

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction among academicians in chinese higher education institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction among academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 346 academicians across five HEIs in Zhejiang, China, and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The results revealed that organizational culture positively influenced both self-efficacy ( $\beta = 1.279$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.573$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), while self-efficacy also had a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.164$ ,  $p = 0.032$ ). In contrast, leadership communication showed a significant but negative direct effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.176$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ) and had no significant impact on self-efficacy. Mediation analysis confirmed that self-efficacy partially mediated the effects of both organizational culture and leadership communication on job satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of fostering a strong organizational culture and enhancing self-efficacy to improve job satisfaction among academic staff, while also suggesting that leadership communication alone may not yield positive outcomes unless supported by internal psychological resources.

**Keywords:** job satisfaction; leadership communication; organizational culture; self-efficacy; structural equation modelling (SEM)

## 1. Introduction

Research has consistently shown that job satisfaction among teachers is linked to their years of service. High stress levels, often caused by organizational practices, tend to negatively impact job satisfaction. For instance, Wang et al. reported that approximately 36% of Chinese university instructors experienced high levels of workplace stress, which adversely affected their job satisfaction<sup>[1]</sup>. Workplace stress has emerged as a significant issue affecting the job satisfaction of academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Specifically, challenges such as excessive administrative workloads, high expectations for research output, and a competitive academic environment contribute to elevated stress levels<sup>[1]</sup>. This stress negatively impacts the overall satisfaction and well-being of academic staff, reducing their effectiveness and

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commitment to institutional goals. Addressing workplace stress through effective management practices and supportive policies is critical for enhancing job satisfaction in Chinese HEIs. Moreover, organizational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the work experiences of academicians in Chinese HEIs. A culture that emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity, and professional development fosters higher levels of job satisfaction among faculty members<sup>[1,2]</sup>. Additionally, institutions that cultivate a supportive culture, recognizing and valuing the contributions of their staff, can mitigate challenges associated with high workloads and competitive environments<sup>[2]</sup>. Thus, fostering an organizational culture aligned with the well-being of academicians is essential for institutional success.

In addition, self-efficacy is a critical determinant of job satisfaction among academicians. Educators with a strong belief in their ability to succeed are more likely to adopt innovative teaching practices and overcome workplace challenges effectively<sup>[3]</sup>. Furthermore, institutions that invest in professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, and a supportive environment enhance the self-efficacy of their academic staff, leading to improved job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to institutional goals<sup>[3]</sup>. Furthermore, leadership communication is a vital factor influencing job satisfaction in Chinese HEIs. Effective communication from leaders fosters trust, transparency, and collaboration within the academic community<sup>[4]</sup>. Involving academic staff in decision-making processes through open and inclusive communication enhances their engagement and commitment to institutional objectives. Consequently, leadership communication serves as a cornerstone for creating a positive and productive work environment<sup>[4]</sup>.

On another note, job satisfaction is closely tied to turnover intentions among academicians in Chinese HEIs. Academicians with low job satisfaction are more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, posing challenges to institutional stability<sup>[5]</sup>. Therefore, addressing factors such as workplace stress, self-efficacy, and organizational culture is crucial for retaining talented faculty and fostering long-term institutional growth. Additionally, professional development opportunities are instrumental in enhancing both self-efficacy and job satisfaction among academic staff. Providing continuous learning opportunities and pathways for career advancement boosts confidence and motivation among educators<sup>[6]</sup>. Thus, professional development not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also contributes to the overall satisfaction and retention of academicians.

The interplay of leadership communication, organizational culture, and self-efficacy significantly impacts the job satisfaction of academicians in Chinese HEIs. Ultimately, addressing workplace stress, fostering a positive organizational culture, and investing in professional development are critical strategies for enhancing the satisfaction and well-being of academic staff. By prioritizing these factors, Chinese HEIs can create a supportive and thriving academic environment, aligning with the goals of national educational reforms and global competitiveness.

## **2. Literature review**

The landscape of higher education in China has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by comprehensive education reforms aimed at enhancing quality and accessibility. Firstly, these reforms, as outlined by the Ministry of Education, emphasize improving basic education, expanding future opportunities for students, and supporting lifelong learning<sup>[7]</sup>. Consequently, within this evolving context, the job satisfaction of academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) has become a critical area of study, particularly in relation to leadership communication, organizational culture, and self-efficacy.

Effective leadership communication is pivotal in shaping the work environment and influencing job satisfaction among academicians. Indeed, leaders who communicate transparently and supportively can foster a sense of trust and collaboration, which is essential for academic staff. Moreover, the recent education

policies in China, which focus on reducing administrative burdens and promoting academic freedom, underscore the importance of effective communication channels within HEIs<sup>[7]</sup>. Thus, these policies aim to create an environment where academicians can thrive, thereby enhancing their job satisfaction. Furthermore, leadership communication involves not only the dissemination of information but also the engagement of academic staff in decision-making processes. This participatory approach, in turn, can lead to a more motivated and committed workforce. Effective communication from leadership is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among academicians<sup>[8]</sup>. This is particularly relevant in the context of Chinese HEIs, where hierarchical structures often dominate. By fostering open communication, leaders can bridge the gap between administration and faculty, leading to a more cohesive and productive academic environment.

Similarly, organizational culture within HEIs plays a significant role in determining job satisfaction. A positive organizational culture that values innovation, inclusivity, and professional development can significantly enhance the work experience of academicians. The Chinese government's commitment to modernizing education by 2035 includes initiatives to improve the allocation of educational resources and promote high-level international cooperation<sup>[7]</sup>. These efforts are designed to cultivate a supportive and dynamic organizational culture that can positively impact job satisfaction.

Organizational culture, therefore, encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviours that characterize an institution. In the context of Chinese HEIs, a culture that promotes academic excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement is essential. Studies have shown that a supportive organizational culture is linked to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates among academic staff<sup>[2]</sup>. By fostering a culture that prioritizes the well-being and professional growth of academicians, HEIs can create an environment where faculty members feel valued and motivated to contribute to the institution's success. Additionally, self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, is another crucial factor influencing job satisfaction. Academicians with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in innovative teaching practices and contribute to academic research. The ongoing reforms in China's education sector, which include the development of modern vocational education systems and the integration of vocational and general education, aim to enhance the professional capabilities of educators<sup>[7]</sup>. By providing continuous professional development opportunities, these reforms help boost the self-efficacy of academicians, thereby improving their job satisfaction.

Self-efficacy influences how academicians approach challenges and their persistence in the face of obstacles. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy suggests that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals and remain committed to achieving them<sup>[9]</sup>. In the context of Chinese HEIs, enhancing self-efficacy among academicians can lead to greater job satisfaction and improved performance. Professional development programs, mentorship opportunities, and supportive leadership can all contribute to building self-efficacy among academic staff<sup>[3]</sup>.

In conclusion, the interplay between leadership communication, organizational culture, and self-efficacy significantly impacts the job satisfaction of academicians in Chinese HEIs. The latest education policies in China, which focus on quality improvement, resource allocation, and professional development, provide a supportive framework for enhancing job satisfaction<sup>[7]</sup>. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing strategies that foster a positive work environment and promote the well-being of academic staff.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design**

The survey design adopted in this study is deductive, beginning with the formulation of hypotheses, followed by empirical data collection and critical analysis of the obtained data<sup>[38]</sup>. The researcher believes that a survey method is appropriate for this study as it aligns with the research objectives, which include: determining the levels of Job Satisfaction (JS), Leadership Communication (LC), Self-Efficacy (SE), and Organizational Culture (OC) among academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs); examining the influence of Leadership Communication (LC) on Job Satisfaction (JS); examining the influence of Leadership Communication (LC) on Self-Efficacy (SE); examining the influence of Organizational Culture (OC) on Job Satisfaction (JS); examining the influence of Organizational Culture (OC) on Self-Efficacy (SE); examining the influence of Self-Efficacy (SE) on Job Satisfaction (JS); testing the mediating impact of Self-Efficacy (SE) on the relationship between Leadership Communication (LC) and Job Satisfaction (JS); and testing the mediating impact of Self-Efficacy (SE) on the relationship between Organizational Culture (OC) and Job Satisfaction (JS) among academicians working in Chinese HEIs.

Additionally, the survey approach is suitable for achieving the research objectives by allowing the researcher to gather information from a large population through sampling methods. This approach enables the researcher to generalize the findings to the actual population based on the identified sample<sup>[11-13]</sup>.

#### **3.2. Population and sample**

Population and sample are essential components of research that influence both the accuracy and applicability of study outcomes. In the realm of research, the population represents the entire group of interest, while the sample, a smaller segment, acts as a representative snapshot of that broader group<sup>[1]</sup>. The population for this study consists of academicians working in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) located in Zhejiang, China. Specifically, the population comprises academicians from five Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in China, namely Ningbo University (2,826), Shaoxing University (1,600), Zhejiang University (3,611), Wenzhou-Kean University (500), and Wenzhou University (1,353), totaling 9,890 academicians. The selection of these five universities as the study population aims to provide a comprehensive representation of different types of higher education institutions and to ensure the applicability of the findings across various academic contexts within Zhejiang Province.

#### **3.3. Sampling method**

The study employs a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation from various academic disciplines and positions within the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). This method is chosen to obtain a diverse and representative sample, which enhances the generalizability of the findings. Stratified random sampling involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata based on specific characteristics, such as academic discipline, position, or department. Each stratum is then sampled randomly, ensuring that all relevant subgroups are adequately represented in the sample, thus reducing sampling bias and increasing the precision of the results<sup>[17]</sup>. The steps in stratified random sampling include identifying the strata, determining the sample size for each stratum proportionally to its size in the population, randomly sampling within each stratum, and combining the samples from each stratum to form the overall sample for the study. This method is justified as it ensures representation, increases the accuracy and reliability of the results by reducing sampling error, and enhances the ability to generalize the findings to the broader population of academicians in Chinese HEIs.

### **3.4. Measurement**

The study employs validated instruments to measure the key variables, ensuring the reliability and validity of the data collected. Leadership communication is measured using the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) developed<sup>[14]</sup>, which assesses dimensions such as clarity, responsiveness, and openness in leadership interactions. Organizational culture is assessed using the Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire by<sup>[15]</sup>, which evaluates factors like innovation, inclusivity, and supportiveness within academic environments. Self-efficacy is evaluated using the scale developed by<sup>[16]</sup>, which measures aspects of personal competence, mastery experiences, and emotional resilience. Finally, job satisfaction is measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by<sup>[17]</sup>, which examines various dimensions of job satisfaction, including pay, coworker relationships, supervision quality, and work conditions. These instruments are chosen for their proven reliability and validity in previous research, making them suitable for this study's objectives<sup>[14-17]</sup>.

### **3.5. Validation**

Determining validity is an assessment of how accurately a test measures what it is supposed to measure. In research, there are several types of validity that need to be considered, such as predictive validity, face validity, content validity, and construct validity. Furthermore, expert reviews are required in a study to ensure that the content has the correct sentence structure and clarity<sup>[16]</sup>. Since the research instruments are derived from various sources and previous studies in English, a translation process was carried out to ensure the validity and appropriateness of the terms used. The first step for the validity of the instrument undertaken by the researchers was to implement the translation process from the original instrument from English to Chinese. The researchers used the services of the Malaysian Translation and Book Institute (ITBM) for a back translation. The back translation process was used to ensure that the meaning of each item from the original questionnaire was accurately translated into Chinese. The back translation process used was based on the method proposed by<sup>[18]</sup>.

Each instrument developed or adapted requires validation, including content validation. Content validity aims to assess whether the items in an instrument represent the overall content to be measured. This process involves a readability test to evaluate whether the items or questions accurately reflect the variables or constructs being measured<sup>[46]</sup>. To obtain the content validity of the instrument used in this study, the researcher enlisted the services of eight experts: four from China and four from Malaysia. The selected experts include university lecturers, practitioners in the field of higher education management, or professionals with experience in the field of industrial or organizational psychology.

### **3.6. Response rate**

This section presents the response rate and the valid response rate of the questionnaires distributed in the study. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the target population comprising academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). As presented in **Table 1**, a total of 368 questionnaires were successfully returned, achieving a response rate of 92%, which is considered highly satisfactory and exceeds the minimum recommended threshold for survey-based research<sup>[21]</sup>. Of the 368 returned questionnaires, 22 were rejected due to extreme outliers. These were excluded from further analysis, resulting in a total of 346 retained questionnaires, which corresponds to a valid response rate of 94%. This high rate of usable responses enhances the reliability and representativeness of the data collected for subsequent statistical analyses using SPSS and SEM AMOS.

**Table 1.** Response rate for the questionnaires.

Response	Frequency/Rate	Percentage
Distributed questionnaires	400	100
Returned questionnaires	368	92
Rejected questionnaires	22	6
Retained questionnaires	346	94

### 3.7. Demographic

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the 346 respondents who participated in the study. The demographic variables considered include gender, age group, and academic qualification. **Table 2** summarises the distribution of the respondents based on these demographic categories.

#### Gender

Out of the 346 respondents, the majority were female ( $n = 249$ ), representing 71.9% of the total sample. Male respondents accounted for 28.1% ( $n = 97$ ). This indicates a higher representation of female participants in the study, which is consistent with gender distributions often found in the academic and educational sectors.

#### Age Group

The age distribution of the respondents varied across four categories. The largest proportion of respondents ( $n = 149$ , 43.1%) fell within the age range of 31 to 40 years. This was followed by respondents aged 20 to 30 years ( $n = 90$ , 26.0%) and 41 to 50 years ( $n = 84$ , 24.3%). A smaller proportion ( $n = 23$ , 6.6%) were aged 51 years and above. The age profile suggests that the study captured a wide range of experiences from early-career to more seasoned professionals.

#### Academic Qualification

In terms of academic qualifications, the highest proportion of respondents held a Master's degree ( $n = 122$ , 35.3%), followed closely by Bachelor's degree holders ( $n = 117$ , 33.8%). Respondents with a PhD constituted 25.7% ( $n = 89$ ), while a smaller percentage ( $n = 18$ , 5.2%) indicated other qualifications, such as professional certifications or diplomas. This distribution reflects a well-educated sample suitable for examining advanced educational and organisational constructs. See **Table 2**.

**Table 1.** Demographics of respondents.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	249	71.90%
	Male	97	28.10%
Age	20–30 years	90	26.00%
	31–40 years	149	43.10%
	41–50 years	84	24.30%
	51 years and above	23	6.60%
Academic Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	117	33.80%
	Master's Degree	122	35.30%
	PhD	89	25.70%
	Others	18	5.20%

**The Impact of Leadership Communication and Organizational Culture on Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction among Academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutions.**

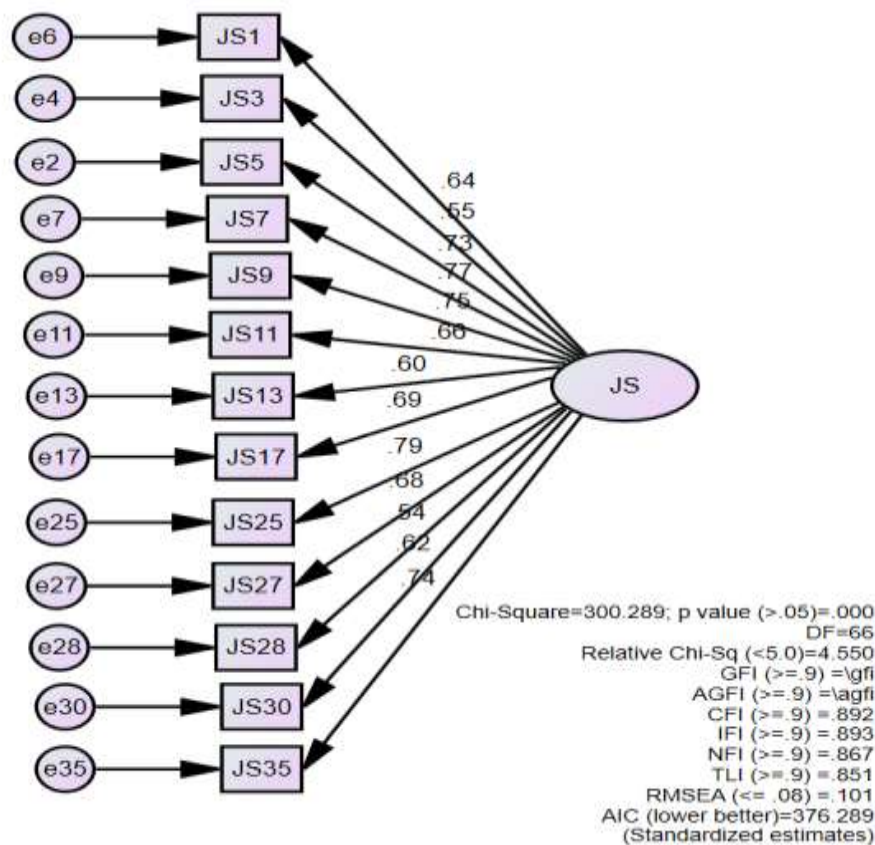


Figure 1. Regression path coefficient model.

**Figure 1** presents the regression path coefficient model illustrating the hypothesized relationships among Leadership Communication (LC), Organizational Culture (OC), Self-Efficacy (SE), and Job Satisfaction (JS). This model was tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) to assess the influence among variables. The structural equation modelling (SEM) results were evaluated to the five proposed hypotheses (H1–H5). Each path was assessed to determine the significance and direction of the relationships among Leadership Communication, Organizational Culture, Self-Efficacy, and Job Satisfaction among academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). See **Figure 2**.

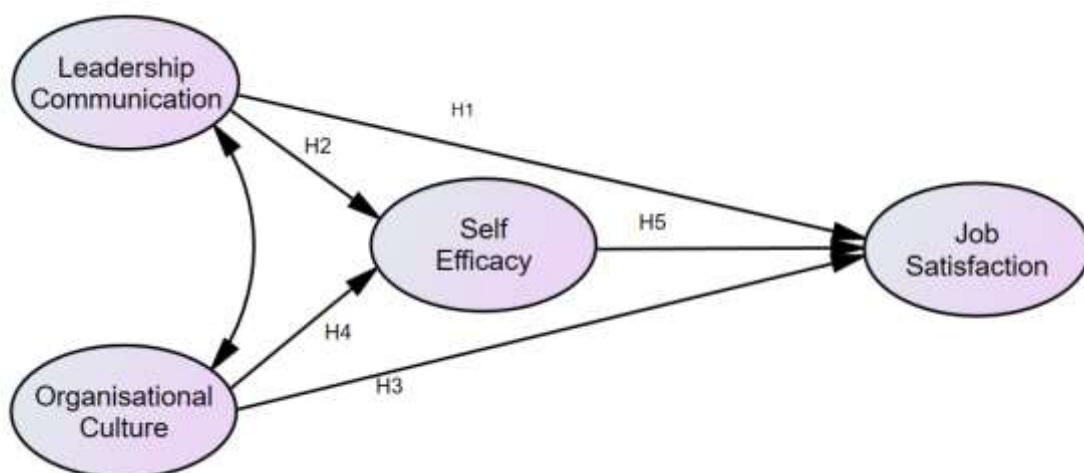


Figure 2. Regression path coefficient model of VIL, CP and TC.

### The influence of variables Leadership Communication (LC) on Job Satisfaction (JS) among academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

RO2 and H1 aim to examine the influence of variables Leadership Communication (LC) on Job Satisfaction (JS) among academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

**H1:** Leadership Communication (LC) has a significant positive impact on Job Satisfaction (JS) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). See **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** The regression path coefficient of LC on JS.

Path	$\beta$	C.R.	P-value	Interpretation	Result
Job satisfaction ← Leadership communication	-0.176	-2.424	0.015	Significant with $p = 0.015$ , but the effect is negative (-0.176),	H1 Rejected

The analysis indicates that Leadership Communication has a statistically significant influence on Job Satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.176$ , C.R. = -2.424,  $p = 0.015$ ). The p-value is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the effect is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. However, the direction of the relationship is negative ( $\beta = -0.176$ ), which is contrary to the hypothesized positive direction. In other words, while the statistical test confirms the existence of a significant effect, the negative beta coefficient contradicts the original assumption that Leadership Communication would enhance Job Satisfaction.

Therefore, H1 rejected.

### The influence of Leadership Communication (LC) on Self-Efficacy among academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

RO3 and H2 aim to examine the influence of variables Leadership Communication (LC) on Self-Efficacy (SE) among academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

**H2:** Leadership Communication (LC) has significant positive impact on Self-Efficacy (SE) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

The structural equation model was employed to assess the hypothesized direct relationship. **Table 4** shows the finding of the regression path coefficient of leadership communication on self-efficacy.

**Table 4.** The regression path coefficient of LC on SE.

Path	$\beta$	C.R.	P-value	Interpretation	Result
Self-efficacy ← Leadership communication	-0.262	-1.77	0.077	LC has no significant effect on SE ( $p > 0.05$ ).	Rejected

Based on **Table 4** the path analysis indicates that Leadership Communication has a negative and non-significant influence on Self-Efficacy ( $\beta = -0.262$ , C.R. = -1.770,  $p = 0.077$ ). Although the beta value indicates a negative direction, the p-value exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the effect is statistically insignificant. Hence, based on the above finding, Hypothesis H2 is rejected.

### The Influence of Organizational Culture on Job Satisfaction Among Academicians Working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

To further analysis, RO4 and H3 aim to examine the influence of Organizational Culture (OC) on Job Satisfaction (JS) among academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) as below.



**H3:** Organizational Culture (OC) has significant positive impact on Job Satisfaction (JS) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

In line with Research Objective 4 (RO4), this section evaluates the influence of Organizational Culture on Job Satisfaction. The structural equation model was employed to assess the hypothesized direct relationship. The regression path coefficient results are presented in **Table 5**.

**Table 5.** The regression path coefficient of OC on JS.

Path	$\beta$	C.R.	P-value	Interpretation	Result
Job_satisfaction $\leftarrow$ Organisational_culture	0.573	2.506	0.012	OC has a significant positive effect on JS (p = 0.012)	Accepted

Referring to **Table 5**, the research finding reveals that Organizational Culture has a significant and positive influence on Job Satisfaction, with a standardized regression coefficient of  $\beta = 0.573$ , a critical ratio (C.R.) of 2.506, and a p-value of 0.012. Since the p-value is below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, the result is statistically significant. The positive beta value indicates that a strong and positive perception of organizational culture is associated with increased job satisfaction among academicians. Thus, the H3 is accepted.

#### **The Influence of Organizational Culture on Self-Efficacy Among Academicians Working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).**

To address Research Objective 5 (RO5), this section examines the influence of Organizational Culture (OC) on Self-Efficacy (SE) among academic staff in Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

**H4:** Organizational Culture (OC) has significant positive impact on Self-Efficacy (SE) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

The analysis was conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM), and the regression results are summarized in **Table 6**.

**Table 6.** Regression Path Coefficient of Organizational Culture on Self-Efficacy.

Path	$\beta$	C.R.	P-value	Interpretation	Result
Self-efficacy $\leftarrow$ Organizational Culture	1.279	6.519	0.001	OC has a significant positive effect on SE. Highly significant (p < 0.001), estimate = 1.279.	Accepted

The regression results reveal that Organizational Culture has a strong, positive, and statistically significant effect on Self-Efficacy among academicians. The standardized regression coefficient is  $\beta = 1.279$ , with a critical ratio (C.R.) of 6.519, and a p-value of 0.001. The p-value is well below the standard threshold of 0.05, indicating that the relationship is highly significant. Thus, H4 is accepted.

#### **The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Job Satisfaction Among Academicians Working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).**

Next, this section examines the influence of **Self-Efficacy** on **Job Satisfaction** among academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutions.

**H5:** There is a significant positive influence of Self-Efficacy (SE) on Job Satisfaction (JS) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

The structural relationship was assessed using regression path analysis within the structural equation modelling (SEM) framework. **Table 7** shows the result of the Regression Path Coefficient of Self-Efficacy on Job Satisfaction.

**Table 7.** Regression Path Coefficient of SE on JS.

Path	$\beta$	C.R.	P-value	Interpretation	Result
Job satisfaction $\leftarrow$ Self efficacy	0.164	2.14	0.032	SE has a significant positive effect on JS ( $p = 0.032$ , $\beta = 0.164$ )	Accepted

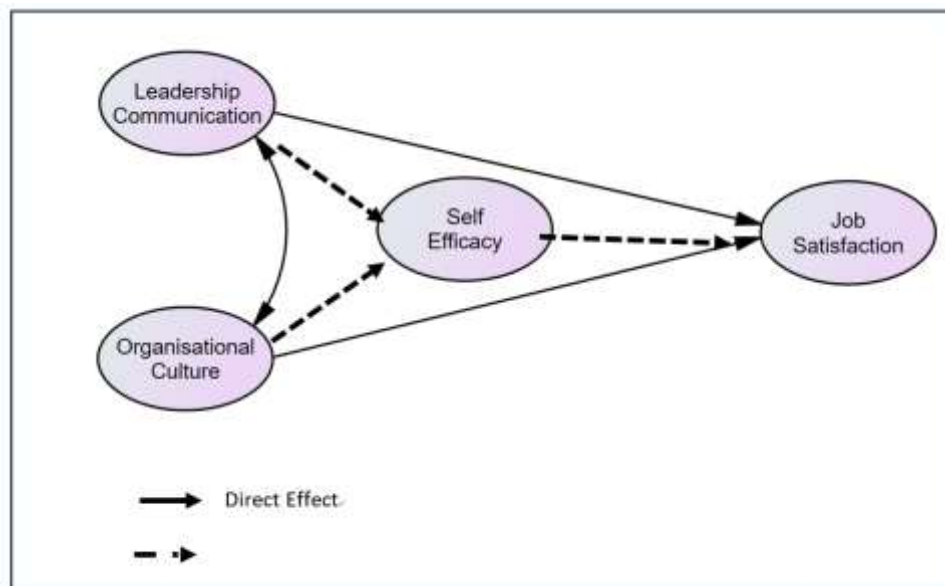
The findings indicated that Self-Efficacy has a statistically significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction. The standardized path coefficient is  $\beta = 0.164$ , with a critical ratio (C.R.) of 2.14, and a p-value of 0.032. As the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, this result confirms that the effect is statistically meaningful. Based on the finding, H5 is accepted.

### Mediating Effect of Self-Efficacy on the Relationship Between Leadership Communication, Organizational Culture, and Job Satisfaction Among Academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutions

To address Research Objectives 7 and 8 (RO7 and RO8), as well as to test Hypotheses 6 and 7 (H6 and H7), both partial and full mediation analyses were conducted using AMOS software. In examining mediation effects, it is essential to evaluate both the direct effect and the indirect effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable through the proposed mediator. The structural mediation model is illustrated in **Figure 3**, which presents the positioning of self-efficacy as a mediating variable within the overall structural framework. The corresponding research objectives and hypotheses are outlined as follows:

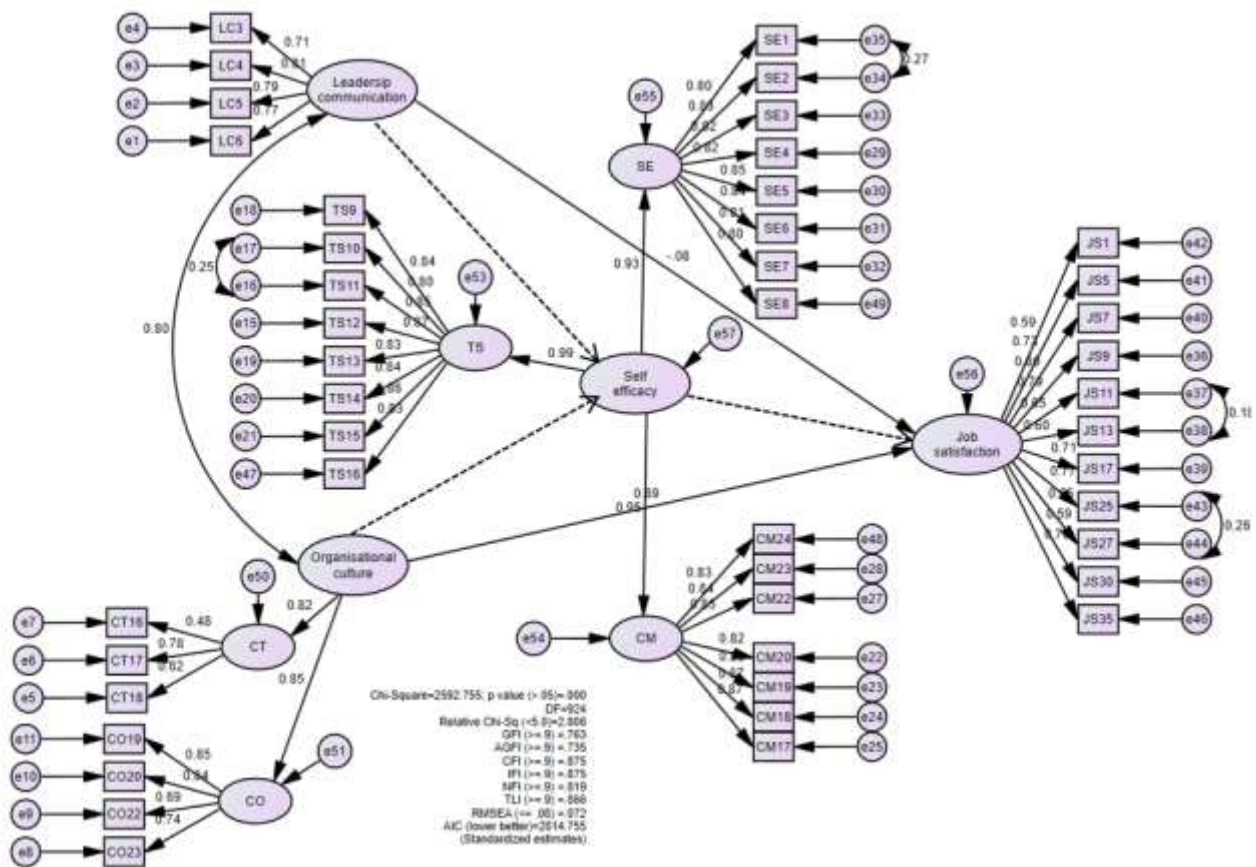
**H6:** Self-Efficacy (SE) mediates the relationship between Leadership Communication (LC) and Job Satisfaction (JS) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

**H7:** Self-Efficacy (SE) mediates the relationship between Organizational Culture (OC) and Job Satisfaction (JS) of academicians working in Chinese Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).



**Figure 3.** Modelling the mediator in the structural model.

Next, **Figure 4** Illustrates the model of leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction without self-efficacy as a mediating variable.



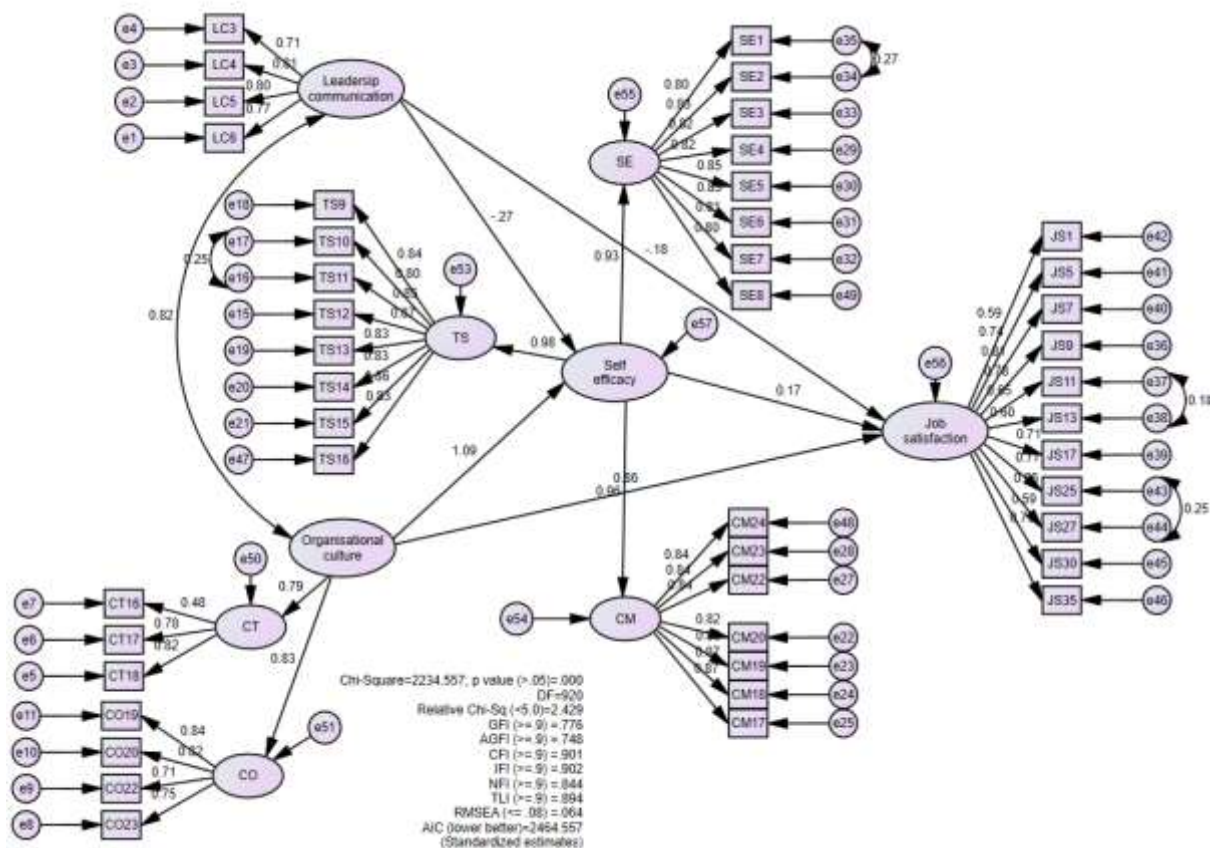
**Figure 4.** The model of leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction without self-efficacy as a mediating variable.

As shown in **Table 8** the direct path from Leadership Communication to Job Satisfaction was not statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.079$ ,  $p = 0.238$ ), suggesting that leadership communication alone does not have a meaningful impact on academicians' job satisfaction in Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In contrast, the direct effect of Organisational Culture on Job Satisfaction was found to be highly significant ( $\beta = -0.573$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 8.** The Multiple Regression Weight (model without mediator).

Path	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Interpretation
JS $\leftarrow$ LC	-0.079	0.067	-1.18	0.238	Not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Leadership communication does not significantly affect job satisfaction.
JS $\leftarrow$ OC	-0.573	0.126	-4.54	0.001	Highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), but the effect is negative ( $-0.573$ ).

Next, **Figure 5** shows the model of leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction mediated by self-efficacy



**Figure 5.** The model of leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction mediating by self-efficacy.

Referring to the **Table 9**, after introducing the mediating variable Self-Efficacy (SE) into the model, the direct path from Leadership Communication (LC) to Job Satisfaction (JS) remains statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.176$ , C.R. = -2.424,  $p = 0.015$ ). This indicates that Leadership Communication has a significant direct negative effect on Job Satisfaction, even after accounting for the mediating role of Self-Efficacy. Similarly, the path from Organizational Culture (OC) to Job Satisfaction (JS) also remains statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.573$ , C.R. = 2.506,  $p = 0.012$ ), indicating a significant direct positive effect of Organizational Culture on Job Satisfaction, despite the presence of the mediator.

Since both LC on JS and OC on JS direct effects remain significant after including the mediator (SE), this suggests that Self-Efficacy only partially mediates the relationships between LC and JS, and between OC and JS. That is, part of the effect of LC and OC on JS is transmitted through Self-Efficacy, while the other part remains a direct effect.

**Table 9.** The multiple regression weight (model with mediator).

Path	$\beta$	C.R.	P	Interpretation	Result
JS $\leftarrow$ LC	-0.176	-2.424	0.015	Statistically significant. LC negatively affects JS	Significant
JS $\leftarrow$ OC	0.573	2.506	0.012	Statistically significant. OC positively affects JS.	Significant

Next, bootstrapping result analysis was conducted to confirm that SE is mediation on the relationship between 1. OL and JS and 2. LC and JS. The total, direct, and indirect effects were examined.

As shown in **Table 10**, OC exhibited a strong total effect on JS ( $\beta = 1.21$ ), with a direct effect of  $\beta = 1$  and an indirect effect of  $\beta = 0.21$  transmitted through SE. This suggests that SE partially mediates the

relationship between OC and JS.LC showed a negative total effect on JS ( $\beta = -0.219$ ), comprised of a direct effect ( $\beta = -0.176$ ) and a smaller indirect effect ( $\beta = -0.043$ ). The indirect path from LC through SE to JS also suggests partial mediation. Next, to confirm that Self-Efficacy is mediation on the relationship between leadership communication and organizational culture on job satisfaction, bootstrapping analysis was conducted. The total, direct, and indirect effects were examined.

**Table 10.** The values of the total, direct and indirect effect.

	Total effect				Direct effect				Indirect effect			
	OC	LC	SE	JS	OC	LC	SE	JS	OC	LC	SE	JS
SE	1.279	-0.262	0	0	1.279	-0.262	0	0	0	0	0	0
JS	1.210	-0.219	0.164	1	1	-0.176	0.164	0	0.21	-0.043	0	0

As shown in **Table 10**, OC exhibited a strong total effect on JS ( $\beta = 1.210$ ), with a direct effect of  $\beta = 1$  and an indirect effect of  $\beta = 0.21$  transmitted through SE. This suggests that SE partially mediates the relationship between OC and JS. While LC showed a negative total effect on JS ( $\beta = -0.219$ ), comprised of a direct effect ( $\beta = -0.176$ ) and a smaller indirect effect ( $\beta = -0.043$ ). The indirect path from LC through SE to JS also suggests partial mediation. These results confirm that Self-Efficacy serves as a partial mediator in both relationships between Organizational Culture and Job Satisfaction, and between Leadership Communication and Job Satisfaction. Thus, H6 and H7 are accepted.

The study examined the relationships among Leadership Communication, Organizational Culture, Self-Efficacy, and Job Satisfaction among academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutes. The findings revealed that Organizational Culture had a significant positive influence on both Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction. Similarly, Self-Efficacy positively influenced Job Satisfaction. These results support the importance of a strong and supportive culture in enhancing academic staff motivation and satisfaction. However, Leadership Communication did not show a positive direct effect on Self-Efficacy or Job Satisfaction. In fact, the effect on Job Satisfaction was significant but negative, suggesting possible communication issues or contextual challenges in these institutions. Importantly, Self-Efficacy partially mediated the relationships between both Leadership Communication and Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Culture and Job Satisfaction. This shows that self-belief plays a key role in shaping how leadership and culture impact job satisfaction. Finally, these findings collectively emphasize that while Organizational Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping both Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction, Leadership Communication alone does not directly predict positive outcomes unless mediated by internal psychological resources such as Self-Efficacy. Institutions aiming to improve job satisfaction should thus not only strengthen their leadership and cultural frameworks but also invest in developing the self-belief and capabilities of their academic staff.

## 4. Discussion

### Leadership Communication and Job Satisfaction

The relationship between leadership communication and job satisfaction is a pivotal area of inquiry in organizational behavior, particularly within healthcare and academic contexts. Effective leadership communication fosters a conducive work environment, boosts job satisfaction, and ultimately enhances organizational performance<sup>[22,26,32]</sup>. Leadership communication involves transparent dissemination of goals, participatory decision-making, and the provision of constructive feedback, all of which contribute to a sense of value and belonging among employees<sup>[26,28,34]</sup>. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, has been shown to significantly

enhance job satisfaction<sup>[26]</sup>. For instance, Quesado et al. found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and group satisfaction among nurses, underscoring the value of strong communication<sup>[22]</sup>.

Authentic leadership, which centers on ethical behavior, transparency, and openness, also positively influences job satisfaction by creating an environment of psychological safety and trust<sup>[32,37]</sup>. This is especially important in high-stress sectors such as healthcare, where leadership styles affect burnout, turnover intentions, and employee satisfaction<sup>[23,37]</sup>. Studies also demonstrate that psychological safety mediates the relationship between leadership communication and job satisfaction, enabling staff to engage more confidently in workplace interactions<sup>[32,34]</sup>. For example, Cho et al. confirmed that psychological safety significantly influences job satisfaction and performance among hospital staff<sup>[34]</sup>.

Leadership communication further contributes to job satisfaction through the promotion of mental health awareness, structured resilience programs, and ongoing professional development opportunities<sup>[23,29,31]</sup>. During the COVID-19 pandemic, transparent and empathetic communication from leadership helped maintain morale and minimize staff attrition in critical care settings<sup>[34]</sup>. Continuous development efforts, such as the IMPROVE job intervention and leadership fellowships, have shown measurable improvements in satisfaction and career advancement<sup>[29,31]</sup>.

Moreover, strong leadership communication enhances teamwork and safety culture, which are essential for organizational learning and staff retention. Simulation-based training programs and structured communication protocols have been proven to improve both patient outcomes and staff morale<sup>[34]</sup>. In addition, perceived organizational support and fair policies have been linked to improved job satisfaction, where effective communication plays a central role in ensuring staff feel valued and recognized<sup>[23,37]</sup>.

Leadership communication is a critical determinant of job satisfaction across sectors. Through the promotion of psychological safety, emotional support, and strategic professional development, leaders can create an environment where employees thrive. This assertion is supported by robust empirical evidence and theoretical insights, emphasizing the need for authentic, empathetic, and responsive leadership communication practices in achieving high levels of employee satisfaction<sup>[22,23-37]</sup>.

### **Leadership Communication and Self-Efficacy**

The relationship between leadership communication and self-efficacy represents a multifaceted dynamic that profoundly affects both organizational outcomes and individual performance. Leadership communication the process through which leaders convey information, expectations, and feedback—plays a central role in shaping employees' self-efficacy, which refers to their belief in their capacity to execute tasks and achieve goals<sup>[4]</sup>. Bandura's foundational work<sup>[4]</sup> highlights that self-efficacy is closely tied to motivation, effort, and resilience in the face of challenges. Clear and consistent leadership communication fosters trust and reduces ambiguity, thus enhancing employees' confidence in their roles. <sup>[11]</sup>found that transformational leadership marked by articulate vision and inspirational feedback significantly contributes to psychological empowerment, which includes heightened self-efficacy. Such communication ensures that employees comprehend their roles and are motivated to pursue organizational goals effectively.

Team dynamics are also enhanced by effective leadership communication. Open and inclusive communication fosters collaboration, trust, and shared support key components of collective self-efficacy. Lanaro et al.<sup>[22]</sup> examined leadership in orchestras and concluded that styles promoting open dialogue and support resulted in elevated self-efficacy and team performance. In summary, effective leadership communication enhances self-efficacy through clear guidance, constructive feedback, and emotional support<sup>[4,11,22]</sup>. These elements foster a positive organizational climate, increase employee engagement, and

improve productivity. As the modern workplace continues to evolve, leadership communication will remain a cornerstone of strategies aimed at strengthening employee belief in their capabilities and enhancing organizational success.

### **Organizational Culture and Self-Efficacy**

The relationship between organizational culture and self-efficacy is a critical dimension of organizational behaviour and psychology. Organizational culture defined as the shared values, beliefs, and norms within an institution plays a pivotal role in influencing employee behaviour, motivation, and performance. Self-efficacy, as conceptualized by<sup>[4]</sup>, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks successfully. The interaction between these two constructs has far-reaching implications for workplace productivity and individual psychological empowerment. A supportive organizational culture that emphasizes trust, collaboration, and open communication can significantly enhance self-efficacy by providing resources and a psychologically safe environment<sup>[25-27]</sup>. For example, <sup>[26]</sup> found that when teachers perceived trust among colleagues and a positive organizational climate, their self-efficacy and organizational citizenship behaviour increased. Likewise, <sup>[27]</sup> highlighted that discrepancies in perceived psychological safety between leaders and subordinates were associated with lower self-efficacy, suggesting that alignment in cultural perceptions is essential for employee confidence.

Moreover, organizational cultures that value professional development and learning opportunities help foster self-efficacy, and <sup>[25]</sup> discovered that a positive climate in nursing institutions enhanced nurses' humanistic practice ability through self-efficacy, underscoring the mediating role of belief in one's capabilities. Meanwhile, <sup>[28]</sup> also emphasized the role of perceived organizational support (POS), revealing that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between POS and career self-management, especially when moderated by proactive personality traits.

The impact of organizational culture on self-efficacy is also evident in stress management and resilience-building. According to <sup>[17]</sup> found that self-efficacy and cognitive reappraisal mediated the relationship between POS and resilience among emergency nurses experiencing workplace violence. Similarly, in the education sector, <sup>[29]</sup> confirmed that supportive work environments played a vital role in sustaining medical teachers' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. A culture of innovation, as explored by<sup>[30]</sup>, further contributes to self-efficacy by encouraging knowledge sharing, problem-solving, and proactive behaviour.

In sum, a culture that promotes continuous development, support, and innovation substantially enhances employees' belief in their own effectiveness ultimately contributing to better performance and organizational success<sup>[25-30]</sup>.

### **Organizational Culture and Job Satisfaction**

Organizational culture is also a key determinant of job satisfaction, which refers to the extent to which individuals feel content and fulfilled in their job roles. Through theoretical frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory<sup>[6]</sup> and Person–Environment Fit Theory<sup>[20]</sup>, scholars have consistently demonstrated that employees' perceptions of alignment with organizational values and support systems lead to higher job satisfaction. Empirical evidence supports this claim. While, <sup>[31]</sup> found that organizational cultures characterized by innovation, support, and reward orientation significantly improved job satisfaction among marketing professionals. According to<sup>[32]</sup> similarly noted that participative and supportive cultures led to greater job satisfaction among Taiwanese employees. A positive culture enhances employee morale, increases engagement, and reduces turnover<sup>[30,33]</sup>. On the contrary, cultures that are bureaucratic, overly competitive, or rigid can foster dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and burnout <sup>[14]</sup>. Companies such as Google



exemplify the benefits of a culture that emphasizes employee well-being and collaboration, resulting in high satisfaction and low attrition rates<sup>[33]</sup>. Thus, cultivating a supportive and dynamic culture is essential for enhancing employee satisfaction and long-term organizational performance.

### **Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction**

Self-efficacy has also emerged as a key predictor of job satisfaction across various professional settings. According to<sup>[4]</sup>, individuals with high self-efficacy are more motivated, persistent, and resilient in achieving workplace goals traits that contribute directly to higher satisfaction levels.

In educational settings, according to<sup>[10]</sup> found that work-related self-efficacy positively influenced job satisfaction among school counsellors, mediated by goal progress. Psychological resilience and self-efficacy have been identified as crucial predictors of job satisfaction for nurse academics in healthcare settings<sup>[28]</sup>. Similarly, <sup>[25]</sup>reported that self-efficacy significantly improved job satisfaction among police administrative officers by enabling effective management of job demands. The mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between leadership and satisfaction is also well documented. Previous research has highlighted that transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction by enhancing self-efficacy<sup>[1]</sup>. In Indian schools, <sup>[19]</sup>demonstrated that instructional leadership raised teacher self-efficacy, thereby improving job satisfaction.

Further supporting<sup>[24]</sup> found that self-efficacy mediated the link between career motivation and turnover intention among social workers in China. In the Turkish context, according to<sup>[34]</sup> revealed that self-efficacy contributed to job satisfaction through the mediating effect of career sustainability. Overall, the evidence suggests that enhancing self-efficacy through professional development, leadership support, and organizational recognition is critical for improving job satisfaction across diverse professional domains<sup>[1,4,10,19,24,25,28,34]</sup>.

### **The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy**

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between leadership communication, organizational culture, and job satisfaction among academicians in Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Structural equation modelling and bootstrapping analyses confirmed that self-efficacy partially mediates both relationships.

Firstly, the direct effect of leadership communication on job satisfaction was found to be significant but negative ( $\beta = -0.176$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ), indicating that ineffective or top-down leadership communication may diminish job satisfaction<sup>[6]</sup>. However, the indirect effect through self-efficacy ( $\beta = -0.043$ ) suggests that even when communication is not perceived positively, self-efficacy can still serve as a compensatory psychological mechanism that contributes positively to job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Bandura's theory that self-efficacy influences how individuals interpret and respond to external factors in the workplace<sup>[4]</sup>.

In contrast, organizational culture demonstrated a strong and positive direct effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 1.000$ ) and a substantial indirect effect through self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.210$ ). This highlights that supportive, inclusive, and empowering organizational cultures enhance self-efficacy, which in turn improves job satisfaction<sup>[25,29,31,34]</sup>. Such findings are in line with previous research indicating that a positive organizational climate is associated with higher levels of employee confidence, motivation, and workplace engagement<sup>[17,24]</sup>.

The partial mediation in both relationships implies that while organizational culture and leadership communication have direct impacts, their influence is significantly strengthened or weakened depending on the level of self-efficacy among employees. For instance, <sup>[24]</sup>found that perceived organizational support



significantly improves career self-management and satisfaction, particularly when self-efficacy is high. Similarly, <sup>[1]</sup> highlighted that transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction through the mediating influence of work motivation and self-efficacy.

From a theoretical standpoint, these results reinforce the applicability of Social Cognitive Theory in organizational behaviour contexts. Self-efficacy acts as an internal cognitive resource that interprets and moderates the effects of external organizational variables on job-related outcomes<sup>[4,10,28,34]</sup>. Practically, the findings emphasize the need for HEIs to strengthen their leadership and cultural strategies while simultaneously investing in faculty development initiatives aimed at building self-efficacy. Training programs, mentorship, coaching, and recognition mechanisms can serve to bolster self-belief among academicians, ultimately leading to enhanced job satisfaction and retention<sup>[19,24,31,34]</sup>. Self-efficacy plays a pivotal mediating role that partially explains how leadership communication and organizational culture influence job satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of a holistic institutional approach balancing organizational systems with psychological empowerment to foster a productive and satisfied academic workforce.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the complex dynamics among leadership communication, organizational culture, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction within Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). One of the most notable outcomes is the strong positive influence of organizational culture on both self-efficacy and job satisfaction among academicians. This affirms the central role that a supportive, inclusive, and professionally enriching institutional environment plays in motivating faculty members and enhancing their psychological belief in their abilities. The high beta values and statistical significance underscore that when organizational norms and values promote collaboration, innovation, and recognition, faculty members are more likely to feel competent, satisfied, and committed to their roles. In contrast, the relationship between leadership communication and job satisfaction revealed unexpected results. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, leadership communication had a statistically significant but negative effect on job satisfaction, and its influence on self-efficacy was not significant. This suggests potential issues in the way communication is perceived or practiced by academic leaders in these institutions possibly characterized by a top-down approach, lack of transparency, or insufficient responsiveness. These dynamics may contribute to a sense of disempowerment or misalignment with the expectations of academic staff, thereby diminishing satisfaction despite formal communication efforts. These finding warrants further qualitative investigation into the nature, tone, and context of leadership communication practices within Chinese HEIs. Furthermore, self-efficacy emerged as a meaningful psychological construct that significantly and positively influenced job satisfaction. Academicians who believed in their own competence and ability to overcome challenges reported higher satisfaction levels, supporting Bandura's social cognitive theory. Importantly, self-efficacy was found to partially mediate the relationship between both organizational culture and leadership communication with job satisfaction. This partial mediation suggests that while organizational factors set the stage, individual psychological belief systems play a crucial role in translating institutional characteristics into personal fulfilment. The presence of mediation reinforces the value of investing in faculty development programs, mentorship schemes, and other mechanisms that strengthen personal agency among staff. Overall, the findings imply that improving job satisfaction in Chinese HEIs requires a dual focus: cultivating a healthy organizational culture and building self-efficacy among staff. While leadership communication is essential, it must go beyond information transmission and evolve into authentic, dialogic engagement that empowers and supports academicians. Institutional strategies that prioritize cultural

transformation and psychological empowerment are more likely to foster a resilient, motivated, and satisfied academic workforce capable of sustaining the goals of higher education reform in China.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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