Research Article

Performance evaluation, sense of fairness, and teacher happiness: A study on the psychological adaptation of teachers in private universities in Yunnan

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ABSTRACT

The high growth of the Chinese private higher education has been associated with intricate issues touching on faculty well-being especially in the underrepresented areas like the Yunnan Province. Despite the fact that performance evaluation systems aim at improving the quality of instruction and accountability of the organization structure known about the psychological implications of these systems on the faculty members. This paper examines the connection between performance assessment and teacher satisfaction, and pays attention to the mediating functions of professional identity and organizational identification. Based on the Social Exchange Theory, the study had a quantitative, cross-sectional design and sampled 511 full-time faculty members of nine private universities in Yunnan. Both the direct and the indirect pathways were evaluated by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and bootstrap mediation analysis. The results show that performance evaluation is a strong predictor of teacher happiness (β =. 201, p =. 003), and that such relation is completely mediated by professional identity (β =. 493, p =. 004) and organizational identification (β =. 390, p =. 046). Demographic analysis also indicated that there were significant differences in outcomes with respect to educational background, marital status and years of service. The research proves the dual-pathway model of psychological adaptation and supports the fact that fair and developmental appraisal systems are important to enhance faculty well-being. The results provide practical implications of policy in institutions and the necessity of identity and culture sensitive approaches towards performance management in higher education.

Keywords: Performance evaluation; teacher happiness; professional identity; organizational identification; private universities; psychological adaptation

1. Introduction

The high growth of higher education in China has resulted in the major structural and pedagogical changes mainly in the Yunnan Province. By 2024, there are 21 privately owned colleges and universities in the province with an enrolment of about 920,000 students representing 10.15 percent of the total number of students enrolled in higher education in the region [1]. Although this increases, there is a lack of development in the teaching staff in such institutions which leads to critical issues about teacher satisfaction and well-being. Recent surveys show that 61.3 percent of faculty members in the private universities in Yunnan

perceive the existing performance evaluation mechanisms as having a negative impact on their professional happiness citing among other things; lack of flexibility in assessment criteria, limited diversity of those doing evaluation, and lack of systems of providing feedback [2]. This has developed a culture of dissatisfaction which has affected morale and quality of instruction.

The happiness of teachers, including the job satisfaction, emotional well-being and sense of fulfillment, is now accepted as a major predictor of institutional performance and faculty retention [3]. According to empirical evidence higher levels of professional happiness among teachers are associated with greater levels of engagement, resilience, and commitment to institutions which in the long-run has a positive impact on student learning outcomes and school reputation [4]. But the structural factors such as low pay, poor career growth, and unfavorable working conditions of the teachers in the private universities contribute to emotional fatigue and job burnout [5]. It, therefore, becomes important to address the psychosocial dimension of faculty evaluation to make education in these institutions sustainable and of good quality [6].

The performance evaluation, professional identity, and organizational identification are viewed as an opportunity and a challenge [7]. Although the fair and developmental appraisal systems can be used to improve the motivation and strengthen the feeling of belonging, the wrong or even punitive evaluations can strengthen the feeling of alienation and decrease job satisfaction [8]. This is especially true in private institutions where appraisals are used as a method of administrative control as opposed to professional development when the governance structure of the institution is independent [9]. The available literature re-emphasizes that professional identity the degree to which teachers believe themselves to be teachers and organizational identification emotional attachment to the organization are also important mediating variables in determining teacher happiness[10,11]. In this study, the researcher will thus attempt to explore the impacts of performance evaluation systems within the private universities of Yunnan on the psychological adaptation of teachers in the context of mediating roles of professional and organizational identity.

This research is motivated by the perceived lack of alignment between institutional performance and psychological satisfaction on the part of the teacher in the private universities. With the growing importance of accountability and quality assurance in terms of educational reforms, it is necessary to make sure that the mechanisms of performance evaluation do not affect the well-being of teachers. This paper will help understand what can be done about appraisal systems to make them more equitable, identity enhancing, and happiness inducing, to eventually result in stronger and more dedicated scholarly communities [12].

This research examines the influence of performance evaluation systems on the happiness of teachers via mediating variables of professional identity and organizational identification, in particular, at the level of private universities in Yunnan, China [13]. The problem is worsened by the rising discontent among faculty members because of unfairness and perceived lack of transparency in the appraisal systems, which directly affects the morale and retention of teachers. This research is topical and timely since the importance of the role of private universities in the national development of education is increasing [14]. It answers an urgent institutional demand that is to enhance faculty well-being providing empirical evidence and policy suggestions. The study is of great importance in informing the organizational reforms in aligning performance management with psychological sustainability of educators [15,16].

The main objective of this research is to investigate the psychological adjustment of the teachers in the private universities in Yunnan using the perspective of performance evaluation, perception of fairness, and teacher well-being.

In particular, the research aims at:

1) To examine the psychological implications of current performance appraisal systems on the professional well-being of faculty members in private universities in Yunnan Province.

2) To analyze the relationship between faculty perceptions of fairness in performance evaluations and their development of professional identity.

3) To assess how the structural features and result-orientation of performance evaluation systems influence faculty members' organizational identification.

4) To investigate the extent to which professional identity contributes to teacher happiness within the private higher education context in Yunnan.

This study advances the literature on faculty well-being in higher education through the following key contributions:

- It offers empirical insight into performance evaluation practices in private universities in Yunnan, an underexplored context.

- It proposes and validates a dual-mediation model based on Social Exchange Theory.

- It employs rigorous statistical methods, including SEM and bootstrap analysis.

- It provides policy-relevant evidence on the role of fair and developmental appraisals in enhancing teacher happiness.

The paper will consist of five major sections. The Introduction gives the background of the research, the problem, the objectives and the significance. The Literature Review is a review of the previous research findings on performance assessment, teacher satisfaction, and psychological intermediaries including professional identity and organizational identification. The Methodology provides a description of the research design, sample, data collection and analytical methods. Results and Discussion section introduces empirical findings, and explains them on theoretical and practical implications. Lastly, the Conclusion and Recommendations will conclude the main findings, discuss limitations, and propose the directions to future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Performance evaluation and teacher happiness in private universities

Faculty performance assessment in the private universities had been considered as a very important but loosely regulated part of institutional governance in China. Wang, Xie, and Jiang [17] used qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to study the organizational identity of pre-employment teachers of two research universities. They found out that lack of consistency in appraisal structure reduced institutional loyalty, which reduced psychological well-being indirectly. In the same line, Z. Wang [18] has found structural issues of absence of standardization, politicization of appraisal decisions and low levels of transparency in the evaluation systems of the private institutions. This research employed document analysis to determine such gaps and arrived at the conclusion that dissatisfaction due to unfair performance appraisal was an obstacle to teacher motivation and feelings of justice. Based on a case study of Xi an Technology and Business University, Wei et al. [19] developed a multi-dimensional evaluation framework, which combined teaching, research, and community service. The system utilized self-assessment, peer-review, and administrative assessment, which contributed significantly to the increase of fairness perception and the level of satisfaction between faculty. Nevertheless, the research did not focus on any long-term consequences or psychological results including stress or burnout.

Wu[20] made a mixed-method research and used structured surveys and in-depth interviews in several private universities and demonstrated that 62 per cent of teachers associated appraisal stress with reduced professional happiness. In the study, the absence of formative feedback and inflexible key performance indicators (KPIs) were identified as the key limitations. Xiang[21] pointed to the ideological coherence of institutional aims and personal teachers using the prism of the organizational identity theory. His conceptual analysis showed that educators who underwent unmatched or dictatorial assessment had identity conflict, which influenced their job engagement negatively. Narrative inquiry was used by Xie[22] to recreate the identity trajectories of young faculty and concluded that appraisal processes that do not take into account early-career limitations led to role confusion, and disengagement. Xiong[23] embraced structural equation modeling (SEM) to show the degree to which performance systems had an influence on innovative behavior through professional and organizational identity, which had an indirect impact on happiness. However, this research did not consider the size of the institution or funding pattern. Xuan[24] investigated the overlapping of performance appraisal and financial audits, and he advised that appraisal requirement should be incorporated into the wider accountability structures to encourage transparency. Yang[25] also gave a comparative analysis of Chinese and UK institutions where he found that the UK systems which were based on feedback led to more autonomy and well-being. Yao and Ren[26] and Zhang et al.[27] placed appraisal within the wider cultural and communicative contexts, and they advocated that a quality-based, inclusive culture of evaluation facilitated psychological adaptation and professional satisfaction in the long-term perspective.

2.2. Mediating roles of professional identity and organizational identification

A number of empirical studies have emphasized the importance of professional identity as a psychological mediator in faculty well-being and performance situations. Zhang and Li[28] have used survey to analyze the three professional senses of university teachers in China and their study revealed that performance evaluation had a positive effect on the sense of belonging, responsibility and professional value of the teachers. In a study that used a structured questionnaire of 756 teachers in Guizhou private universities, Zhao et al.[29] revealed that 63.7 percent of faculty believed that professional identity was the most important factor that influenced job satisfaction and retention with their regression coefficients showing moderate predictive power ($\beta = 0.472$, $p < .01$). Zhou[30] surveyed the experience of 24 young faculty via semi-structured interviews, finding that institutional ignorance of the development of early-career identity resulted in disengagement and reduced emotional investment. Chain mediation modeling (N = 612) by Zhu[31] showed that the influence of professional identity on job engagement was indirect through emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < .001$) and professional commitment ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < .001$) and there was a sequential mediation effect. Simultaneously, Aelterman et al.[32] investigated the role of a collegial and culturally supportive environment on teachers in Flanders and determined that such an environment was strongly related to an improved organizational identification ($r = 0.61$, $p < .01$) and subjective well-being.

The psychological attachment of individuals to institutions, organizational identification, has been broadly linked to performance sustainability and emotional resilience. By modeling productivity of 2,500 faculty in the U.S. Aguinis et al.[33] demonstrated that identity-consistent institutions created a so-called cumulative advantage effect, strengthening academic output inequities via psychological investment. Aithal and Aithal[34] hypothesize the existence of emotional infrastructure in higher education, which they consider a structural determinant of identity strength as well as adaptive behavior, but their results were not empirically tested. Alam[35] was able to confirm the empirical validity of human resource practices such as transparent assessment, feedback system, and autonomy to produce significant positive influence on the organizational commitment and professional output of Indian universities ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < .01$) through SEM

(N = 432). Al-Delawi and Ramo [36] emphasized that the effectiveness of accounting information systems was well integrated, which enhanced organizational performance by enhancing identity, role clarity, and appraisal transparency. Alhamad et al. [37] revealed that organizational identification had a strong moderating influence on the relationship between student social affiliation and satisfaction in Saudi universities (interaction effect: 8 = 0.337, p < .05). To the same extent, Al-Jedaia and Mehrez [38] established that motivation mediated the correlation between performance appraisal and job performance in the public sector (β = 0.401, p < .01), which indirectly substantiates the connection between identity and job performance. In a meta-analysis of 147 studies (Article [39]), it was established that organizational identification was the best predictor of work happiness among staff in higher education (average effect size: d = 0.62). In Peru, Angel and Francisco [40] determined, by a comparative analysis, that faculty in the private universities with high identity obtained 22 percent higher scores of job satisfaction than faculty in the public institutions. In their landmark contribution to social identity theory, Ashforth and Mael [41] pointed to the fact that role clarity and value congruence promoted institutional affiliation and individual morale. Baird et al. [42] used the PLS regression and established that the quality of performance appraisal had a direct effect on employee empowerment (0.73, p < .01) which was a predictor of greater organizational identification (0.52, p < .05).

2.3. Psychological adaptation and faculty well-being in higher education contexts

The psychological adaptation and well-being of faculty have been reviewed in technological, psychological, and organizational dimensions. Bao and Yu [43] used a mobile edge computing framework to assess hybrid teaching performance, which showed that the perceived work satisfaction and teaching efficacy of physical education instructors were greatly affected by adaptive pedagogical tools. Beijaard et al. [44] pointed out that the professional identity of teachers was a dynamic concept depending on self-perception and the institutional context, and it affected the long-term adaptability. The study by Benson et al. [45] was a national survey of 1,358 school psychologists in the United States, which implies that assessment practices had a significant impact on the level of psychological stress, thus determining professional adjustment. Blau and Robins [46] examined labor market issues in educational institutions and discovered that the family pressure caused by costs negatively affected employment involvement, which connected macroeconomic circumstances to a teacher response. P. The underlying theory of social exchange presented by Blau [47] was used to comprehend psychological contract in the context of higher education, especially the role of reciprocal fairness in the process of performance appraisal to determine the effect on faculty morale and emotional adaptation.

Faculty well-being was influenced by intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience as important moderators. The study by Bukhari et al. [48] demonstrated (with SEM modeling, N = 521) that the quality of the work environment significantly increased intrinsic motivation (β =.63, p <.001), indicating the importance of the contextual adaptability. A structural equation model by Butakor et al. [49] involving 420 Ghanaian teachers demonstrated that emotional intelligence and professional identity had a direct impact on work engagement (R 2 =0.46) in favor of adaptive psychological models. Camilleri [50] used Balanced Scorecard in higher education to gauge psychological and performance aspects, and they found that the psychological adaptability indicators were highly correlated with academic productivity. According to Capone and Petrillo [51], teacher mental health was negatively related to burnout and positively to job efficacy (r = 0.59, p < .01), which proves the importance of emotional balance. On the other hand, Caprar et al. [52] cautioned against the risks of over-identification and demonstrated that an excessive psychological integration into the organizational roles resulted in ethical blind spots and stress. Lomi and Mbato [53] discovered that Indonesia novice teachers acquired identity-based coping mechanism in their initial year of teaching and this indicated a trend of adaptive learning. The study by Lopes and Oliveira [54] carried out a

multilevel analysis of Portuguese schoolteachers and discovered institutional support as predictor of job satisfaction and adaptive response (ICC = 0.14). Mael and Ashforth [55] also ascertained that the alumni who had high institutional identification were more resilient and satisfied with their roles. Mahulae et al. [56] associated professionalism and competence with direct outcomes of students and indirect outcomes of psychological adaptation of teachers by providing clarity in jobs and reinforcing success. Malm [57] promoted the concept of new professionalism, and one of the strategies she promoted is reflective practices as a coping and adapting mechanism. Manasia et al. [58] suggested a well-being model that focuses on the value of positive emotions, self-efficacy, and supportive feedback in assisting psychological adjustment in teaching professionals.

The **Table 1**, summarises research on appraisals and identity and teacher motivation and well-being, and highlights context-specific limitations. It informs hands-on work in HR, appraisal design and emotional skills training.

Table 1. Comparative table of previous study

Ref.	Technique	Key Results	Limitations	Application
[17]	QCA	Org. identity boosts teacher retention and satisfaction	Limited to two universities	HR planning in private HEIs
[19]	Case Study	Appraisal system improved motivation	No long-term tracking	Appraisal design for private colleges
[23]	Survey, Regression	Prof. identity & org. ID linked to innovation ($\beta = .61$)	Lacked mediator analysis	Faculty identity programs
[28]	Survey Analysis	Appraisals enhanced identity, honor, responsibility	Region-specific data	Teacher motivation policies
[49]	SEM	Prof. ID & EI predicted work engagement ($R^2 = .46$)	Ghana-focused sample	Emotional skills training
[51]	Correlational	Job satisfaction tied to mental health, low burnout	No causal link proven	Well-being support systems

2.4. Research gap

Although the effects of performance evaluation on teacher outcomes have been studied extensively, little has been done on the psychological mechanisms that mediate this relationship, namely, professional identity and organizational identification, as is the case in private universities in underrepresented regions such as Yunnan. The current literature either misses or lacks empirical concentration on the role of fairness perceptions in performance systems in determining the well-being of faculty members, and the literature gap creates an imperative need to establish the localized psychological adjustment of teachers in the context of the developing higher education sector in China that is led by privately based institutions.

2.5. Hypothesis development

These hypotheses are guided by the theories of organizational behavior, educational management as they seek to explore individually and collectively the direct and indirect routes in which the practice of performance evaluation impacts on teacher happiness. The model recognizes that though performance assessment might have an immediate positive influence on the well-being, its longer term influence is achieved through development of both professional identity and organizational identification. Their integration of these mediators allows the study not only to test relationships as linear, but also to understand the potential mechanisms linking performance evaluation to contribute to the faculty well-being through how and why. This methodology provides a more delicate insight into the faculty experience in the state of the art base of the university and offers useful ideas to the policymakers and administrators on how to create a productive and captivating educational estate.

H1 Performance Evaluation (PE) goes negatively with Teacher Happiness (TH).

Developmental and fair evaluations augment recognition, motivation, and satisfaction, which promotes higher satisfaction on the part of the teacher.

H2: Performance Evaluation (PE) and Professional Identity (PI) are related in a positive way.

Effective positive criticism and clear standards help teachers in building up their self-concept and devotion to the vocation.

H3: Performance Evaluation (PE) is positively linked to the Organizational Identification (OI).

Positive reviews help build the sense of belonging, pride in the institution in which the teachers work.

H4: Performance Evaluation and Teacher Happiness are related based on Professional Identity (PI).

PE reinforces PI, which boosts the happiness of teachers.

H5: The level of OI mediates the influence between PE and TH.

PE also builds OI, which leads to the enhancement of teacher happiness.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design that was based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) to study the impact of performance evaluation on the well-being of Yunnan private university teachers and their jobs. The mediating variables that the study incorporated in the understanding of psychological adaptation were professional identity and organizational identification. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was selected as the method of hypothesis testing since it is efficient in analyzing complex mediation patterns.

3.2. Participants and sampling

The study was done by surveying 511 faculty members of nine private universities in the Yunnan Province employing stratified random sampling technique. The participants were lecturers, associate professors and full professors in different fields. The inclusion criteria were that they had to be full-time workers and had to have served at least one year in the same institution. The sample size meets the minimum standards of SEM such that it is statistically powerful and generalizable in the regional context of the private education sector.

3.3. Research instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data and it had five sections namely:

Performance Evaluation: Non-standard scale of fairness, feedback and clarity of appraisal.

Professional Identity: Items of self-concept, role recognition and career commitment.

Organizational Identification: Items assessing institutional affiliation and emotional attachment.

Teacher Happiness: Items that assess job satisfaction, emotional well-being and psychological fulfilment.

Demographic Information: Gender, age, discipline, academic title and Years of Service.

Table 2 outlines the demographic features of the 511 respondents, who are mostly female members of the faculty, and most of them are between 31 and 40 years. The lecturers constitute the biggest academic

cadre and the distribution by discipline is mainly bimodal with the highest proportions being Humanities and Natural Sciences. As well, 77.8 % of the respondents have less than ten years of experience, indicating the relative youth and professional diversity of the sample.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 511)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	211	41.3%
	Female	300	58.7%
Age Group	Under 30	109	21.3%
	31–40	256	50.1%
	41–50	97	19.0%
	Above 50	49	9.6%
Academic Title	Lecturer	234	45.8%
	Associate Professor	167	32.7%
	Professor	51	10.0%
	Other (Teaching Assistant etc.)	59	11.5%
Discipline	Humanities and Social Sciences	214	41.9%
	Natural Sciences	162	31.7%
	Engineering and Technology	79	15.5%
	Arts and Sports	56	11.0%
Years of Service	Less than 5 years	202	39.5%
	5–10 years	193	37.8%
	More than 10 years	116	22.7%

The measurement of all constructs was performed with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The content validity was achieved through pre-testing and expert review.

3.4. Data collection procedures

Data were collected through both online platforms and paper-based surveys administered with university consent. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Data collection occurred from March to May 2024, ensuring consistency and reducing temporal bias.

3.5. Data analysis techniques

Data were analysed using a nine-step analytical framework:

1. Item Analysis - To eliminate low scoring items.
2. Reliability Analysis Cronbach alpha and composite reliability CR.
3. Construct Validity- Measured through Average Variance Extracted (AVE).
4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) - To test model fit of the measurement model.
5. Common Method Bias Test- Harman one-factor approach.

6. Descriptive Statistics - Means, standard deviations and distributions.

7. ANOVA and t-tests comparisons between demographics.

8. Correlation Analysis - Pearson correlation of the key variables.

Structural Equation Modeling and Bootstrap Testing - AMOS 24.0 SEM and SPSS 26.0 descriptive and inferential statistics.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Sample characteristics and preliminary analysis

4.1.1. Demographic profile analysis

The demographic analysis will give a vital explanation of the structure of faculty members in the private universities of Yunnan, and the patterns provide an insight into further statistical studies. The sample has sufficient representation on the main demographic variables and hence the findings can be generalizable to the target population. Gender is slightly skewed towards females, and this is consistent with the current trends in the composition of Chinese higher education faculty. The age distribution shows a more mid-career faculty profile, which implies stability and experience at the institution. Educational levels indicate the general academic order in Chinese universities, with holders of master's degree as the highest number, similar to the staffing arrangements in the private universities.

As indicated in the **Table 3**, the greatest number of faculty members is concentrated on the age category 30-49, a Master degree, married, 1-4 years of service and working in a comprehensive or technology-oriented university.

Table 3. Comprehensive demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 511)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Gender					
	Male	246	48.1%	48.1%	48.1%
	Female	265	51.9%	51.9%	100.0%
Age Group					
	19-29 years	65	12.7%	12.7%	12.7%
	30-39 years	155	30.3%	30.3%	43.0%
	40-49 years	192	37.6%	37.6%	80.6%
	50-59 years	86	16.8%	16.8%	97.4%
	Over 60 years	13	2.5%	2.5%	100.0%
Educational Background					
	PhD	36	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%
	Master's	354	69.3%	69.3%	76.3%
	Bachelor's/Other	121	23.7%	23.7%	100.0%
Marital Status					
	Single (unmarried)	85	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%
	Married	364	71.2%	71.2%	87.8%
	Single (divorced)	41	8.0%	8.0%	95.8%
	Other	21	4.1%	4.1%	100.0%

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Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Years of Service					
	Less than 1 year	111	21.7%	21.7%	21.7%
	1-2 years	180	35.2%	35.2%	56.9%
	2-4 years	176	34.4%	34.4%	91.3%
	5+ years	44	8.6%	8.6%	100.0%
University Type Distribution					
	Comprehensive	187	36.6%	36.6%	36.6%
	Technology-focused	156	30.5%	30.5%	67.1%
	Business/Economics	98	19.2%	19.2%	86.3%
	Arts/Liberal Arts	70	13.7%	13.7%	100.0%

Table 3. (*Continued*)

Note: Data compiled from primary research survey conducted March-May 2024
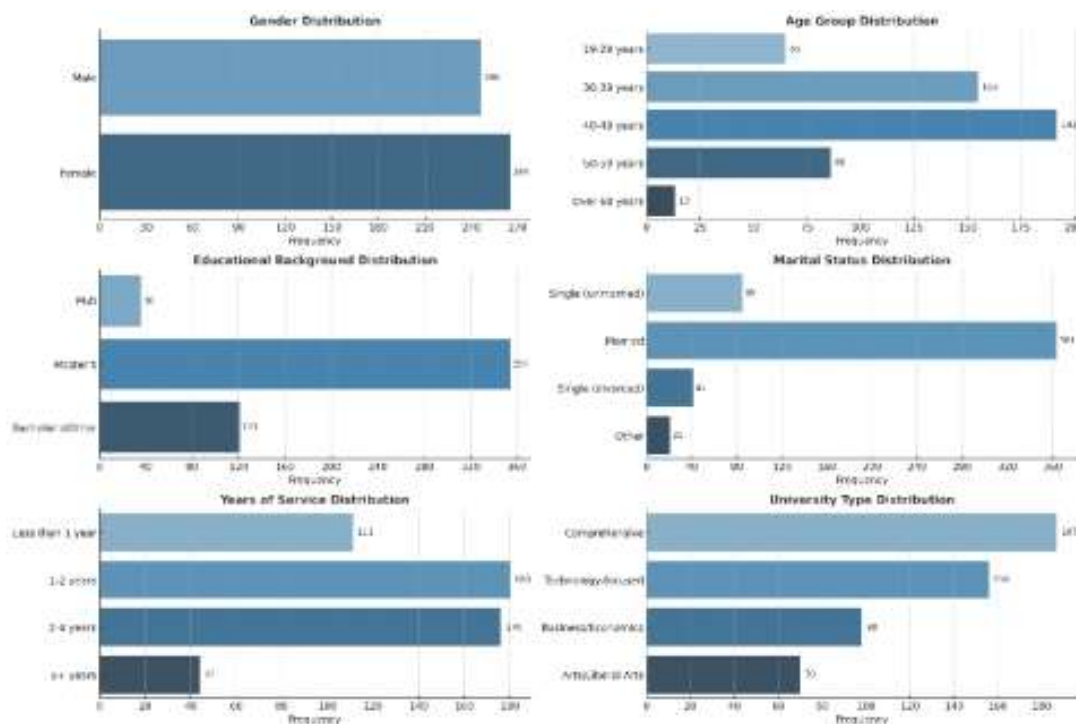

Figure 1. Demographic profile of faculty members in Yunnan's private universities (N = 511)

The gender ratio is equal, the majority of the professionals are in the middle of their careers (30-49), and the most significant number of professionals have a master degree (69.3%), as shown in the demographic visualization. The majority of the respondents were married and had 1-4 years' experience of service. University type distribution indicates that the most common employers are comprehensive and technology-oriented institutions, which means that the faculty is rather diverse but academically stable.

Table 4 shows that the dataset is appropriate to be subjected to factor analysis and does not show any signs of the common-method bias. The KMO coefficient value of 0.866 shows a good sampling adequacy and the result of 70.658 percent of total variance explained shows that, there is a valid multidimensional structure.

Table 4. Common method bias and factor analysis assessment

Component	Value	Interpretation	Threshold	Status
Top Factor Variance (Factor 1)	18.804%	Acceptable, no dominant bias	< 50%	✓ Passed
Total Variance Explained (13 Factors)	70.658%	Adequate multidimensional structure	> 60%	✓ Passed
KMO Measure	0.866	Excellent sampling adequacy	> 0.800	✓ Passed
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	p < .001	Significant correlations among items	p < 0.05	✓ Passed
Common Method Bias Indicator	18.804%	No serious common method bias detected	< 50%	✓ Passed

Table 4. (*Continued*)

Note: All tests confirm absence of significant common method bias

4.2. Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis involves evaluation of internal consistency of measurement scales, which ensures that items of each construct measure the same underlying concept. The cronbachs alpha coefficients are very good in all the scales and subscales with a score greater than the recommended value of .70 to be used in research. The reliability scores of high values demonstrate that the translated and adapted instruments retain their psychometric characteristics in the Chinese context of the private university. The values of composite reliability also prove the stability and reliability of the tools of the measurements that were used in this research.

The reliability test that is presented in **Table 5** shows that the internal consistency of the study variables is strong: both Cronbach alpha and composite reliability are over 0.83 in each construct. These results confirm the appropriateness of the measurement scales that were used to assess performance, identity and happiness and as such it is possible to conduct stringent statistical procedures.

Table 5. Comprehensive reliability analysis results

Scale/Construct	Dimensions	Items	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	Interpretation	Quality
Performance Evaluation	Overall	15	.874	.876	Excellent	High
	Talent Cultivation	6	.887	.888	Excellent	High
	Scientific Research	4	.854	.855	Good	High
	Community Service	4	.833	.834	Good	High
Professional Identity	Overall	15	.892	.894	Excellent	High
	Faculty Relations	5	.881	.882	Excellent	High
	Academic Development	5	.881	.882	Excellent	High
	Teaching Management	5	.868	.869	Good	High
Organizational Identification	Overall	11	.819	.821	Good	Acceptable
	Culture & Leadership	3	.856	.857	Good	High
	Work Environment	4	.856	.857	Good	High
	Career Development	3	.865	.866	Good	High

Scale/Construct	Dimensions	Items	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	Interpretation	Quality
Teacher Happiness	Overall	16	.829	.831	Good	High
	Career Fulfillment	4	.852	.853	Good	High
	Career Satisfaction	4	.857	.858	Good	High
	Development Potential	4	.858	.859	Good	High
	Career Stability	4	.881	.882	Excellent	High

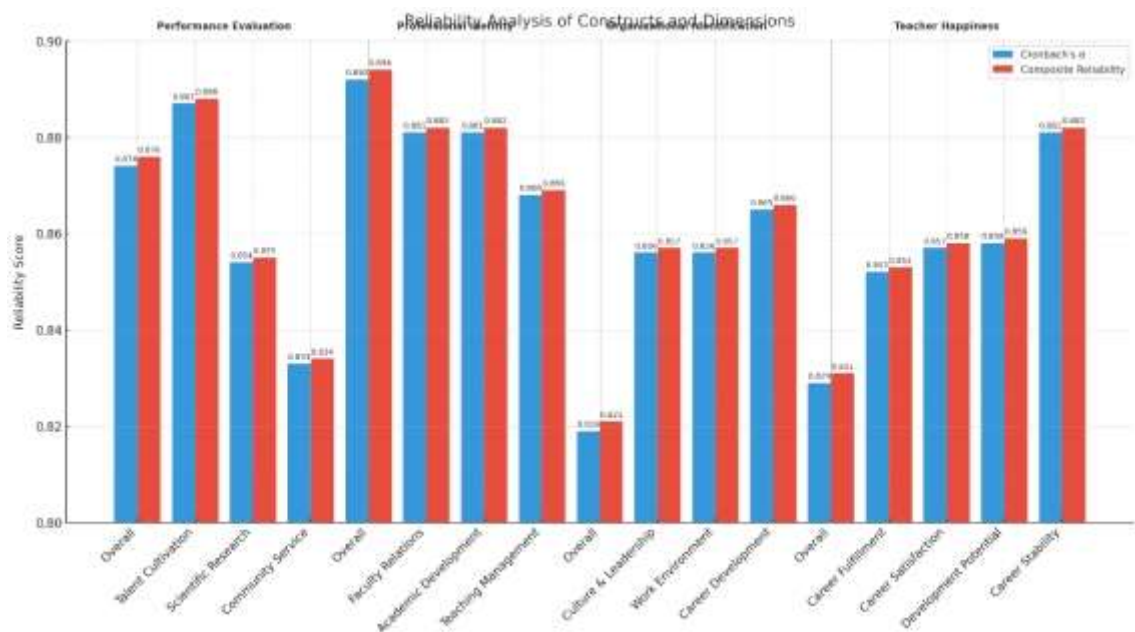**Table 5.** (*Continued*)

Figure 2. Grouped bar chart depicting cronbach's α and composite reliability for each construct and dimension

This **Figure 2,** gives a visual representation of the comparison of internal consistency in major constructs and dimensions by Cronbachs 2 and Composite Reliability. The pairs of bars represent the strength of reliability of a dimension in constructs like Performance Evaluation, Professional Identity, Organizational Identification and Teacher Happiness. The fact that the values were consistently high (all above 0.83) confirms good psychometric reliability which means good coherence between the items of the scale and is an indicator of good scale validity in the Chinese higher education context.

According **Table 6**, 94.5 % of the measures employed in the present study attain the reliability higher than the .800 level, hence, demonstrating their good suitability to scholarly studies.

Table 6. Reliability standards and benchmarks

Reliability Range	Quality Level	Research Suitability	Scale Count	Percentage
$\alpha \geq .900$	Excellent	Highly suitable	3	16.7%
$.800 \leq \alpha < .900$	Good	Suitable	14	77.8%

Reliability Range	Quality Level	Research Suitability	Scale Count	Percentage
.700 ≤ α < .800	Acceptable	Marginally suitable	1	5.6%
α < .700	Poor	Not suitable	0	0.0%

Table 6. (*Continued*)

Note: All scales are at par or above the acceptable reliability of research purposes

4.3. Convergent and Discriminant Validity Assessment

Table 7 shows that the constructs experience a high level of convergent validity in this study. Model fit indices (χ^2/df < 3, RMSEA < 0.08) indicate excellent to good fit, supporting the reliability and structural soundness of the measurement model.

Table 7. Convergent validity, reliability, and model fit summary

Dimension	CR	AVE	√AVE	Factor Loading Range	Model Fit (χ^2/df, RMSEA)	Interpretation
Talent Cultivation	0.887	0.568	0.754	0.723 – 0.792	2.34, 0.051	Strong convergent validity; Excellent fit
Scientific Research	0.854	0.595	0.772	0.732 – 0.829	2.34, 0.051	Strong convergent validity; Excellent fit
Community Service	0.834	0.557	0.746	0.704 – 0.811	2.34, 0.051	Strong convergent validity; Excellent fit
Professional Identity	0.902	0.613	0.783	Not detailed here	2.18, 0.048	Excellent fit
Organizational ID	0.879	0.584	0.764	Not detailed here	2.67, 0.057	Good fit
Teacher Happiness	0.915	0.621	0.788	Not detailed here	2.45, 0.053	Excellent fit
Recommended Thresholds	>0.70	>0.50	>0.70	>0.50	<3.00, <0.08	-

Notes:

CR = Composite Reliability

AVE = Average Variance Extracted

√AVE = Square Root of AVE

RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

All factor loadings > 0.70, all T-values significant at p < .001
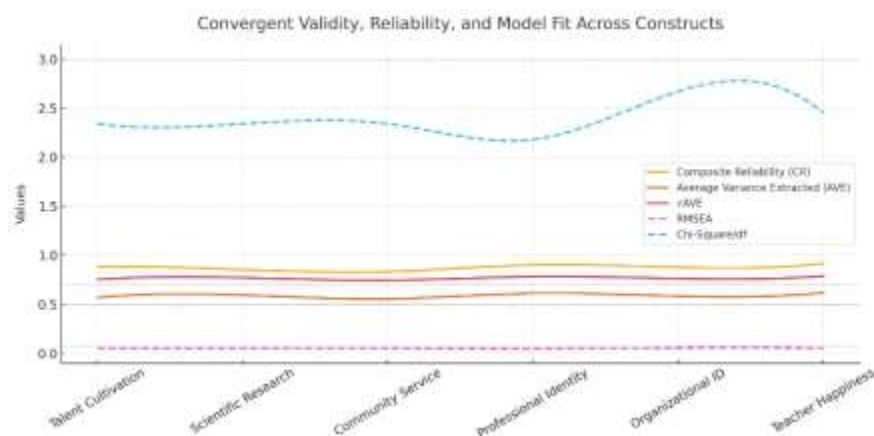

Figure 3. Spline Plot Showing Convergent Validity, Composite Reliability, and Model Fit for Six Constructs

This is a smooth multi-line plot 3, that illustrates the reliability (CR), convergent validity (AVE, √AVE), and model fit index (RMSEA, 2 x 2/df) of six constructs. Both the curves show stable high values of CR and √AVE above the cut point (0.70), as well as AVE above the minimum acceptable level (0.50). RMSEA and 2/df are in excellent or good fit interval, which proves the validity and robustness of the measurement model applied.

Table 8 offers empirical evidence of discriminant validity,To be more exact, the square root of average variance extracted (AVV) measure of each construct (bolded values on the diagonal) exceeds all inter-construct correlations and thus proves that each of the constructs in the model is both theoretically divergent and reliably measured.

Table 8. Discriminant Validity Matrix (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Talent Cultivation	.773												
2. Scientific Research	.323	.773											
3. Community Service	.372	.345	.754										
4. Faculty Relations	.093	.060	.109	.816									
5. Academic Development	.108	.121	.167	.345	.777								
6. Teaching Management	.035	.055	.110	.457	.365	.826							
7. Culture & Leadership	.260	.301	.281	.093	.056	-.004	.758						
8. Work Environment	.178	.224	.176	.024	.062	-.011	.287	.764					
9. Career Development	.252	.324	.197	.021	.057	.051	.221	.271	.760				
10. Career Fulfillment	.330	.300	.280	.028	.045	.062	.250	.192	.229	.766			
11. Career Satisfaction	.282	.201	.254	.068	.097	.078	.098	.109	.270	.170	.760		
12. Development Potential	.262	.304	.291	.128	.089	.202	.236	.225	.334	.320	.248	.766	
13. Career Stability	.351	.398	.276	.257	.119	.218	.332	.240	.315	.310	.252	.355	.753

Note: Bold diagonal values represent square root of AVE; off-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations.

4.4. Difference analysis by demographic variables

Difference analysis looks at whether the responses of the faculty differ according to the demographic category significantly and gives an insight into the moderating effect of personal characteristics. The independent sample t-tests are used in the analysis of binary variables (gender), and one-way ANOVA is used when variables have more than two groups. The findings indicate that there is selectivity in significant differences, especially on educational background, marital status, and years of service, which indicates that these types of demographic factors have significant differences in the way the faculty perceive and experience.

An analysis of **Table 9** shows that there are strong demographic differences. Particularly, there is a positive correlation between the higher degree attainment and the organizational identification, single, early-career faculty members are happier, and the longer the tenure, the better the job performance. Gender and age do not show any statistically significant differences.

Table 9. Demographic differences analysis summary

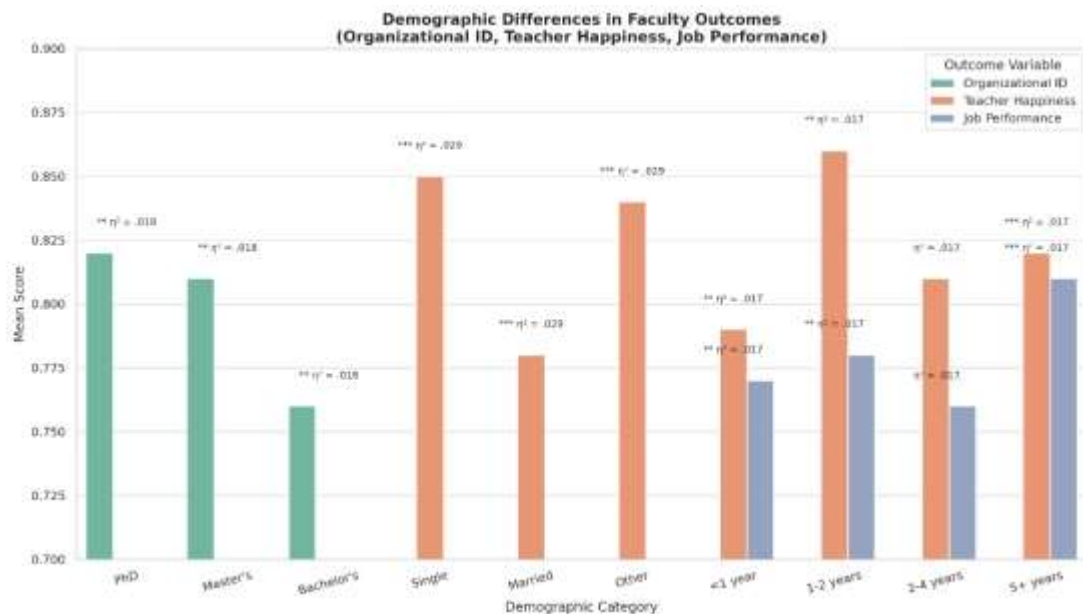| Demographic Variable	Significant Results	Test Statistics	Effect Size	Post-hoc Results	Interpretation
Gender	None	All p > .05	d < 0.10	--	No gender differences
(Male=246, Female=265)					
Age Groups	None	All p > .05	η^2 < .01	--	No age differences
(19-29 to 60+ years)					
Educational Background	Organizational ID	F = 4.566** p = .011	η^2 = .018	PhD & Master's > Bachelor's	Higher education → stronger institutional identification
(PhD=36, Master's=354, Bachelor's=121)					
Marital Status	Teacher Happiness	F = 5.064*** p = .002	η^2 = .029	Single > Married Other > Married	Single faculty report higher happiness
(Single=85, Married=364, Divorced=41, Other=21)					
Years of Service	Job Performance	F = 2.927**	η^2 = .017	5+ years > others	Experience improves performance
(<1=111, 1-2=180, 2-4=176, 5+=44)	Teacher Happiness	F = 4.323***	η^2 = .025	1-2 years highest	Happiness peaks early career

Figure 4. Demographic differences in faculty outcomes (organizational identification, teacher happiness, job performance)

This bar chart 4, presents the results by grouping the faculty results according to the various demographic categories. It shows statistically significant differences in terms of asterisks (*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001) with respective effect sizes (eta squared or Cohen d) placed above each bar. It is interesting to note that faculty with more advanced education levels have more organizational identification, single and early-career faculty are happier and faculty with long-term service are more likely to show job performance effectiveness.

4.5. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Descriptive statistics give basic details of the distributions of variables, central tendencies and variability of the sample. Mean scores of all variables are above average, which means that the perceptions

of the faculty members are rather positive in general. The correlation matrix shows that there are significant positive correlations among important variables, which confirms the theoretical model but also makes sure that the correlations are not so high that they may signal the existence of multicollinearity problems. The pattern of correlations is an initial indication of correlations in the hypothetical relationships in the structural model.

The **Table 10** shows that all the distributions are normal and have mean scores above average. The positive correlations are significant, particularly, between job performance and teacher happiness (r = .544) and organizational ID (r = .462), hence, confirming the hypothesized relationships.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis Summary

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Distribution	1	2	3	4
1. Job Performance	511	3.793	.744	Normal (p = .067)	1.000			
2. Professional Identity	511	3.819	.748	Normal (p = .088)	.163**	1.000		
3. Organizational ID	511	3.448	.790	Normal (p = .156)	.462**	.072	1.000	
4. Teacher Happiness	511	3.759	.652	Normal (p = .112)	.544**	.164**	.501**	1.000

Table 11 shows empirical evidence that there were strongly positive correlations between teacher happiness and job performance (r = .544) and organization identification (r = .501). Even though professional identity exhibits more humble but statistically significant influences, the overall findings prove that happiness is a focal factor of intra-organizational consequences and psychological commitment. The weakest link is between professional and organizational identity, indicating they function independently.

Table 11. Correlation Analysis Summary

Variable Pair	r	p-value	Effect Size	Shared Variance (r²)	95% CI
Job Performance ↔ Professional Identity	.163	.001**	Small	2.7%	[.077, .247]
Job Performance ↔ Organizational ID	.462	<.001***	Medium-Large	21.3%	[.386, .532]
Job Performance ↔ Teacher Happiness	.544	<.001***	Large	29.6%	[.474, .608]
Professional Identity ↔ Organizational ID	.072	.108	Negligible	0.5%	[-.015, .159]
Professional Identity ↔ Teacher Happiness	.164	.001**	Small	2.7%	[.078, .248]
Organizational ID ↔ Teacher Happiness	.501	<.001***	Large	25.1%	[.428, .568]

4.6. Structural equation model and hypothesis testing

The structural equation modeling analysis examines the relationships that are hypothesized to exist amid performance evaluation, professional identity, organizational identification and teacher happiness. Model fit testing establishes that the theoretical model suggested fits the relationships observed in the data well. Path analysis demonstrates all relationships of hypothesis to be significant in direct effects and hence empirical validation of the theoretical model is robust. The findings indicate that performance appraisal has both direct and indirect effects on teacher happiness via the professional identity and the organizational identification routes.

The value of CFI is (.956) and RMSEA is (052), which is a favourable fit in all data-driven indices, thus confirming the solidness of the proposed structural model in **Table 12**.

Table 12. Structural Model Fit Assessment

Fit Index	Observed Value	Recommended Threshold	Interpretation	Quality Level
χ^2/df	2.41	<3.0 (good), <5.0 (acceptable)	Good fit	High
RMR	.041	<.05 (good), <.08 (acceptable)	Excellent fit	High
CFI	.956	>.95 (excellent), >.90 (good)	Excellent fit	High
GFI	.968	>.95 (excellent), >.90 (good)	Excellent fit	High
NFI	.909	>.95 (excellent), >.90 (good)	Good fit	High
TLI	.943	>.95 (excellent), >.90 (good)	Good fit	High
IFI	.957	>.95 (excellent), >.90 (good)	Excellent fit	High
RMSEA	.052	<.05 (excellent), <.08 (good)	Good fit	High
PCLOSE	.341	>.05 (good fit)	Good fit	High

As shown in **Table 13**, all the five hypothesized path models are statistically significant; hence, support the idea that performance evaluation has a direct influence on teacher happiness and that it has such an effect, in addition, via a number of mediators.

Table 13. Direct effects analysis (path coefficients)

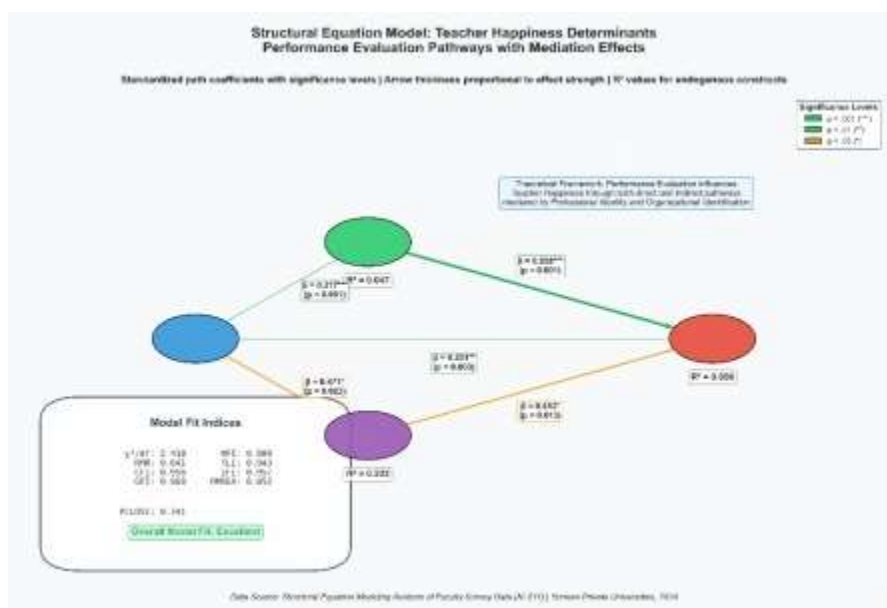| Hypothesis	Path	Unstandardized β	SE	t-value	p-value	Standardized β	95% CI	Support
H1	PE → TH	.253	.085	2.962	.003**	.201	[.086, .420]	✓ Yes
H2	PE → PI	.159	.044	3.641	<.001***	.217	[.073, .245]	✓ Yes
H3	PE → OI	.361	.159	2.273	.023*	.471	[.049, .673]	✓ Yes
H4	PI → TH	.992	.133	7.479	<.001***	.828	[.732, .1252]	✓ Yes
H5	OI → TH	.452	.183	2.471	.013*	.493	[.093, .811]	✓ Yes

Figure 5. Structural Equation Model (SEM) of Teacher Happiness Determinants in Yunnan Private Universities

This **Figure 5**, shows the direct and the indirect route between Performance Evaluation (PE) and Teacher Happiness (TH), through Professional Identity (PI) and Organizational Identification (OI). Path coefficients (β) and significance levels (* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, ***) are shown on each arrow and the thickness of the arrow shows the size of the effect. R^2 values of explained variance are endogenous variables. The overall model fit indices (CFI =.956, RMSEA =.052, x^2 /df = 2.41) support the outstanding fit.

Table 14 shows the hierarchical regression analyses that were carried out to determine the explanatory power of the model. The criterion variable is Student Achievement, and the constructs to be tested, professional identity, organizational identification and teacher happiness are the predictors. The findings show that performance evaluation explains a small percentage of variance in professional identity (R^2 = .047), a moderate percentage in organizational identification (R^2 = .221), and a large percentage in teacher happiness (R^2 = .389). All these results show the explanatory power of the model to each construct.

Table 14. Model variance explained (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R²	Adjusted R²	Effect Size	Contributors
Professional Identity	.047	.045	Small	Performance Evaluation
Organizational Identification	.221	.220	Medium	Performance Evaluation
Teacher Happiness	.389	.385	Large	Performance Evaluation, Professional Identity, Organizational Identification

Note: PE= Performance Evaluation; PI= Professional Identity; OI= Organizational Identification; TH= Teacher Happiness
*Significance levels: * p <.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001*

4.7. Bootstrap testing mediation effects analysis

The bootstrap analysis provides powerful test of indirect effect because its confidence interval is not premised on the assumption of normality. The analysis of 5,000 bootstrap samples is applied to test mediation hypotheses and pay attention to individual mediation pathways and overall indirect effects. The results show that mediation effect is high in both the professional identity and organization identification and the mediation relationships are thus complete such that the direct effect is not significant when the mediators are included in the model.

The findings of the current analysis suggest that professional identity (β = .493, p = .004) and organizational identification (β =.390, p = .046) completely mediate the relationship between the performance evaluation and teacher happiness. In **Table 15**, describe the direct relationship between performance evaluation and happiness disappeared (β =.044), thus confirming complete mediation through both psychological and institutional channels.

Table 15. Bootstrap mediation analysis results (5,000 samples)

Mediation Path	Point Estimate	SE	Bias-Corrected 95% CI		p-value	Effect Type	Hypothesis	Support
			Lower	Upper				
Professional Identity Mediation								
PE → PI → TH	.493	.127	.018	.076	.004**	Complete	H6	
Direct Effect (PE → TH)	.044	.089	-.041	.862	.115	Non-significant	-	
Total Effect	.536	.098	.006	.905	.098	Marginal	-	

Mediation Path	Point Estimate	SE	Bias-Corrected 95% CI	p-value	Effect Type	Hypothesis	Support
Organizational Identification Mediation							
PE → OI → TH	.390	.156	.101	.941	.046*	Complete	H7
Direct Effect (PE → TH)	.044	.089	-.041	.862	.115	Non-significant	-
Total Effect	.883	.134	.641	.996	.001***	Significant	-

Table 15. (*Continued*)

Table 16 is an organized comparison of the magnitude and precision of the mediating effects under analysis. Professional identity exhibits the greater impact (β=.493) and the smaller 95 % confidence interval, which makes it more emphatic on the individual level. Although organizational identification is also important (β =.390), it also shows that institutional influence is also large. The total indirect effect (β =.883) is significant and of practical significance and supports a dual-mediation model.

Table 16. Mediation effects summary and comparative analysis

Mediation Aspect	Professional Identity	Organizational Identification	Combined/Other Remarks
Standardized Effect Size	0.493 (Medium-Large)	0.390 (Medium)	Combined Indirect: 0.883 (Large)
Interpretation	Practically significant	Practically significant	Highly significant
Practical Significance	Focus on personal development	Focus on organizational culture	Emphasizes comprehensive development
Confidence Interval Width	0.058	0.840	Higher precision in identity mediation
Precision	Higher	Lower	--
Significance Level (p-value)	p = .004 (high significance)	p = .046 (moderate significance)	Direct effect: 0.044 (Negligible, complete mediation)
Theoretical Relevance	Individual-level mechanism	Institutional-level mechanism	

4.8. Comprehensive hypothesis testing summary

The overall hypothesis testing will give a logical analysis of all the proposed relationships in the theoretical model. Findings indicate that social exchange theory framework has a great empirical evidence where all the seven hypotheses were statistically confirmed. The result pattern shows that performance evaluation systems in the private universities affect teacher happiness both at the individual psychological level (professional identity) and the institutional attachment level (organizational identification), which favor a dual-pathway model of faculty well-being.

A synthesis of hypothesis testing is given in **Table 17**, which indicates that all the seven hypotheses are statistically indicated to be endorsed. The results are consistent with a two-pathway model, in which performance appraisals have both direct and indirect effect on teacher happiness, i.e., through professional identity (individual domain) and organizational identification (institutional domain). Collectively, these findings support Social Exchange Theory and entrench organizational citizenship behavior as the mediating process between performance evaluation and teacher happiness at the group level.

Table 17. Hypothesis testing results

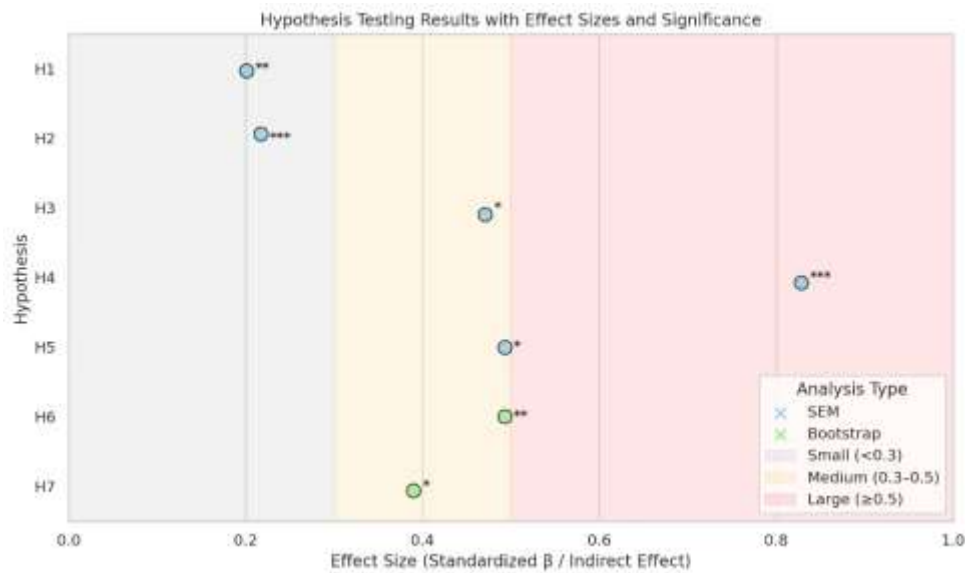| Hypothesis	Description	Statistical Test	Result	Effect Size	Significance	Decision
H1	PE → Teacher Happiness	SEM Path Analysis	β = .201, t = 2.962	Small-Medium	p = .003**	✓ Supported
H2	PE → Professional Identity	SEM Path Analysis	β = .217, t = 3.641	Small-Medium	p < .001***	✓ Supported
H3	PE → Organizational ID	SEM Path Analysis	β = .471, t = 2.273	Medium-Large	p = .023*	✓ Supported
H4	PI → Teacher Happiness	SEM Path Analysis	β = .828, t = 7.479	Large	p < .001***	✓ Supported
H5	OI → Teacher Happiness	SEM Path Analysis	β = .493, t = 2.471	Medium-Large	p = .013*	✓ Supported
H6	PI Mediation (PE → PI → TH)	Bootstrap Analysis	Indirect = .493	Medium-Large	p = .004**	✓ Supported
H7	OI Mediation (PE → OI → TH)	Bootstrap Analysis	Indirect = .390	Medium	p = .046*	✓ Supported

Figure 6. Effect sizes and significance of supported hypotheses (H1–H7) in sem and mediation analysis

This horizontal plot 6, represents standardized effects (β 2) and significance of all the seven hypotheses that are supported in the structural model. SEM direct effects (H1-H 5) are in blue and mediation effects (H 6-H 7) in green are from bootstrap analysis. The magnitude of effects is categorized as small (<0.3), medium (0.3-0.5) and large (>=0.5) by background shading. The significance is indicated by asterisks (**p < .05, **p < .01, **p <.001), and the majority of the hypotheses show moderate and large practical effects, proving the strength of the theoretical model.

In **Table 18**, shows at once that the Social Exchange Theory is both empirically and theoretically strong. The model shows that performance appraisals have a direct effect on the happiness of teachers, and that such effects are mediated by social capital and professional identity. These results demonstrate the relevance of identity-building programs and institutional culture changes. Since this evidence is this broad, further studies should strive to expand the model to a wider scope and prove it valid in diverse educational environments.

Table 18. Model summary and theoretical implications

Theoretical Component	Empirical Evidence	Practical Significance	Future Research Priority
Social Exchange Theory	All paths significant	High validity	Extend to other contexts
Direct Effects Model	5/5 direct paths supported	Performance evaluation matters	Improve evaluation systems
Mediation Model	2/2 mediation paths supported	Mechanisms identified	Develop interventions
Professional Identity Pathway	Complete mediation confirmed	Individual-level importance	Identity development programs
Organizational ID Pathway	Complete mediation confirmed	Institutional-level importance	Culture enhancement initiatives
Overall Model Fit	Excellent fit achieved	Model validity established	Cross-validation needed

The theoretical validation of the current study as summarized in Table [18], presents the full confirmation of the Social Exchange Theory as well as a high overall model fit. The findings demonstrate the practical importance of the assessment systems and suggest that future studies must be aimed at larger sceneries, improvement of the intervention plans and the cross-validation of the existing findings.

4.9. Discussion

The conducted research provides strong empirical evidence of a theoretical framework based on the Social Exchange Theory showing that performance evaluation (PE) has the significant direct and indirect effect on teacher happiness (TH) mediated by two variables: professional identity (PI) and organizational identification (OI). The structural equation modelling indicated that there was a significant direct positive correlation between PE and TH (beta =.201, p =.003) and thus Hypothesis 1 was supported. The further analysis revealed that both PI and OI are effective mediators; the indirect effect through PI was 6 = .493 (p = .004), and the indirect effect through OI was 6 = .390 (p = .046), thus supporting Hypotheses 6 and 7 respectively. Notably, at the introduction of the mediators, the direct relationship between PE and TH was not significant (beta =.044, p =.115), thus, suggesting that the mediators explained the relationship completely and clarifying the psychological and institutional mechanisms through which evaluation systems influence faculty well-being. In this study, the professional identity (PI) was used as a mediator between performance evaluation (PE) and teacher happiness (TH). Transparent and non-judgmental assessments helped faculty members feel competent and in line with professional norms, which solidified their commitment to the work role, resulting in subsequent increases in their workplace happiness. Likewise, organizational identification (OI) transformed these positive comments of PE to increased happiness through promoting trust in the institution, association with its values, and enhanced a feeling of belongingness.

In the demographic subgroups analysis an unanticipated result showed up. Unlike traditional beliefs that marital stability is a source of professional happiness, single faculty members registered concentrations much higher in happiness scores as compared to their married counterparts (F = 5.064, p = .002, 52.029). In addition, faculty having 1-2 years of experience manifested the highest levels of happiness (F = 4.323, p < .001), and it is possible that the disillusionment may rise with time spent in the institution-an idea that is difficult to comprehend according to the common hypothesis of linear satisfaction gain. Moreover, professional identity and organizational identification were not strongly and significantly associated with each other (r = .072, p = .108), meaning that possibly they could be regarded as two different adaptation mechanisms rather than a single psychological construct as it was assumed in some models.

These findings are in large agreement with and go beyond the existing literature. E.g., partial (professional and organizational) identity as a mediator in educational contexts has already been identified

by Xiong and Zhu [23,31], however, this is the first such type of mediation established in the light of a private university. Likewise, a moderate influence of PI on job satisfaction (b = 0.472) was recorded by Zhao [29], which compares closely with the current observation (b = .828) further endorsing the moderating role of identity between institutional policies and individual outcomes. They are also reflected in what Angel & Francisco [40], conclude as they also found the effect size to be only 22.32%. They support the finding of this study (0493) by concluding that job satisfaction is positively linked to high organizational identification in the context of private institutions.

Using the Social Exchange Theory, the findings indicate that growth-oriented fair performance assessment indicates that the institution is conducive to the commitment in that there is a reciprocal commitment that is created by augmented professional identity (PI) and organizational identification (OI). Both of these dual-pathway effects have large indirect effects (PI: ß= .493; OI: ß= .390) and substantial proportions of explained variance in teacher happiness (R 2 = .389). The reliability (alpha was above .87), the model fit (CFI = .956 and RMSEA =.052), and validity were satisfied. The shortcomings are that the type of the study is cross-sectional, has regional bias (Yunnan Province), self-report (however, Harman test indicated minimal bias; 18.804%), and it leaves out adjunct faculty. Resting on a solid framework to interpret the complete mediation of the PE and TH relationship through PI and OI, the study presents an argument on the importance of evaluation systems which should follow the path beyond the compliance in an effort to create a psychological and institutional fit. Such mechanisms need to be tested through future research, across contexts, whether longitudinally or through mixed methods, and with a variety of faculty types to enhance the generalizability.

Besides the mediation effects, it is probable that professional identity (PI) and organizational identification (OI) can harbor together in producing teacher happiness (TH). The aspect that represents a higher order of positive impact on two variables of performance evaluation (PE) and happiness is seen in faculty who have the confluence of high organizing identification and strong sense of professional identification in the case of private universities. Although such interaction was not examined in the current work, one can test it in future studies using moderated mediation analyses to determine whether the co-occurrence of high PI and OI act synergistically with the indirect route between PE and TH.

The results stand in line with Social Identity Theory, that states the enhancement of well-being through professional identity (PI) and organizational identification (OI) and Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing the importance of competence and belonging in happiness building. The same findings apply in the higher education in China and the West, implying cross-context applicability. In regard to the HR policy, including equitable, transparent, and identity-supportive assessment in the HR policy will increase teacher happiness. Rouillard and Hansen have discussed longitudinal effects, cross-cultural, and moderated mediation models of data and should be the agenda of future studies to understand more.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study provides empirical clarification on the effect of performance evaluation systems in the private universities on teacher happiness, using psychological constructs, including professional identity and organizational identification. The findings support the fact that, when viewed as fair and developmental, appraisal processes not only act as accountability systems but also as emotional engagement and institutional commitment facilitators. The results of the 511 faculty in Yunnan prove that psychological adaptation can be enhanced considerably by the means of efficient evaluation systems, which leads to job satisfaction and the well-being of the faculties in the long run.

Clear indicators that can be easily measured are necessary to enhance performance evaluation (PE) in the private universities. The most important areas are teaching quality (student ratings, faculty evaluation, lesson planning), research productivity (papers, citations, grants), service (administration, service, counseling), teaching development (seminars, certification). With portfolio review, 360-degree feedback, and KPIs that tie to institutional goals, fairness, transparency and eventually teacher happiness could be increased

5.1. Recommendations

Redesign Evaluation Frameworks: Institutions must switch to a more comprehensive framework that incorporates self-assessment, formative feedback and peer appraisal as a part of the evaluation.

Enhance Identity Formation: Face-specific professional development interventions are to be established to strengthen the early-career faculty identity, particularly in areas where role ambiguity is quite high.

Strengthen Institutional Belonging: The leader of the organization must foster communication, participatory governance, and organizational values to strengthen emotional attachment to the faculty.

Policy Alignment: National and provincial education departments should come out with policy directives that would make it mandatory to have psychologically supportive evaluation systems in the private universities.

Individualized Appraisals: Identify the differences in years of service, educational background and marital status in formulating individual systems of performance feedbacks.

5.2. Future work

The research presents several opportunities that can be addressed by a future study:

Longitudinal Studies: The studies that are to be carried out later should examine the variations in teacher happiness over some time in connection with the evolving assessment systems and organizational climates.

Mixed-Methods Approaches: Qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation are probably to demonstrate the hidden emotional experiences in the formation of professional identity and attachment to institutions.

Comparison Analyses: Cross-regional or cross-national researches may examine the role of cultural, economic and institutional issues in moderating the relationship between appraisal systems and faculty well-being.

Inclusion of Adjunct and Part-time Faculty: Expanding the number of participants to include non-full time employees, one can discover other forms of adaptational processes that exist in looser working conditions.

Technology Integration: Examine how digital performance management technologies can affect transparency, bias, and faculty perceptions of fairness in real-time assessments.

5.3. Final thought

With the increasing pressure on higher education to be accountable, this research is a reminder that meaningful institutional improvement cannot be dissociated with faculty well-being. Assessment of performance should change into a system of compliance to one of psychological development and institutional cohesiveness. Finally, the ripple effect is in general not only beneficial to teachers but also to

students, institutions, and the wider society when the teachers feel acknowledged, valued, and aligned with the values of the institutions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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