career advancement, employees are more likely to perceive organizational support and respond with higher levels of job engagement. This increased engagement, in turn, is expected to lead to improved performance outcomes. Thus, SET offers a coherent framework for understanding the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance.

The social exchange theory emphasizes reciprocal exchange in interpersonal relationships, where participants evaluate whether resources and rewards are commensurate in their interactions (Meira & Hancer, 2021). In the organizational environment, this means that employees respond positively to the support and resources provided by the organization, affecting their work engagement and performance. This theory highlights the importance of social relationships in the exchange process and how an individual's level of expectation for exchange affects their behavior (Ahmad et al., 2023). When studying the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, social exchange theory provides a powerful framework that helps to understand the interaction and influencing factors between organizations and employees.

The social exchange theory is of great significance for understanding the impact of talent management on employee engagement and performance. By providing resources and rewards, organizations can establish reciprocal exchange relationships with employees, promoting their work engagement and performance (Meira & Hancer, 2021). This theory emphasizes the interdependence between organizations and employees, and highlights the feedback effect of employees on the support and motivation provided by the organization (Stafford & Kuiper, 2021). In research, social exchange theory can be used to explain the impact of talent management measures on employees, providing important theoretical

support for developing more effective human resource management strategies.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The main objective of this study is to investigate the interrelationships among talent management, job engagement, and employee performance within a comprehensive framework. Specifically, the study examines: (1) the impact of talent management on job engagement, (2) the effect of talent management on employee performance, (3) the influence of job engagement on employee performance, and (4) the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance. To capture the multi-dimensional nature of these constructs, the study adopts a well-established classification for each variable. Talent management is conceptualized based on Al Aina and Atan (2020), encompassing four dimensions: talent attraction, talent retention, learning and development, and career management. Job engagement follows the framework of Rich et al. (2010), which includes physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Employee performance is measured using the two-dimensional model of task-oriented and context-oriented performance proposed by Andrade et al. (2020).

While these variables are multi-faceted in nature, this study combines all dimensions under each construct into composite variables for testing. This decision is justified by the high conceptual coherence and empirical intercorrelation among the sub-dimensions, as demonstrated in prior studies. Moreover, this research aims to examine the overall influence and mediation effects among key constructs rather than the contribution of individual dimensions. Therefore, treating each construct as a unified latent variable enables a more parsimonious, interpretable model while maintaining theoretical consistency with prior literature. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

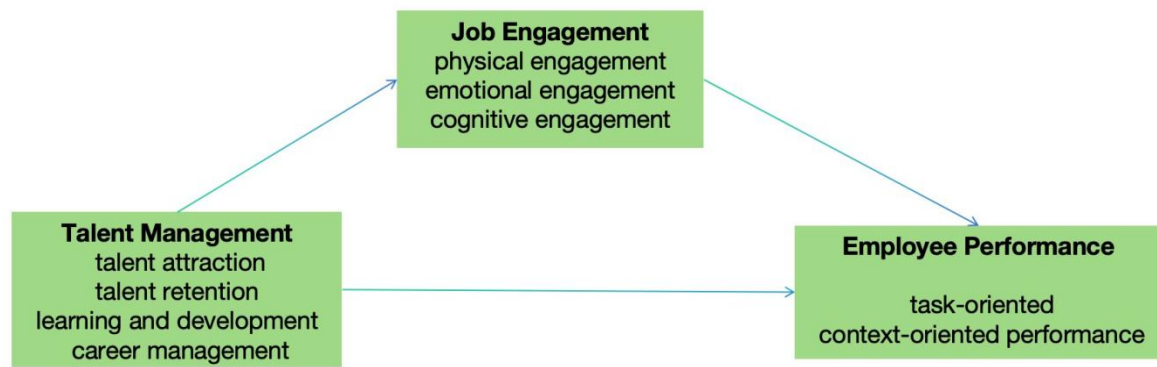


Figure 2.3: Conceptual Framework

The integration of HRM theory and SET provides a robust theoretical foundation for the proposed model. HRM theory primarily explains the direct influence of talent management on both job engagement and employee performance. It supports the notion that strategically managing human capital through targeted practices enhances employee involvement and leads to improved performance outcomes. In this context, the direct paths from talent management to job engagement and from talent management to employee performance are grounded in HRM principles.

On the other hand, Social Exchange Theory (Ahmed et al., 2028) offers a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying these relationships. Specifically, SET explains the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance. When employees perceive organizational practices such as talent development and career support as valuable investments, they are likely to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement. This psychological engagement, in turn, enhances their performance. Thus, SET supports the indirect path from talent management to employee performance through job engagement, highlighting the importance of reciprocal exchanges between the employee and the organization.

By clearly defining research questions, variables, and relationships, the research framework helps researchers construct research hypotheses. In addition, the research framework also plays a crucial role in the literature review, helping to clarify the research context and identify research gaps in the next step of the literature review. Overall, based on the research object and question, this study constructs a clear and reasonable research framework, which ensures the consistency and logicity of the research, and also enhances the credibility and effectiveness of the research.

2.8 Hypotheses Development

Based on the research object and question, and the conceptual framework in Figure 2.3, four hypotheses are developed.

2.8.1 Talent Management and Job Engagement

Talent management issues and job engagement are becoming crucial labor management challenges in the workplace. Kadiri and Jimoh (2021) found a positive and important relationship between talent management and job engagement in a study of 178 bank employees in Nigeria. A study from Malaysia suggests that talent management issues, such as bureaucratic intervention, ineffective performance management systems, talent retention and shortage, are positively correlated with job engagement (Li & Jia, 2021). Kamel's (2019) study on workers in the oil industry also found that talent management is a business side effect and has a positive relationship with job engagement.

Numerous research studies have consistently affirmed the positive correlation between talent management and job engagement. For instance, Nawangsari and Sutawidjaya's (2019) investigation, encompassing 101 employees in small and medium-

sized enterprises, revealed a robust positive correlation between talent management practices and job engagement. Additionally, Järvi and Khoreva's (2019) research emphasized the noteworthy and positive influence of talent management on job engagement within organizational contexts. These findings collectively underscore the recurring evidence supporting the notion that effective talent management strategies contribute positively to fostering and sustaining high levels of job engagement among employees across various organizational settings.

Despite the importance of talent management, O'Connor and Crowley Henry's (2019) study discovered that unfair treatment during the talent management process could potentially diminish job engagement. Similarly, Jung et al.'s (2021) research noted that individuals lacking high levels of job engagement, enthusiasm, and focus often harbor increased turnover intentions. Guzeller and Celiker's (2020) study added that elevated turnover rates can adversely affect talent management. The conflicting nature of these research findings underscores the necessity for additional investigations into the intricate relationship between talent management practices and job engagement.

In the context of university counselors, the relationship between talent management and job engagement is particularly relevant. Counselors play a pivotal role in student development, mental health support, and academic guidance, which requires not only professional competence but also sustained emotional and cognitive investment in their work (Ma, 2024; Luo et al., 2024). When universities implement effective talent management practices such as transparent recruitment, ongoing professional development, fair performance evaluations, and clear career advancement paths, counselors are more likely to feel valued, supported, and motivated (Liu & Shu, 2023). This sense of recognition

and support can foster stronger emotional and cognitive ties to their roles, thereby enhancing their job engagement. Moreover, given the unique emotional labor involved in counseling, targeted talent management practices can help alleviate burnout and promote resilience, further reinforcing job engagement. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that talent management has a positive impact on job engagement among university counselors. Based on the above research, this study proposes the following research hypothesis 1.

H1: Talent management has a positive impact on job engagement.

2.8.2 Talent Management and Employee Performance

In the realm of organizational performance, Al Hussaini et al. (2019) conducted a study demonstrating the substantial positive influence of talent management strategies on employee performance behavior within the telecommunications sector in Pakistan. Similarly, El Masri and Suliman (2019) underscored the pivotal role of talent management as a key variable influencing employee performance. Moreover, the research by Wickramaratchi and Perera (2020), involving 180 bank employees in Sri Lanka, provided further confirmation of the significant positive impact that talent management exerts on enhancing employee performance. These collective findings across diverse contexts accentuate the consistent and affirmative association between adept talent management strategies and heightened levels of employee performance.

Not only has research on enterprise employees shown a positive correlation between talent management and job engagement. In the medical industry, it has also been found that the job engagement of doctors and nurses is influenced by talent management (Sopiah et al., 2020). Further research has shown that if organizations effectively implement talent

management strategies, it can increase job engagement, and help improve organizational performance (Hongal & Kinange, 2020).

Nevertheless, there exist studies with divergent findings. Al Aina and Atan (2020) discovered that talent attraction and retention exert no influence on sustainable organizational performance across various facets of talent management. In contrast, learning and development, as well as career management, were identified to have noteworthy positive effects. Additionally, Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) observed that talent management does not directly affect employee performance. Consequently, there is a need for additional research to delve into the direct impact of talent management on job performance.

In the context of university counselors, the relationship between talent management and employee performance is especially significant due to the demanding and multifaceted nature of their roles. Counselors are responsible for student advising, psychological support, crisis intervention, and the coordination of educational activities (Knight, 2024). These responsibilities require not only subject-matter expertise but also strong interpersonal and problem-solving skills. When institutions implement effective talent management practices such as talent acquisition, continuous professional development, and structured career management, counselors are more likely to develop the competencies necessary for delivering high-quality services (Yang, 2023). Furthermore, such practices contribute to increased motivation, job satisfaction, and a stronger sense of professional identity, all of which are critical components that influence performance (Abdullahi et al., 2022). By providing counselors with growth opportunities, recognition, and a supportive work environment, talent management initiatives can enhance their capacity to manage work

demands, improve student outcomes, and fulfill institutional objectives. Hence, it is logical to propose that talent management positively affects the performance of university counselors. Therefore, this study proposes hypothesis 2.

H2: Talent management has a positive impact on employee performance.

2.8.3 Job Engagement and Employee Performance

The research conducted by Perangin Angin et al. (2020) brought to light a positive correlation between job engagement and employee performance. Fidyah and Setiawati's (2020) study further substantiated these findings, affirming the positive influence of job engagement on job performance. In alignment with these results, the investigation by Ngwenya and Pelser (2020) lends additional support to the conclusion that heightened job engagement contributes positively to overall employee performance. This consistent evidence across multiple studies underscores the importance of recognizing and fostering job engagement for enhancing job performance outcomes.

A study of 571 full-time employees from a Korean organization showed that job engagement has a positive impact on employee performance (Kim et al., 2019). The study by Fidyah and Setiawati (2020) also confirms the positive impact of job engagement on employee performance. There are also many studies supporting this research conclusion (Ahmed et al., 2020; Gameda & Lee, 2020; Paramita & Sudhartio, 2022; Wang & Chen, 2020).

Nevertheless, certain studies present inconclusive findings. For instance, Noercahyo et al.'s (2021) research revealed that while job engagement demonstrates a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction, it does not significantly impact organizational

performance. Additionally, their study found that organizational engagement lacks a significant impact on organizational performance. Furthermore, Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) reported that job engagement does not exhibit a direct positive influence on employee performance. These results suggest that the association between job engagement and employee performance may manifest differently across research contexts.

In the context of university counselors, job engagement is a critical factor influencing their level of performance. Counselors who are physically, cognitively, and emotionally engaged in their work are more likely to demonstrate dedication, attentiveness, and a proactive attitude in fulfilling their responsibilities (Medina, 2025). Given the emotionally intensive and often unpredictable nature of counseling work, high engagement enables counselors to better manage stress, maintain student-centered approaches, and respond effectively to diverse student needs (Shan, 2024). Engaged counselors are also more likely to take initiative, collaborate with colleagues, and contribute to institutional goals beyond their core responsibilities. For university counselors, this means that greater engagement can lead to improved support for students, better communication with stakeholders, and more innovative approaches to student development (Dixon-Saxon & Buckley, 2020; Hines et al., 2020). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that job engagement positively influences counselor performance. Thence, this study proposes hypothesis 3.

H3: Job engagement has a positive impact on employee performance.

2.8.4 The Mediating Role of Job Engagement

The study conducted by Abdullahi et al. (2022) determined that job engagement does not function as a mediating factor between talent management practices and employee

performance. When job engagement acts as a mediator, talent management practices demonstrate a positive influence on employee performance, albeit statistically insignificant, as indicated by the research conducted by Khairina and Games (2022).

Moreover, Ali et al. (2019) uncovered that the relationship between personal development practices encompassing talent management and career development and organizational efficiency is predominantly mediated by job engagement. These findings collectively emphasize the intricate dynamics and nuanced interplay between talent management practices, job engagement, and their impact on overall organizational performance. Pasaribu et al. (2021) reported that job engagement indeed serves as a mediating factor between talent management practices and employee performance.

However, Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) arrived at the conclusion that talent management doesn't directly impact employee performance but rather operates indirectly through the mediation of job engagement. The divergence in research outcomes underscores the need for additional exploration into the nuanced relationship involving job engagement as a mediating factor in the context of talent management and its impact on employee performance. This incongruity prompts further investigation to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics at play in the interconnection between talent management practices, job engagement, and overall employee performance.

In the context of university counselors, effective talent management practices such as talent attraction, retention, career development, and learning opportunities can enhance counselors' sense of value and organizational support. When counselors perceive that their institution invests in their development and acknowledges their contributions, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement in their

roles (Hines et al., 2020). This elevated engagement in turn leads to better performance outcomes in both task-oriented and context-oriented aspects. For instance, engaged counselors tend to be more responsive to student needs, more proactive in communication, and more willing to contribute beyond their formal duties (Dixon-Saxon, & Buckley, 2020). Therefore, job engagement functions as a key mechanism that translates talent management strategies into enhanced counselor performance. This mediating relationship highlights the importance of fostering engagement to optimize the impact of talent management efforts. Therefore, this study proposes hypothesis 4.

H4: Job engagement mediate the relationship between talent management and employee performance.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents research foundational theories, including HRM theory and SET theory. Based on the research objectives, this study proposes a corresponding research framework. This chapter reviewed the literature and found controversy in the research on talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. Based on these research gaps, this chapter proposes corresponding research hypotheses, laying the foundation for further research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter mainly discusses the methodology used in this study, including the research design and methodology adopted. In addition, this study will also discuss the sampling methods used and the methods of data collection to ensure a more scientific data collection process. The methods of data analysis and research tools will also be analyzed in detail in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to a series of systematic arrangements chosen and planned by researchers during scientific research (Choguill, 2005). The research design aims to enable researchers to effectively answer research questions, obtain reliable data, and establish trust in the scientific community (Fellows & Liu, 2021). The importance of research design lies in ensuring the quality and credibility of scientific research. By clearly defining research questions and selecting appropriate methods and tools, clearer ideas can be provided for research (Sileyew, 2019). In addition, effectively collecting and analyzing data can reduce errors and biases in research design, and improve the scientificity and reliability of research (Fellows & Liu, 2021). Overall, good research design is the key to the success of scientific research, and is of great significance in establishing trust, and solving practical problems. The step design for the entire study in this study is shown in the following figure.

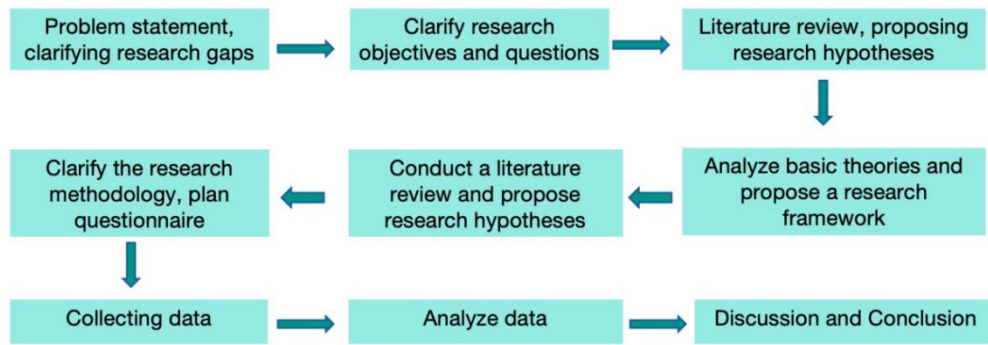


Figure 3.1: Schematic Diagram of Overall Research Steps

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, and explanatory research design to investigate the relationships among talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. A quantitative approach is appropriate given the study's aim to measure the influence of talent management on employee performance and examine the mediating role of job engagement. By collecting numerical data through structured questionnaires and analyzing the results using regression analysis, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence of the hypothesized relationships. The cross-sectional nature of the design allows for capturing perceptions at a single point in time, which is suitable for testing the causal paths among the variables as conceptualized in the proposed theoretical framework.

This study employs a survey method as the primary data collection approach. A structured questionnaire was designed based on validated measurement scales to quantitatively assess the dimensions of talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. The survey method is suitable for collecting data from a large number of respondents efficiently, which aligns with the study's objective to explore patterns and relationships among variables within the context of higher education. The use of standardized items also ensures reliability and comparability of responses. The target

population consists of university counselors in China, and the questionnaire was distributed online to facilitate broad participation across institutions.

3.3 Research Method

Research type is the basic methods or approaches adopted by scientific research, used to answer research questions, verify hypotheses, or drive theoretical development (Fellows & Liu, 2021). Different types of research differ in terms of research objectives, data collection and analysis methods, conclusion derivation, etc. Therefore, researchers choose different types of research based on specific problems and objectives. The type of research directly affects the way research data is collected and interpreted, as well as the final conclusion derivation process, which is crucial for ensuring the credibility and reliability of research conclusions.

3.3.1 Empirical Research

This study adopts an empirical research method. Empirical research is a scientific research method that uses observation, experimentation, investigation, and other methods, based on actual data, to verify or refute research hypotheses (Flynn et al., 1990). Empirical research emphasizes the validation of phenomena and relationships in the real world through practical observation and measurement (Patten, 2016). Empirical research provides a reliable basis for theoretical validation and practical problem-solving (Adkins & Lury, 2009). Through practical observation and data analysis of real-life situations, empirical research can provide practical guidance for policy making, business decision-making, and disciplinary development.

This study chooses empirical research in order to fully utilize its advantages and provide scientific basis for solving practical organizational problems by verifying the relationship between variables. Empirical research emphasizes the collection and statistical analysis of actual data, which helps to accurately verify the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. The research objectives include exploring the mediating effects, which further emphasizes the value of empirical research as it can quantify the existence and degree of mediating effects, providing organizations with a deeper understanding. Therefore, choosing to conduct empirical research is reasonable and applicable.

In this study, the empirical approach is implemented through a structured quantitative design. Primary data are collected using a self-administered survey questionnaire distributed to university counselors. The constructs of interest, namely talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, are measured using validated instruments adapted from previous studies. The empirical research approach enables the researcher to test the proposed hypotheses and to examine both the direct and mediating effects among the variables using appropriate statistical techniques. By relying on observable and measurable indicators, this approach provides reliable evidence for understanding how talent management practices affect job engagement and employee performance in the higher education sector in Jinan.

3.3.2 Cross-sectional Research

This study adopts a cross-sectional research method. Cross section research is a research method of collecting data at the same time point, by comparing data from different groups or conditions, to understand the situation at a certain time point, without paying

attention to changes in time (Kesmodel, 2018). Cross section research can provide a horizontal comparison about a specific moment, providing a foundation for preliminary understanding of problems, identifying trends, and determining research directions. The results of cross-sectional studies can provide a theoretical basis for further in-depth research and provide value for the exploration stage of subsequent problems (Spector, 2019).

This study chooses cross-sectional research to fully utilize its advantages in quickly understanding and comparing the situation of multiple groups at a certain point in time. Cross sectional research can provide a quick horizontal perspective to preliminarily observe and analyze the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. The rapid acquisition of data enables researchers to quickly understand the differences in the research population, providing a theoretical basis for further in-depth research.

3.3.3 Quantitative Research

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, which places emphasis on measuring quantities through numerical data and utilizing statistical analysis methods. In quantitative research, data is collected from extensive samples and statistically analyzed to quantify and examine information, enabling the derivation of universally applicable conclusions (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The outcomes of quantitative research, achieved through statistical methods, possess a level of universality and offer practical guidance for theoretical validation. This method underscores precision in scientific inquiry, providing support for decision-making in academic.

The preference for quantitative research is driven by its benefits in handling quantitative data, conducting statistical analysis, and generating objective and replicable

results. This approach accurately quantifies the relationships between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance using numerical data, furnishing scientific evidence that is both universal and verifiable. Researchers gain the ability to assess and compare variables with greater accuracy, delivering reliable guidance for decision-makers. Opting for quantitative research also facilitates the analysis of large-scale samples, yielding conclusions with broad applicability, and consequently enhancing the credibility and applicability of the research. Hence, for the objective of quantifying relationships and facilitating practical problem-solving, quantitative research methods prove to be a fitting choice.

3.4 Research Sampling

3.4.1 Location of Sample Selection

The research location of this study was selected in Jinan City, Shandong Province. Jinan City is the capital of Shandong Province, China, located in the central and western parts of Shandong Province. It is one of the important cities with a long history and rich culture. Jinan has achieved significant development in higher education and is the center of higher education in Shandong Province (Jinan Education Bureau, 2023). It has several well-known universities and colleges, making contributions to cultivating outstanding talents in various fields.

As the capital of Shandong Province, Jinan holds an important position in the field of higher education. Higher education institutions in Jinan are active in the field of scientific research, actively promoting technological innovation and achievement transformation (General Office of Jinan Municipal People's Government, 2019). In addition, Jinan City attaches great importance to international exchange and cooperation, attracting a

certain number of international teachers and students (Jinan Municipal People's Government, 2022). In terms of talent cultivation, higher education institutions in Jinan actively promote curriculum reform and innovation and entrepreneurship education, cultivating students' comprehensive qualities and innovative abilities. The high-quality universities and research institutions in Jinan have trained a large number of talents for Shandong Province and even China, promoting the development of local social economy and making Jinan an important education and academic center in Shandong Province.

3.4.2 Population for Sample Selection

The research object of this study was carefully selected as counselors from relevant universities located within the Jinan city, Shandong Province. In China's higher education system, the term "university" typically refers to higher education institutions that are authorized to offer undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs, including bachelor's, master's, and even doctoral degrees. The subjects of this study are only focused on universities, and do not include counselors from junior colleges or vocational colleges. Primary data are collected via a self-administered questionnaire distributed to university counselors employed in both ordinary undergraduate institutions and applied undergraduate colleges (vocational universities) in Jinan, China. This is because university counselors typically operate within more academically rigorous and research-oriented environments, where expectations for talent management, job engagement, and employee performance may differ significantly. Moreover, universities often have more structured human resource systems and clearer career development pathways, making them a more suitable context for examining the theoretical relationships proposed in this study (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010).

Counselors, as frontline professionals who directly interact with students in universities, play a critical role in providing guidance, support, and mentorship. Studying this group allows for a deeper understanding of their level of job engagement and offers valuable insights into how talent management practices influence their engagement. This, in turn, contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying job engagement in the higher education context. Furthermore, exploring the relationship between counselors' engagement, talent management, and employee performance can help university administrators identify areas for improvement in work processes, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of counselors, and ultimately improve student services and educational outcomes. Optimizing talent management and enhancing counselor engagement and performance can improve talent cultivation and academic development, thereby boosting institutional competitiveness.

While numerous studies have examined the effects of talent management and job engagement on teaching staff in China, such as secondary school teachers and college instructors (Ho, 2021; Liang, 2021), research focusing specifically on university counselors remains limited. University counselors play a vital and indispensable role in higher education institutions by providing academic guidance, psychological support, and comprehensive student affairs management (Yang, 2023). Despite their essential function in maintaining student development and institutional stability, this group has received relatively less scholarly attention compared to faculty members. Therefore, selecting counselors as the focal population of this study addresses a critical research gap and contributes valuable insights into how talent management and job engagement relate to their performance outcomes.

To ensure the relevance and consistency of the data, this study defines the unit of analysis as full-time university counselors working in ordinary undergraduate and applied undergraduate institutions (vocational universities) in Jinan, China. The inclusion criteria are: (1) counselors who are formally employed on a full-time basis, (2) individuals whose primary responsibilities involve direct student support, career guidance, psychological counseling, and academic advising, and (3) those with at least one year of continuous counseling experience at their current institution. Exclusion criteria include part-time counselors, contract-based or temporary staff, administrative personnel whose primary duties are unrelated to student counseling, and those with less than one year of counseling experience. These criteria ensure that the data collected reflect the experiences of counselors who are fully engaged in student-centered roles and are likely to have established interactions with the talent management system of their institutions.

3.4.3 Number of Sample Selections

G*Power is a widely recognized statistical tool utilized for conducting power analysis, which is crucial for estimating the required sample size during the study design phase or assessing the statistical power of a test when a sample is already collected. This tool accommodates various statistical tests, including t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis, and chi-square tests. In the present study, which investigates the relationships between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, linear multiple regression analysis is employed to explore these relationships and potential mediating effects. The use of G*Power in this context is essential for determining the adequate sample size needed to achieve sufficient statistical power, typically set at 0.80 or higher. This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of Type I (α) and Type II (β) errors, thereby increasing the robustness and

credibility of the study’s findings.

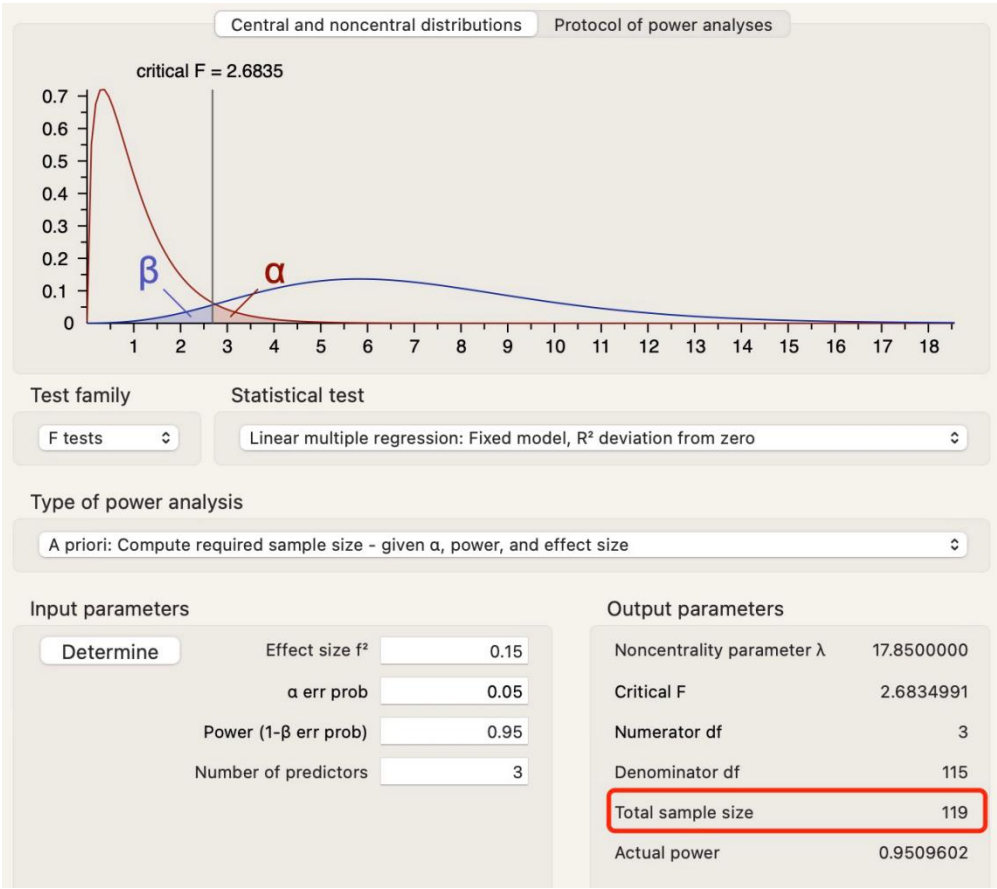


Figure 3.2 : Minimum sample size for G*Power calculation

By utilizing G*Power, this study can accurately estimate the sample size required for detecting a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) within a linear multiple regression model containing three predictors. For a significance level (α) of 0.05 and a desired power of 0.95, the software calculates that a minimum of 119 participants is necessary. This analysis highlights the importance of power analysis in ensuring the reliability of research outcomes. Accordingly, G*Power provides a solid foundation for sample selection and data collection, ensuring that the research is statistically well-equipped to detect the anticipated effects. The results of the G*Power analysis indicate that, to achieve a statistical power of 0.95 and a

significance level of 0.05 for detecting a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) in a model with three predictors, a minimum sample size of 119 participants is required. This sample size ensures that the research findings will be both statistically significant and interpretable.

According to statistics conducted by the People's Government of Jinan City in 2023, the permanent population of Jinan City at the end of 2022 was 9.415 million, an increase of 0.8% compared to the end of the previous year. According to the 2022 Education Statistics Bulletin released by the Jinan Education Bureau, there are a total of 12 universities in Jinan (5 public universities and 7 private universities). There are 192,550 students on campus, including 57,232 regular undergraduate students, 10,338 vocational undergraduate students.

Table 3.1: Population and Sampling Data

Category	Data
Total Universities in Jinan	12 (5 public/ 7 private)
Total Students on Campus	192,550
Recommended Counselor Ratio	1:200 (Counselor : Students)
Minimum Number of Counselors Required	338
Sample Size for Population of 340	181(refer to Krejcie and Morgan Table)
Sample Size for Public Universities	75
Sample Size for Private Universities	106

Note: The sample sizes for public and private universities were calculated using stratified sampling based on their proportions in the total university population.

According to the regulations on the construction of the counselor team in ordinary higher education institutions, higher education institutions should set up full-time counselor positions at a ratio of no less than 1:200 between teachers and students. According to the specific number of undergraduate students (67,570) and the minimum configuration

required by the government, the minimum number of counselors in the current 12 public and private universities in Jinan should be 338. According to the sample division of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for different populations, the corresponding sample size for a population of 340 is 181. The population and sampling data are shown in the Table 3.1.

3.4.4 Sampling Method

This study chooses probability sampling. The importance of probability sampling lies in its ability to ensure sample representativeness, generalizability, and reliability. In probability sampling, the probability of each individual being selected is equal, which helps to reduce sampling errors and selection bias. In addition, selecting probability sampling can also improve the rigor of scientific research and the effectiveness of statistical analysis. The reason for choosing probability sampling in this study is its relative scientificity and the applicability of statistical methods. Probability sampling provides more accurate statistics, making research more credible. The results of probability sampling are more externally valid, providing a reliable foundation for the rationality and generalizability of the research.

This study employed stratified purposive sampling to ensure a representative and methodologically sound selection of participants. The rationale for choosing this method lies in its ability to capture the target population, particularly in terms of university type (public vs. private), institutional size, and geographical distribution within Jinan. This heterogeneity reflects key structural and operational differences across institutions, which may influence the implementation and perception of talent management practices, job engagement, and employee performance among counselors.

The target population consists of university counselors from 12 higher education institutions in Jinan, including both ordinary undergraduate universities and vocational

undergraduate colleges. These universities are geographically scattered across various districts in the city, contributing to the population's diversity in terms of institutional mission, student population, and administrative structure. To account for this, the initial stratification criterion was university type, dividing the population into two strata: public universities and private universities. The total sample includes 181 participants, proportionally allocated with 75 counselors selected from 5 public universities and 106 from 7 private universities. This reflects a proportionate stratified sampling approach, with sampling ratios aligned to the actual distribution of counselor populations in public and private universities.

The selection process followed a step-by-step procedure:

- (1) Universities in Jinan were first categorized into public and private types.
- (2) Within each stratum, universities were selected based on purposive criteria such as size, accessibility, and willingness to participate.
- (3) Simple random sampling was then conducted within each selected university to ensure that every eligible counselor had an equal chance of being selected.
- (4) Counselors were included based on criteria such as being full-time, having at least one year of experience, and being directly involved in student support services.

By using this stratified purposive sampling method, the study captures institutional diversity while maintaining representativeness and analytical rigor. The proportional sampling strategy, combined with attention to geographic dispersion and institutional characteristics, strengthens the external validity of the findings and ensures that different

segments of the counselor population are adequately represented in the analysis.

3.5 Research Instruments

There are two types of questions in this survey questionnaire, one is a multiple-choice question used to collect basic population information. Another type is the 5-point Likert scale, which is used to collect participants' opinions on variables. first part of this survey collects demographic information to analyze participant characteristics. The content of these surveys includes gender, age, education status, work experience, etc.

Table 3.2: Talent Management

Statement	Reference Form
TM1. The good working conditions and fair wages have enabled the university I work for to attract the right talent.	Al Aina & Atan, (2020)
TM2. In the university I work for, we support employee training and career progression.	
TM3. The university I work for has a competitive compensation system, in comparison to other organizations in the same industry, which is a motivating factor for our employees.	
TM4. The university I work for has flexible working hours as a motivating factor for our employees.	
TM5. In the university I work for, an in-house development program is commonly used.	
TM6. The university management motivates me with updated feedback for my career developmental purposes.	
TM7. The university I work for believes career planning facilitates the expansion and growth of this university.	
TM8. The university I work for plans on employee growth and progression.	

Second parts of the survey is dedicated to talent management and utilizes the questionnaire developed by Al Aina and Atan (2020). It consists of a total of 8 questions, with 2 questions each addressing talent attraction, talent retention, learning and development, and career management. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive assessment of the key aspects of talent management. The detailed content of each item is presented in Table 3.2, providing clarity on the areas being evaluated.

The third part is a questionnaire on job engagement, which uses the questionnaire from Rich et al. (2010) and consists of 6 questions. The specific item content is shown in the following Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Job Engagement

Statement	Reference Form
JE1. I devote a lot of energy to my job. JE2. I try my hardest to perform well on my job. JE3. I feel energetic at my job. JE4. I am interested in my job. JE5. At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job. JE6. At work, I am absorbed by my job.	Rich et al. (2010)

The third part is a questionnaire about employee performance, which uses the questionnaire from Andrade et al. (2020) and consists of 5 questions. This survey questionnaire is a short version of the job performance self assessment scale. The specific item content is shown in the following Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Employee Performance

Statement	Reference Form
EP1: I try to update my technical knowledge to do my job.	Andrade et al. (2020)
EP2: I plan actions according to my tasks and organizational routines.	
EP3: I take initiatives to improve my results at work.	
EP4: I seek new solutions for problems that may come up in my job.	
EP5: I work hard to do the tasks designated to me.	

To minimize Common Method Variance (CMV), several procedural remedies were implemented during the design and administration of the questionnaire. First, the items were carefully constructed to reduce ambiguity, and constructs were measured using different scale formats where appropriate to avoid response pattern bias. Additionally, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce evaluation apprehension and encourage honest responses. Temporal separation was not feasible due to the cross-sectional nature of the study; however, Harman's single-factor test was conducted post-data collection to statistically assess CMV risk.

Regarding the translation process, as the original questionnaire was developed in English and the target respondents were native Chinese speakers, the instrument underwent a rigorous translation and back-translation procedure. First, the English version was translated into Chinese by a bilingual expert. Then, a second independent bilingual translator, unaware of the original questionnaire, translated the Chinese version back into English. Discrepancies between the original and back-translated versions were carefully identified, thoroughly reviewed, and meticulously resolved through detailed discussions and consensus among the research team.

To establish content validity, the questionnaire items were developed based on an extensive review of relevant literature and existing validated scales. Expert reviews were conducted with three domain scholars to evaluate the relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the items. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the instrument. For reliability, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample to pre-test the questionnaire. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with all constructs exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

3.6 Data Collection

This study utilized Wenjuanxing, one of the most widely adopted online survey platforms in China, to administer the data collection process. Wenjuanxing offers a user-friendly interface for questionnaire design, supports real-time monitoring of response rates, and allows flexible dissemination through various digital channels, including WeChat, email, and institutional networks. Its built-in data export functionality facilitates efficient integration with statistical software for subsequent analysis.

The data collection process followed a structured and time-bound plan to ensure efficiency and response quality. On the first day, a Wenjuanxing account was registered and the survey questionnaire was uploaded. On the second day, an internal pre-test was conducted among a small group of counselors (not included in the final analysis) to check for clarity, logical flow, and functionality. Necessary adjustments were made based on the feedback received.

From days three to four, the questionnaire was disseminated through official communication channels, including counselor WeChat groups, internal university mailing lists, and direct messages to qualified participants. On the fifth day, the research team

monitored response progress via Wenjuanxing's dashboard and adjusted dissemination strategies accordingly—for instance, by following up with underrepresented universities. From the sixth to the tenth day, continued reminders and engagement efforts were carried out to encourage participation.

On the eleventh day, a final round of invitations was issued to ensure maximum participation. On the twelfth day, data collection was formally closed, and the dataset was downloaded, verified, and backed up for analysis. Throughout the entire process, only respondents who met the inclusion criteria—full-time counselors currently working in public or private universities in Jinan—were included in the final sample. This comprehensive and controlled data collection strategy ensured both the efficiency and integrity of the data, while maintaining participant anonymity and data security throughout the process.

3.7 Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 was employed for data analysis in this study. SPSS is a widely recognized and user-friendly software that supports a comprehensive range of statistical techniques, making it particularly suitable for social science research involving quantitative data. The choice of SPSS is justified by its robust capabilities in handling descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and regression analysis—all of which are essential for examining the relationships among the variables in this study.

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) will be used to summarize demographic characteristics and survey responses. Cronbach's alpha will assess the internal consistency reliability of the constructs. Pearson correlation analysis

will identify the strength and direction of linear relationships among variables. Multiple regression analysis will test the direct effects of independent variables on the dependent variable, and mediation analysis will be conducted using the PROCESS macro (Model 4) developed by Hayes (2018), which is integrated with SPSS. The guidelines for interpreting regression results will follow conventional statistical thresholds, with significance levels set at $p < 0.05$ and confidence intervals at 95%. These procedures ensure the rigor, transparency, and reproducibility of the data analysis process.

Descriptive statistical analysis is a statistical method aimed at summarizing, summarizing, and visualizing a dataset in order to understand its basic characteristics (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). By calculating key statistics such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, etc., the study can observe the trend of data distribution. Descriptive statistical analysis provides researchers with intuitive data cognition and lays the foundation for further analysis and decision-making. Descriptive statistical analysis show in the following Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Descriptive Statistical Analysis Step

Step 1: Data collection	Collect the necessary data to ensure its completeness.
Step 2: Data cleaning	Check for outliers, missing values, and abnormal distribution in the data, and take appropriate measures, such as filling in missing values
Step 3: statistics calculation	Calculate key descriptive statistics, such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values
Step 4: Distribution charts	Draw histograms and pie charts to visually display the distribution and dispersion of data

Multiple regression analysis is a statistical method aimed at studying the complex effects of multiple independent variables on a dependent variable and establishing mathematical models to simulate actual relationships (Stolzenberg, 2004). It allows for explaining the interactions between independent variables, evaluating the relative contributions of each variable, helping to predictions and inferences (Maxwell, 2000). Multiple regression analysis is widely used in fields like economics, sociology, and science to enhance understanding and support accurate model building and empirical research. The analysis steps of multiple linear regression are show in the figure 3.2.

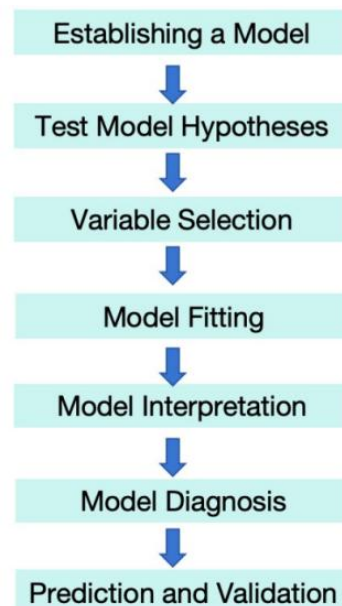


Figure 3.3: Analysis Steps of Multiple Linear Regression

Regression analysis allows for testing the influence relationships between variables and detecting mediating effects. In SPSS, this is typically done using a layer-by-layer approach: first, conduct regression to examine the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y), including control variables. Next, regress the mediator variable (M) on Y and save the mediator's predicted values. Then, perform a second regression analysis with both X and the mediator's predicted values to predict Y.

Finally, evaluate the direct effect of (X) on (Y) and the indirect effect through (M), assessing both statistical and substantive significance of the mediation.

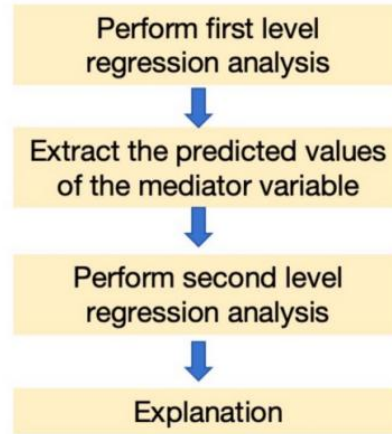


Figure 3.4: Analysis Steps of Mediating Effects

3.8 Chapter Summary

This study mainly provides an overall statement of methodology, clarifying the methods for selecting empirical research, cross-sectional research, and quantitative research. The area, population, number of people, and sampling method of the selected sample have been determined. Moreover, chapter 3 also indicate the specific methods of data collection and the specific steps of data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter delved into the analysis of the collected data, providing a thorough examination of demographic information and exploring the intricate relationships among talent management, job engagement, and employee performance. The findings reveal significant insights into how effective talent management practices can enhance job engagement, which in turn positively impacts overall employee performance. The chapter further discusses the implications of these findings for organizational strategies and suggests areas for future research to build on these insights.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the three dimensions. The Talent Management scale (TM1–TM8) showed excellent reliability, with corrected item-total correlations ranging from 0.888 to 0.901. Deleting any item did not significantly improve reliability. The Job Engagement scale (JE1–JE6) also demonstrated strong internal consistency, with item-total correlations between 0.827 and 0.854. Similarly, the Employee Performance scale (EP1–EP5) yielded acceptable reliability, and item-total correlations ranged from 0.741 to 0.784. Overall, all scales met the acceptable standards for internal consistency and no items required removal.

As an important step in the preliminary scale verification, this study conducted a pilot test on 60 full-time counselors in a university to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire and ensure that each measurement dimension has good discrimination and

consistency. The data from this stage provides a strong basis and optimization direction for the subsequent formal testing.

To assess the construct validity of the measurement instrument, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.792, indicating a meritorious level of factorability. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 575.868$, $df = 171$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, collectively accounting for 61.38% of the total variance after rotation. Specifically, Factor 1 explained 25.97% of the variance, Factor 2 accounted for 19.31%, and Factor 3 contributed 16.10%. These results support the multidimensional structure of the scale.

The rotated component matrix revealed clear and distinct factor loadings for the items, with all values exceeding the threshold of 0.40, thus indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Items TM1 to TM8 loaded strongly on Factor 1, corresponding to talent management. Items JE1 to JE6 loaded on Factor 2, representing job engagement), while items EP1 to EP5 loaded on Factor 3, associated with employee performance. Communalities for all items ranged from 0.490 to 0.719, demonstrating that a substantial proportion of each item's variance was explained by the underlying factors. In summary, the factor structure was robust and consistent with theoretical expectations, suggesting that the measurement items exhibit adequate reliability and validity for subsequent analysis.

Table 4.1: Validity Analysis Results

Item	Factor Loadings			Communalit y (CFV)	Cronbach' s Alpha
	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3		
TM1	0.772	-0.129	-0.054	0.615	0.900
TM2	0.82	-0.009	0.178	0.704	0.89
TM3	0.821	0.003	0.069	0.679	0.891
TM4	0.819	0.12	-0.112	0.697	0.898
TM5	0.719	-0.139	0.317	0.636	0.895
TM6	0.698	-0.086	0.169	0.524	0.901
TM7	0.836	-0.09	0.112	0.719	0.888
TM8	0.704	-0.044	0.288	0.581	0.901
JE1	0.071	0.715	-0.039	0.518	0.854
JE2	-0.029	0.831	-0.003	0.691	0.827
JE3	-0.145	0.787	0.043	0.642	0.833
JE4	-0.092	0.707	0.143	0.529	0.851
JE5	-0.079	0.715	0.246	0.578	0.844
JE6	-0.03	0.833	0.077	0.701	0.828

Table 4.1 continued

EP1	0.072	0.136	0.767	0.612	0.759
EP2	0.202	0.154	0.753	0.632	0.741
EP3	0.146	0.054	0.683	0.49	0.784
EP4	0.103	0.155	0.717	0.548	0.768
EP5	0.055	-0.073	0.746	0.565	0.776
Eigenvalue (before rotation)	5.452	3.994	2.215	-	-
Variance Explained % (before rotation)	28.70%	21.02%	11.66%	-	-
Cumulative Variance Explained % (before rotation)	28.70%	49.72%	61.38%	-	-
Eigenvalue (after rotation)	4.935	3.668	3.058	-	-
Variance Explained % (after rotation)	25.97%	19.31%	16.10%	-	-
Cumulative Variance Explained % (after rotation)	25.97%	45.28%	61.38%	-	-
KMO	0.792			-	-
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	575.868			-	-
<i>df</i>	171			-	-
<i>p</i>	0.00			-	-

4.3 Normality Test

This study employed P-P plots to examine the normality of the data distribution. As shown in Figure 4.1, the data points for the variable Talent Management are approximately aligned along the diagonal line. Similar patterns are observed in Figure 4.2 for Job

Engagement and in Figure 4.3 for Employee Performance, where the data points also closely follow the reference line. These results indicate that the residuals of all three key variables are approximately normally distributed, thereby satisfying the normality assumption required for regression analysis. This confirms the appropriateness of the data for further statistical procedures, such as structural equation modeling.

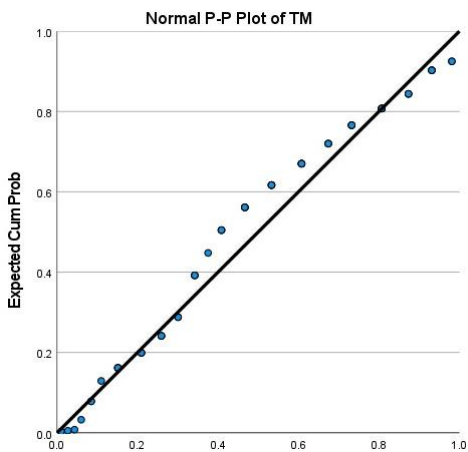


Figure 4.1: Normal P-P Plot of TM

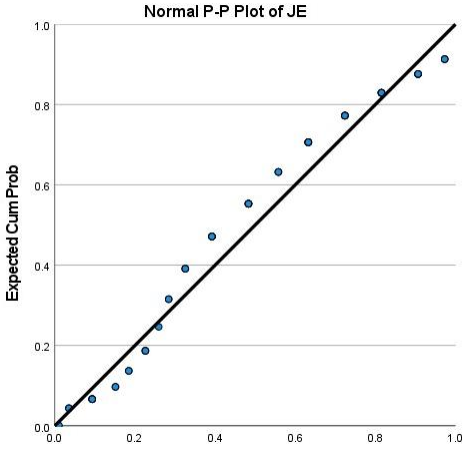


Figure 4.2: Normal P-P Plot of JE

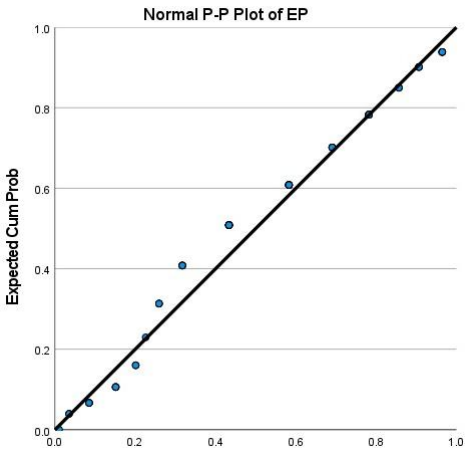


Figure 4.3: Normal P-P Plot of EP

4.4 Demographic Information

The data collected from the survey provides valuable insights into the demographic composition and work characteristics of the respondents. In this study, a total of 220 questionnaires were distributed, and 200 valid responses were collected. Among the excluded responses, 7 were incomplete, 6 were identified as duplicate submissions, and 6 participants were verified to be part-time counselors, thus not meeting the inclusion criteria of the study. This study collected a total of 181 valid data as shown in Table 4.1.

The data collected from the survey provide valuable insights into the demographic composition and work characteristics of the respondents, with a total of 181 valid responses summarized in Table 4.1. The age distribution reflects a relatively balanced spread across various age groups, with the largest proportion of respondents falling within the 26 – 35 years old category (25.4%), followed by those aged 36 – 45 (23.2%) and 46 – 55 (21.0%). The smallest proportion (10.5%) is found in the over 56 age group. Notably, 19.9% of respondents are between 20 – 26 years old, suggesting a mix of early- and mid-career professionals. From a contextual standpoint, the age distribution of the sample aligns with current employment trends for university counselors in China. Typically, the age requirement for counselor positions is under 30 years old, although this limit may be extended to 40 years old under special conditions. For example, the 2025 open recruitment announcement of Shandong Engineering Vocational and Technical University states that counselor applicants must be under 35 years old., while Jinan Vocational College allows applicants up to 40 years old for junior-level positions. Therefore, the observed age composition in this study corresponds reasonably well with these institutional norms and supports the representativeness of the sample within the target population of counselors.

The gender distribution of the respondents in this study is relatively balanced, with 52.5% male and 47.5% female participants. This near-equal representation reflects ongoing efforts by universities in China to address gender imbalances among student affairs staff, particularly university counselors. Traditionally, the gender composition of counselors in many institutions has been skewed, often with a higher proportion of female counselors. However, recent recruitment trends suggest a deliberate move toward gender balance. For example, in the 2024 recruitment plan for full-time counselors at Soochow University, 9 males and 4 females were to be hired, reflecting a male-to-female ratio of 1:0.44. In contrast, Nanjing University achieved a more balanced distribution in its 2023 counselor admissions, recruiting 7 males and 7 females, resulting in a 1:1 ratio. The gender composition in this study aligns with current institutional practices, supporting the sample's representativeness.

The tenure data reveals that a significant portion of respondents (36.5%) have been working at the university for 4-6 years, followed by those with over 10 years (22.1%) and 7-10 years (21.5%). This suggests a stable workforce with many employees having mid to long-term tenure. Furthermore, the total work experience data indicates that most respondents (59.7%) have over 10 years of work experience, highlighting a mature and seasoned workforce. In terms of educational attainment, a majority of respondents (63%) hold a graduate degree, signifying a highly educated group. These findings align with the employment policies of several Chinese universities, which emphasize long-term tenure and role stability for full-time counselors. For example, Shandong University of Technology (2024) requires counselors to serve for at least eight years before transferring, with exceptions permitted under specific conditions. Zhengzhou University (2023) stipulates a five-year non-transfer period aligned with contract terms. Similarly, Nanchang

University (2024) enforces an eight-year service requirement. These policies emphasize stability and continuity, aligning with the tenure patterns found in this study.

Table 4.2: Population Information

Question	Options	Subtotal	Percentage
What is your Age Group?	20-26 years old	36	19.9%
	26-35 years old	46	25.4%
	36-45 years old	42	23.2%
	46-55 years old	38	21%
	Over 56 years old	19	10.5%
What is your gender?	Male	95	52.5%
	Female	86	47.5%
How long have you been working in this university?	Less than 1 year	15	8.3%
	1-3 years	21	11.6%
	4-6 years	66	36.5%
	7-10 years	39	21.5%
	Over 10 years	40	22.1%
What is your total work experience?	Less than 1 year	9	5%
	1-3 years	10	5.5%
	4-6 years	17	9.4%
	7-10 years	37	20.4%
	Over 10 years	108	59.7%
What is the highest education you have attained?	Undergraduate degree	67	37%
	Graduate degree	114	63%
Total respondents		181	100%

These findings have several implications for organizational strategies. The diverse age range and nearly equal gender distribution can foster a balanced and inclusive work environment, promoting varied perspectives and innovation. The stability indicated by the tenure data suggests high organizational commitment, which can be leveraged for long-term strategic planning. The high level of work experience and education among respondents can drive superior job performance and engagement, making it essential to implement targeted talent management strategies can enhance employee performance.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was not employed in this study due to the primary research objective focusing on testing direct and mediating effects within a relatively straightforward conceptual framework. Instead, SPSS was used in combination with multiple regression analysis and the Bootstrap method, which are well-suited for examining mediation effects and estimating robust confidence intervals. Given the sample size and the study's emphasis on direct empirical relationships rather than modeling latent constructs with multiple indicators, this approach offered greater practicality, interpretability, and statistical adequacy for the research objectives.

4.5.1 Discussion of Talent Management and Job Engagement

Table 4.3 summarizes the relationship between talent management (TM) and job engagement (JE). The high R value of 0.929 indicates a strong correlation between the variables. An R Square of 0.863 means that 86.3% of the variability in job engagement is explained by talent management, showing the model's strong explanatory power. The Adjusted R Square of 0.863, close to the R Square, suggests minimal overfitting. The standard error of 0.39757 reflects a good model fit, indicating talent management as a

significant predictor of job engagement.

The ANOVA results (Table 4.4) demonstrate that the regression model, which includes talent management as a predictor of job engagement, is highly significant. The regression sum of squares (178.812) indicates that a substantial portion of the variability in job engagement is explained by talent management. With an F -statistic of 1131.3 and a p -value of 0.001, the model is statistically significant, affirming that talent management has a significant impact on job engagement. The low residual sum of squares (28.293) and mean square residual (0.158) further suggest a good fit of the model, indicating that effective talent management is crucial for enhancing job engagement among employees.

Table 4.5 presents the coefficients results of the regression analysis between talent management and job engagement. The constant term ($\beta = 0.327$, $p = 0.003$) represents the expected value of job engagement when talent management is zero. The unstandardized coefficient for talent management ($\beta = 0.922$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that for each unit increase in talent management, job engagement is expected to increase by 0.922 units. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.929$) shows the strength of this relationship, with a very high t -value (33.635) confirming the statistical significance of talent management as a predictor of job engagement. These results highlight that effective talent management significantly and positively influences job engagement.

Table 4.3: Model Summary of Talent Management and Job Engagement

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.929a	0.863	0.863	0.39757
a. Predictors: (Constant), TM			

Table 4.4: ANOVA Results of Talent Management and Job Engagement

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Regression	178.812	1	178.812	1131.3	.000b
Residual	28.293	179	0.158		
Total	207.104	180			
a. Dependent Variable: JE; b. Predictors: (Constant), TM					

Table 4.5: Coefficients Results of Talent Management and Job Engagement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	beta	<i>t</i>	sig.
(Constant)	0.327	0.108		3.028	0.003
TM	0.922	0.027	0.929	33.635	0
a. Dependent Variable: JE					

4.5.2 Discussion of Talent Management and Employee Performance

Table 4.6 summarizes the relationship between talent management and employee performance (EP). The R value of 0.944 indicates a very strong correlation, while an R Square of 0.891 shows that 89.1% of the variability in employee performance is explained by talent management, demonstrating the model's strong explanatory power. The Adjusted R Square, matching the R Square at 0.891, suggests the model is well-fitted without overfitting. The standard error of 0.35833 reflects a good model fit, confirming that talent management is a significant predictor of employee performance.

Table 4.7 presents the ANOVA results for the relationship between talent management and employee performance. The regression sum of squares (188.72) indicates that a substantial portion of the variability in employee performance is explained by talent management. With a very high F -statistic (1469.768) and a significance value of 0.001, the model is statistically significant, confirming that talent management has a significant impact on employee performance. The residual sum of squares (22.984) and mean square residual (0.128) suggest that the model fits the data well. The ANOVA results highlight that effective talent management is a predictor of employee performance.

Table 4.8 presents the coefficients results for the regression analysis between talent management and employee performance. The constant term ($\beta = 0.182$, $p = 0.01$) represents the expected value of employee performance when talent management is zero. The unstandardized coefficient for talent management ($\beta = 0.947$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that for each unit increase in talent management, employee performance is expected to increase by 0.947 units. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.944$) demonstrates a very strong relationship, with a high t -value (38.338) confirming the statistical significance of talent management as a predictor of employee performance. These results emphasize that effective talent management significantly and positively influences employee performance.

Table 4.6: Model Summary of Talent Management and Employee Performance

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.944a	0.891	0.891	0.35833
a. Predictors: (Constant), TM			

Table 4.7: ANOVA Results of Talent Management and Employee Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Regression	188.72	1	188.72	1469.768	.000b
Residual	22.984	179	0.128		
Total	211.704	180			
a. Dependent Variable: EP; b. Predictors: (Constant), TM					

Table 4.8: Coefficients Results of Talent Management and Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients beta		
	B	Std. Error		<i>t</i>	sig.
(Constant)	0.255	0.097		2.621	0.01
TM	0.947	0.025	0.944	38.338	0
a. Dependent Variable: EP					

4.5.3 Discussion of Job Engagement and Employee Performance

Table 4.9 provides a model summary of the relationship between job engagement and employee performance. The R value of 0.932 indicates a very strong correlation between the two variables. An R Square of 0.869 suggests that 86.9% of the variability in employee performance can be explained by job engagement, demonstrating the model's high explanatory power. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.868, very close to the R Square value, implies that the model is not overfitting and remains robust. The standard error of the estimate, 0.39389, indicates a good fit of the model, showing the average distance of the

observed values from the regression line is relatively small. Overall, this summary underscores that job engagement is a significant and strong predictor of employee performance.

Table 4.10 presents the ANOVA results for the relationship between job engagement and employee performance. The regression sum of squares (183.932) indicates that a significant portion of the variability in employee performance is explained by job engagement. The high *F*-statistic (1185.493) and the significance value of 0.001 suggest that the model is statistically significant, confirming that job engagement has a substantial impact on employee performance. The residual sum of squares (27.772) and mean square residual (0.155) further indicate that the model fits the data well. Overall, the ANOVA results highlight that JE is a crucial and strong predictor of EP.

Table 4.9: Model Summary of Job Engagement and Employee Performance

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.932a	0.869	0.868	0.39389
a. Predictors: (Constant), JE			

Table 4.10: ANOVA Results of Job Engagement and Employee Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Regression	183.932	1	183.932	1185.493	.000b
Residual	27.772	179	0.155		
Total	211.704	180			
a. Dependent Variable: EP; b. Predictors: (Constant), JE					

Table 4.11: Coefficients Results of Job Engagement and Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients beta		
	B	Std. Error		<i>t</i>	sig.
(Constant)	0.244	0.109		2.244	0.026
JE	0.942	0.027	0.932	34.431	0
a. Dependent Variable: EP					

Table 4.11 presents the coefficients results for the regression analysis between job engagement and employee performance. The constant term ($\beta = 0.244$, $p = 0.026$) represents the expected value of employee performance when job engagement is zero, although it is not statistically significant. The unstandardized coefficient for job engagement ($\beta = 0.942$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that for each unit increase in job engagement, employee performance is expected to increase by 0.942 units. The standardized coefficient (beta = 0.932) shows a very strong relationship, with a high t-value (34.431) confirming the statistical significance of JE as a predictor of EP. These results underscore that JE significantly and positively influences EP.

4.5.4 Discussing the Mediating Role of Job Engagement

When conducting the mediation effect test, this study used the stepwise regression analysis method in SPSS. This method consists of three steps. Firstly, it tests whether the independent variable (X) has statistical significance on the regression equation of the dependent variable (Y) (represented by the path c). Secondly, test whether the regression equation of X on the mediator variable (M) has statistical significance (represented by path a). Finally, verify whether the regression equation of X and M for Y has statistical

significance (represented by paths c' and b).

After conducting the above tests, there are several main situations analyzed. The first type, if c, a, c', and b are all significant, it is a partial mediating effect. If c, a, and b are all significant and c' is not significant, then it is a complete mediating effect. The third scenario is that, except for the first two cases, the mediating effect is not significant in other cases. The specific path model is shown in the following figure.

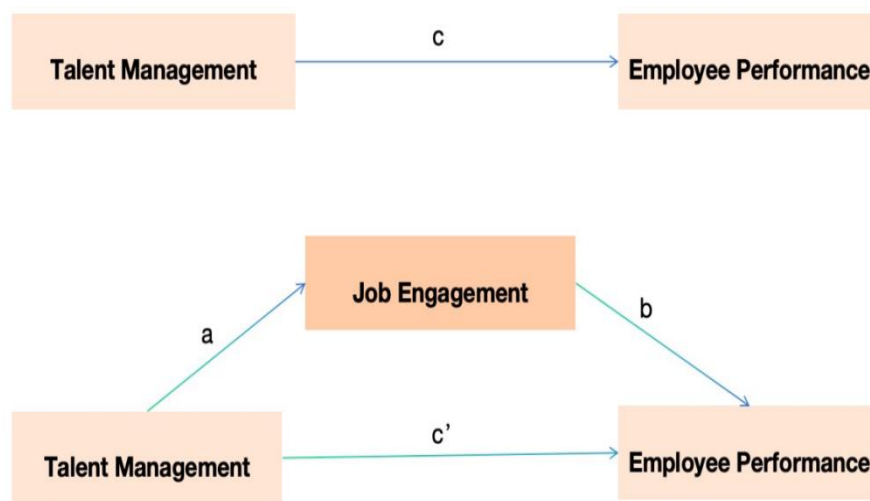


Figure 4.4: Path Diagram of Mediate Model

After clarifying the analysis method, reviewing Table 4.7, it has been confirmed that talent management has a positive impact on employee performance ($\text{sig} = 0$, $\beta = 0.947$, $t = 38.338$), indicating that path c is valid. Looking back at Table 4.4, it is also found that talent management significantly and positively influences job engagement ($\text{sig} = 0$, $\beta = 0.922$, $t = 33.635$), which indicates that path a is valid.

The final step of testing the independent, mediating, and dependent variables (Table 4.12) showed that talent management had a significance influence on employee performance ($\text{sig} = 0.01$, $\beta = 0.573$, $t = 9.576$). However, compared to the absolute value

of the coefficient in the first step, it has decreased. The regression equation showed that job engagement had a significance influence on employee performance ($\text{sig} = 0.01$, $\beta = 0.406$, $t = 6.723$). The 95% confidence intervals for both variables do not include zero, further confirming the significant positive relationships between talent management, job engagement and employee performance. Thus, this study can conclude that job engagement partially mediates the impact of talent management on employee performance.

Table 4.12: Bootstrap for Coefficients

	B	Bias	Std. Error	t	Bootstrap a	95% Confidence Interval	
					Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper
(Constant)	0.122	0.001	0.097	1.371	0.197	-0.069	0.336
TM	0.573	-0.003	0.055	9.576	0.001	0.464	0.679
JE	0.406	0.003	0.053	6.723	0.001	0.299	0.512
a. Dependent Variable: EP							

4.6 Chapter Summary

This survey data reveals a balanced age and gender distribution among respondents, with a diverse range of ages and nearly equal male and female representation. Most respondents have substantial tenure at the university and extensive work experience, with a high level of educational attainment. This indicates a stable, experienced, and highly educated workforce, highlighting the importance of effective talent management, professional development, and recognition programs to enhance employee performance and engagement. In addition, data analysis has also found a close relationship between talent management, employee performance, and job engagement. Specifically, talent management has a positive impact on both job engagement and employee performance, and job

engagement also has a positive impact on employee performance. Moreover, job engagement partially mediates the relationship between talent management and employee performance.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the research findings and offers actionable recommendations for industries related to the study. It delves into the implications of the results, providing insights into how these industries can apply the findings to improve their practices and strategies. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the limitations of the study, acknowledging areas where the research may have fallen short or where the data may not fully capture the complexities of the topic. It also outlines potential avenues for future research, suggesting specific improvements and new directions that could enhance the understanding and application of the study's findings. This comprehensive discussion aims to provide a clear roadmap for both current industry applications and future academic inquiries.

5.2 Discussion

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, grounded in both the research findings and a thorough review of existing literature.

5.2.1 The Relationship between Talent Management and Job Engagement

The research findings of this study indicate that talent management has a positive impact on job engagement, which is consistent with the research results in a large number of existing literature. For example, Kadiri and Jimoh's (2021) study found a significant

positive correlation between talent management and job engagement in the banking industry. Similarly, more research also support this conclusion, emphasizing the importance of effective talent management practices in enhancing employee job engagement (Kamel, 2019; Li & Jia, 2021).

Theoretically, these findings align with HRM theory, which emphasizes the importance of systematically managing human capital to enhance employees' behaviors and attitudes (Fang, 2021). Talent management, as an essential HRM practice, signals organizational investment in employees, thereby promoting greater job engagement. Furthermore, this relationship can also be interpreted through the lens of SET, which posits that when employees perceive supportive talent management practices, they are more likely to reciprocate through heightened engagement and commitment (Davlembayeva, & Alamanos, 2023).

However, the research results of this study also show inconsistencies with some literature. O'Connor and Crowley Henry (2019) found that unfair management practices may significantly reduce employee job engagement, while Jung et al. (2021) found that employees who lack engagement and enthusiasm are more likely to have intentions to quit. In addition, Guzeller and Celiker (2020) argue that high turnover rates have a negative impact on talent management. These inconsistent results may be attributed to the fairness of management practices, psychological and emotional factors of employees, as well as different work environments and cultural backgrounds.

In the present study, although the positive relationship is significant, the effect size is moderate, suggesting that other latent variables such as leadership quality, perceived fairness, or personal motivation may influence the strength of this relationship. It is also

possible that variations in the implementation of talent management practices across institutions in Jinan have led to differential perceptions and outcomes among counselors. Moreover, given the dual structure of the sample (public vs. private universities), organizational culture and administrative practices may also shape employees' reactions to talent initiatives.

In conclusion, while this study supports the prevailing view that talent management positively impacts job engagement, it also highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how this relationship unfolds in different institutional and cultural contexts. Future research should further explore mediating and moderating factors such as organizational support, justice perceptions, or leadership styles to deepen theoretical insights and inform the design of more tailored and effective talent management strategies.

5.2.2 The Relationship between Talent Management and Employee Performance

This study found that talent management has a positive impact on employee performance, which is consistent with the conclusions of multiple existing studies. For example, the research by Al Hussaini et al. (2019) indicate that talent management strategies have a significant positive impact on employee performance. Similarly, Wickramaaratchi and Peru's (2020) research also confirmed this. Further supporting the conclusion of this study are Sopia et al.'s (2020) research indicate that talent management plays a critical role in improving employee performance.

However, there are also some research results that are inconsistent with the findings of this article. Al Aina and Atan's (2020) study suggests that talent attraction and retention have no impact on sustainable organizational performance, but have significant positive effects on learning and development as well as career management. Achmada and Soetjito

(2022) found that talent management does not directly affect employee performance. These inconsistent results may stem from different research methods, industry backgrounds, and cultural differences. For example, some studies may focus on specific talent management practices and overlook the implementation effects of overall strategies, leading to differences in results.

While some discrepancies exist, the findings of this study are generally consistent with the majority of the literature, indicating that effective talent management strategies significantly improve employee performance. The theoretical framework of HRM theory, particularly in relation to performance management, can help to explain these findings, suggesting that the strategic alignment of talent management with organizational goals is crucial to enhancing performance. Similarly, SET can provide insight into how talent management practices influence employees' reciprocal behaviors and commitment, further improving their performance.

Future research should explore the specific impacts and optimization paths of talent management practices in various contexts, addressing the complex relationship between these practices and employee performance. It is essential to identify mediating factors such as organizational support, job satisfaction, or leadership styles that might influence this relationship. By further investigating these elements, researchers can provide more comprehensive theoretical insights and practical guidance, which will be valuable in developing more effective and context-sensitive talent management strategies.

5.2.3 The Relationship between Job Engagement and Employee Performance

This study found that job engagement had a positive influence on employee performance. Based on the synthesis of existing literature, several studies consistently

highlight the positive relationship between job engagement and employee performance. Perangin Angin et al. (2020), Fidyah and Setiawati (2020), and Ngwenya and Pelsier (2020) all affirm that heightened job engagement enhances employee performance. This consensus underscores the critical role of fostering job engagement in achieving favorable performance outcomes.

However, some studies present contrasting findings. For instance, Noercahyo et al. (2021) observed that while job engagement positively influences job satisfaction, its impact on organizational performance is not significant. Similarly, Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) found no direct positive influence of job engagement on employee performance. These discrepancies may be due to a range of factors, such as the specific nature of the work, the organizational context, or differences in how job engagement is conceptualized and measured. SET provides a useful framework for understanding these findings, suggesting that the quality of the exchange relationship between employees and their organization can influence how engagement translates into performance. In organizations where employees perceive the exchange as less favorable or where engagement is not adequately supported, the expected positive outcomes may not materialize.

In addition, contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, and communication skills may also mediate the relationship between job engagement and employee performance (Hawkes, Biggs & Hegerty, 2021; Huaman et al., 2023; Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). For instance, in some organizations, the lack of sufficient resources or leadership support could undermine the potential positive effects of job engagement on performance. These variations highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of how job engagement operates across different organizational settings.

Overall, while the majority of studies support the idea that job engagement enhances employee performance, the divergent findings underscore the complexity of this relationship. Future research should further investigate the contextual variables that influence how job engagement impacts performance. Examining mediating factors such as organizational support, leadership quality, and team dynamics could offer deeper insights into the conditions under which job engagement leads to improved employee performance. Such research would provide more comprehensive theoretical guidance and practical implications for organizations seeking to leverage job engagement to boost performance outcomes.

5.2.4 Discuss the Mediating Effect of Job Engagement

Based on the findings of this study and the synthesized literature, several insights can be drawn regarding the role of job engagement as a mediator between talent management practices and employee performance. The research by Abdullahi et al. (2022), which found job engagement to not significantly mediate the relationship between talent management and employee performance, contrasts with Pasaribu et al. (2021), who established a significant mediation effect. This disparity suggests that while job engagement may play a mediating role in some contexts, its impact can vary depending on specific organizational factors or methodologies employed. According to SET, employees respond positively to favorable work conditions and support, which fosters engagement (Ahmad et al., 2023). When these conditions are absent or inconsistently applied, the mediating effect of engagement may weaken or disappear.

Furthermore, the study by Khairina and Games (2022) indicating an insignificant statistical mediation effect of job engagement aligns with the complexity highlighted in

organizational research. It underscores the need for careful consideration of statistical power and sample characteristics when interpreting mediation results in studies of this nature. Conversely, Ali et al. (2019) demonstrated a significant mediation effect of job engagement between personal development practices and organizational efficiency within talent management, illustrating the nuanced ways in which job engagement can mediate different facets of organizational performance. This suggests that job engagement may function more effectively as a mediator in environments where development-oriented HRM practices are embedded within a supportive organizational culture.

Moreover, the finding by Achmada and Soetjipto (2022) that talent management practices indirectly influence employee performance through job engagement suggests a multifaceted relationship that merits further exploration. This perspective challenges traditional views and emphasizes the dynamic nature of how talent management strategies impact employee outcomes. These findings encourage a shift from linear to more integrated models of human resource development, where job engagement is shaped by various organizational, psychological, and contextual factors.

In conclusion, while the current study confirms that job engagement plays a mediating role in the link between talent management and employee performance, the variability in findings across the literature points to the need for deeper theoretical integration and contextual sensitivity. Future research should explore moderating variables such as organizational justice, leadership style, and employee personality traits that may influence this mediation process. Understanding these dynamics can offer more precise guidance for designing strategic talent management initiatives that not only attract and retain talent but also enhance employee performance through sustained engagement.

5.3 Limitation

One of the limitations of this study is its focus on a specific geographical area, Jinan, and a particular occupational group, university counselors. While this concentration provides valuable insights into local contexts and professional dynamics, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations or different cultural settings. The unique characteristics and organizational cultures in Jinan and among university counselors may not fully represent the diversity of experiences and practices found in other regions or among different types of counselors. Additionally, the study's reliance on quantitative research methods, while useful for statistical analysis and generalizability, may overlook nuanced qualitative aspects. Qualitative data, such as interviews or focus groups, could offer deeper insights and context that quantitative methods alone might miss.

5.4 Further Research

Future research could address these limitations by exploring talent management in different geographical regions and occupational groups to enhance the generalizability of findings. Cross-national studies are necessary to examine how cultural norms, labor market structures, and organizational expectations differ across regions and influence talent management outcomes. For example, in collectivist cultures such as China, talent management strategies that emphasize group cohesion and long-term employment may be more effective (Deshan, Ying & Ghosh, 2023). In contrast, in individualistic societies like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia, performance-based incentives and personal development opportunities may yield better results (Lin et al., 2022). Furthermore, legal and institutional differences such as labor regulations, employee rights, and education systems can significantly shape how talent is attracted, developed, and

retained. Therefore, conducting comparative studies enables researchers to test the universality versus contextual specificity of existing theories and practices, ultimately contributing to the design of more effective and culturally adaptive talent management frameworks.

Incorporating qualitative methods alongside quantitative approaches could offer a more comprehensive view of how talent management practices impact job engagement and employee performance. Qualitative research could reveal subjective perceptions, motivations, and interactions that quantitative data alone may not capture. Employing mixed-methods research designs would enable data triangulation, improving the validity and reliability of findings and contributing to more robust theory development and practical implications in organizational psychology and management.

5.5 Implications

5.5.1 Practical Implications

This study explores the relationship between talent management and job engagement, and finds that talent management has a positive impact on job engagement. This has corresponding implications for related industries. Schools or enterprises can enhance employees' work engagement by strengthening talent management strategies such as training and development, performance evaluation, and incentive measures. This is because enhanced work engagement helps to improve employee satisfaction, reduce employee turnover rates, and lower the cost of recruiting and training new employees.

Specifically, institutions can offer structured training and development programs such as leadership development workshops, communication and interpersonal skills

training, and stress management courses tailored to the demands of student support roles. These programs not only equip counselors with essential competencies for managing student affairs but also foster greater confidence and resilience in high-pressure situations (Shan, 2024). In addition, career development initiatives, including mentoring systems and personalized growth plans, can help counselors envision long-term career trajectories by providing continuous guidance and feedback. Regular professional development seminars on educational policies, mental health interventions, and crisis response strategies can further enrich their expertise (Yang, 2023). Moreover, the integration of technology training, such as data-driven student support systems or digital counseling tools, ensures that counselors remain proficient in contemporary educational environments. Collectively, these developmental efforts contribute to sustained job engagement and professional satisfaction.

Appropriate incentive strategies may include performance-based bonuses tied to specific outcomes such as student satisfaction or program effectiveness, which directly reinforce high-quality service. Recognition programs, such as awards or institutional acknowledgments, can also foster a strong sense of professional identity. Furthermore, offering clear career advancement opportunities and involving counselors in institutional decision-making processes can increase organizational commitment (Liu & Shu, 2023). Institutions should also consider providing financial support for professional development activities, including training programs, conferences, and certifications. Additionally, flexible work arrangements and non-monetary benefits, such as wellness support or additional leave, can contribute to job satisfaction and help mitigate burnout. Together, these measures can strengthen engagement, retention, and overall counselor effectiveness within the university context.

This study establishes the relationship between talent management and employee performance, which can inspire relevant schools or enterprises to optimize talent management strategies, improve employee job performance, and ultimately enhance overall organizational performance. The results of this study are helpful for enterprises to effectively allocate resources and focus on management practices that can generate the most performance improvement. For example, enterprises can allocate more resources toward high-impact areas such as targeted training and development programs, mentorship schemes, and succession planning. Prioritizing investment in data-driven talent acquisition, skills-gap analysis, and personalized career development plans can ensure that resources are directed toward developing and retaining high-potential employees. Additionally, specific management practices such as performance-based incentives, regular feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for internal mobility can significantly drive employee motivation and output (Nawangarsi & Sutawidjaya, 2019). By focusing on these strategies, organizations can not only enhance individual employee performance but also foster a culture of continuous improvement and long-term organizational growth.

In addition, this study also found a positive relationship between job engagement and employee performance, which suggests that schools or companies should adopt targeted strategies to enhance employee engagement. For example, granting employees task autonomy, such as allowing them to decide how to complete their tasks, or schedule autonomy, such as offering flexible working hours or the option to work remotely, can foster a stronger sense of ownership and motivation. Assigning challenging tasks, including leading cross-functional projects, tackling complex problems, or participating in innovation and strategic planning initiatives, can stimulate engagement by promoting skill development and a sense of accomplishment. Moreover, improving the overall work

environment by fostering open communication, recognizing employee contributions, and promoting team collaboration can further support higher job engagement and ultimately lead to improved employee performance.

This study identifies the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance. This indicates that schools and enterprises should pay attention to enhancing employees' work engagement when formulating talent management strategies, in order to more effectively improve employee performance. Through research, it is possible to identify which talent management measures have an impact on employee performance by increasing work engagement, and thus develop more targeted and effective management policies. By increasing employee engagement, related industries can not only improve short-term performance, but also maintain high levels of employee performance and organizational competitiveness in the long term.

5.5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study explores the relationships between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance, specifically focusing on university counselors as the research population. While previous studies have validated these relationships in various organizational contexts, this research contributes novel insights by applying and empirically testing these theoretical models within the higher education sector—a setting that has received limited attention in the talent management literature. By examining university counselors, the study enriches the theoretical understanding of how talent management strategies influence job engagement and performance in educational institutions.

More importantly, the study introduces talent management as a key independent variable in the context of university counselor performance, an area previously underexplored. This expands the list of known performance drivers in the educational sector and highlights the critical role of talent strategies in enhancing engagement and productivity. In addition, the empirical validation of job engagement as a mediating variable between talent management and employee performance deepens theoretical knowledge of the internal mechanisms that translate organizational practices into individual outcomes. By filling a literature gap and providing context-specific evidence, this study contributes to the development of a more comprehensive and contextually relevant theoretical framework that future research can build upon in educational settings.

This study identifies the mediating role of job engagement in the relationship between talent management and employee performance. By exploring the mediating role of work engagement, enriching the theoretical research on mediating variables, and providing new explanatory paths for theoretical models in related fields. This study reveals the mechanism by which talent management affects employee performance through work engagement, promoting theoretical innovation and development. This study's empirical data validate the mediation hypotheses, thereby enhancing the theory's practical relevance and credibility.

These practical and theoretical significance not only provide practical management guidance and strategic suggestions for schools, enterprises, and managers, but also provide rich research materials and theoretical support for the academic community, which helps to promote research and practical progress in fields such as talent management, work engagement, and employee performance.

5.6 Conclusion

This study explores the relationship between talent management, work engagement, and employee performance among counselors at multiple universities in Jinan. It has been confirmed that talent management has a positive impact on both job engagement and employee performance, and job engagement also has a positive impact on employee performance. In addition, this study confirms that job engagement partially mediates the relationship between talent management and employee performance.

These findings provide new perspectives and practical guidance for university and corporate management. By implementing effective talent management strategies, such as offering professional development opportunities, fair performance evaluations, and competitive incentives, institutions can enhance employee engagement and performance. This, in turn, can lead to higher productivity, improved job satisfaction, and reduced turnover rates. For universities, these insights can help in creating a supportive environment that promotes the professional growth and commitment of counselors, ultimately improving educational outcomes. For corporate entities, the study underscores the importance of investing in talent management to foster a motivated and high-performing workforce, thereby achieving organizational goals and ensuring sustainable development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

尊敬的先生/女士，

Greetings! Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. We sincerely appreciate your support and cooperation. This survey is part of an academic study aimed at exploring the relationship between talent management, employee engagement, and employee performance. The survey will be conducted anonymously, and all data collected will be used solely for academic purposes. It will be processed by professional researchers in the field for statistical analysis, with no reference to any specific individuals or organizations. We guarantee that your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Please answer the questions based on your actual situation. Your honest and accurate responses are crucial to the validity and reliability of the study's findings. Once you have completed the survey, kindly submit your responses.

您好！感谢您抽出宝贵时间参与本次调查问卷。我们非常感激您的支持与配合。本次调查旨在探讨人才管理、员工投入与员工绩效之间的关系，属于一项学术研究。调查将采取匿名方式进行，所有收集的数据仅用于学术研究目的，并将由相关领域的专业研究人员进行统计分析，数据处理过程中不涉及任何具体个人或单位的信息。我们承诺对您的回答严格保密。请根据您的实际情况填写问卷，您提供的真实、准确的信息对于研究结论的有效性和准确性至关重要。完成填写后，请提交您的问卷。

Thank you once again for your participation and support!

再次感谢您的参与与支持！

1. What is your Age Group?

您属于那个年龄组？

☐ 20-26 岁 years old

☐ 26-35 岁 years old

☐ 36-45 岁 years old

☐ 46-55 岁 years old

☐ Over 56 岁 years old

2. What is your gender ?

您的性别是？

☐ 男性 male

☐ 女性 female

3. How long have you been working in this university?

您在这个大学工作多久了？

☐ 少于 1 年 less than 1 year

☐ 1-3 年 years

☐ 4-6 年 years

☐ 7-10 年 years

☐ 超过 10 年 over 10 years

4. What is your total work experience??

您的总工作年限是？

☐ 少于 1 年 less than 1 year

☐ 1-3 年 years

☐ 4-6 年 years

☐ 7-10 年 years

☐ 超过 10 年 over 10 years

5. What is the highest education you have attained?

您的最高学历是？

○本科学历 Undergraduate degree

○研究生学历 Graduate degree

Talent Management 人才管理

The stars from left to right represent strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree

从左到右的星星分别代表非常不同意, 不同意, 中立的, 同意, 非常同意

6. TM1. The good working conditions and fair wages have enabled the university I work for to attract the right talent.

良好的工作条件和公平的工资使我工作的大学能够吸引合适的人才。

非常不同意
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 非常同意
Strongly agree

7. TM2. In the university I work for, we support employee training and career progression.

在我工作的大学里，我们支持员工培训和职业发展。

非常不同意
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 非常同意
Strongly agree

8. TM3. The university I work for has a competitive compensation system, in comparison to other organizations in the same industry, which is a motivating factor for our employees.

与同一行业的其他组织相比，我工作的大学的薪酬制度是更有竞争力的，这也是是我们员工的激励的因素之一。

非常不同意
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 非常同意
Strongly agree

9. TM4. The university I work for has flexible working hours as a motivating factor for our employees.

我工作的大学有灵活的工作时间，作为我们员工的激励的因素。

非常不同意						非常同意
Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

10. TM5. In the university I work for, an in-house development program is commonly used.

在我工作的大学里，通常使用内部开发计划。

非常不同意						非常同意
Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

11. TM6. The university management motivates me with updated feedback for my career developmental purposes.

大学管理层通过更新的反馈来激励我的职业发展。

非常不同意						非常同意
Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

12. TM7. The university I work for believes career planning facilitates the expansion and growth of this company.

我工作的大学认为，职业规划有助于大学的扩张和发展。

非常不同意						非常同意
Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

13. TM8. The university I work for plans on employee growth and progression.

我工作的大学，有计划促进员工的成长和发展。

非常不同意						非常同意
Strongly disagree	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5	Strongly agree

Job Engagement 工作参与度

14. JE1.I devote a lot of energy to my job.

我投入很多精力在工作当中。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

15. JE2.I try my hardest to perform well on my job.

我尽力在工作中表现良好。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

16. JE3. I feel energetic at my job.

我对工作感到精力充沛。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

17. JE4. I am interested in my job.

我对我的工作很感兴趣。

非常不同

意 Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

18. JE5. At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job.

在工作时，我会非常关注我的工作情况。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

19. JE6. At work, I am absorbed by my job.

在工作中，我会全神贯注。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

Employee Performance 员工绩效

20. EP1. I try to update my technical knowledge to do my job.

我会尝试更新我的技术知识来完成我的工作。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

21. EP2. I plan actions according to my tasks and organizational routines.

我会根据我的任务和组织的规则来安排我的日常工作。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

22. EP3. I take initiatives to improve my results at work.

我主动提高工作成绩。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

23. EP4. I seek new solutions for problems that may come up in my job.

我为工作中可能出现的问题寻找新的解决方案。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree

24. EP5. I work hard to do the tasks designated to me.

我努力完成指定给我的任务。

非常不同意

Strongly
disagree

○1

○2

○3

○4

○5

非常同意

Strongly
agree