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Article

The mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between university teachers' competence and job performance: A comprehensive analysis

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the mediating role of perceived organizational support(POS) in the relationship between university teachers' competence and job performance. Through a questionnaire survey of 968 undergraduate university teachers in China, 879 valid questionnaires were collected. The study employed quantitative methods, constructing a university teacher competence scale comprising foundational competence, teaching competence, research competence, and innovation competence, as well as a job performance scale encompassing task performance, relationship performance, and adaptive performance. Structural equation modeling and SOBEL tests were used for data analysis. The results showed that POS exhibited different mediating effect patterns between various competence dimensions and job performance dimensions: no significant mediating effect was found in task performance; partial mediating effects were observed in relational performance and adaptive performance; and a complete mediating effect was identified between foundational competence and adaptive performance. The study provides theoretical support and practical guidance for university teachers management, emphasizing the importance of establishing a competence-based human resources management system, strengthening teachers perceptions of organizational support, and establishing diverse evaluation standards. Future research could further explore the impact of different cultural backgrounds and organizational types on mediating effects.

Keywords: university teachers' competence; job performance; perceived organizational support; mediating effect; structural equation modeling

1. Introduction

In the field of higher education, the quality of teaching and research is closely related to the competence of teachers. As the core human resources of the higher education system, university teachers' job performance directly impacts educational quality and research innovation levels. Enhancing the professional competence of university teachers, strengthening their research and innovation competence, and advancing personnel system reforms are crucial for improving the quality of talent cultivation in higher education institutions (Warisno & Hidayah, 2022). Teachers competence have long been regarded as one of the key factors influencing job performance. In recent years, the relationship between teacher competence and job performance has become a research hotspot in the field of educational management (Haque, 2021; Yang & Sheikh, 2022).

Competence is defined as "the comprehensive abilities required for teachers to effectively fulfill their teaching, research, and social service functions" (Yang & Chang,

2023), encompassing not only teachers' knowledge and skills but also their motivation, attitudes, and values (Yang & Guo, 2018). Research indicates that teacher competence is a prerequisite for enhancing teacher job performance (Staskevica, 2019). However, the underlying mechanisms through which competence translates into actual job performance remain to be explored in depth. In recent years, Perceived Organizational Support（POS）has increasingly emerged as a key variable in explaining employee performance (Liu et al., 2024; Muliadi & Idris, 2022), reflecting teachers' beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. According to social exchange theory, when teachers POS, they reciprocate by increasing their work effort and performance (RHOADES et al., 2001). However, the fundamental mechanisms through which teacher competence influences job performance have not been fully explored. This study aims to address this gap by examining the mediating role of POS in the relationship between teacher competence and job performance.

2. Literature review

2.1. University teachers' competence

Competency refers to the comprehensive traits, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, that an individual must possess to achieve outstanding performance in a specific job role (McClelland, 1973). According to Shields et al. (2020), the competencies of university teachers primarily include teaching ability, academic research ability, communication ability, and sensitivity to student needs. Zhang (2022) points out that teaching competence refers to the characteristics that teachers possess to effectively perform their teaching duties, including teaching cognitive ability, teaching practical ability, and teaching reflective ability.

In recent years, with the digital transformation and globalization of higher education, the construction of teacher competence models has received increasing attention. Lü (2024) emphasized the dynamic and context-dependent nature of teacher competence, pointing out that in the context of digital transformation, competence models need to integrate technological integration competence and cross-cultural collaboration competence. Ye and He (2024) proposed a "course-based ideological and political education competence model," which includes five primary indicators: course-based ideological and political education cognition, teacher ethics and conduct, knowledge literacy, ability literacy, and personal traits. This model emphasizes the deep integration of ideological and political education with professional teaching. Su (2020) conducted interviews and questionnaire surveys and used exploratory factor analysis to construct a mentor competence model based on the perspective of graduate students' expectations. Hu and Ge (2022) extracted a four-dimensional model based on the basic functions of higher education institutions, which includes teaching innovation, scientific research conversion, social service integration, and personality appeal. Through empirical research, they proved that this model can systematically predict job performance.

Digital competence has emerged as a research hotspot in recent years. Song et al. (2024) developed an evaluation framework for assessing digital competence among university teachers, covering multiple dimensions such as technology application (e.g.,

AI tool operation), data literacy (educational data analysis), and digital ethics (student privacy protection). Li and Wang (2025) noted through bibliometric analysis that research in this area experienced explosive growth from 2019 to 2024, but current frameworks remain fragmented and lack cross-cultural comparisons. They suggested that future research should strengthen dynamic capability models, such as mechanisms for continuous learning to adapt to technological iterations, and enhance alignment with policy practices. Liu and Wang (2023) caution that teacher competence is context-dependent, and university teachers need to balance multiple roles in teaching, research, and administration. Therefore, when designing competence models, one should avoid the hiring tendency of "emphasizing explicit skills while neglecting personality traits."

There is some controversy regarding evaluation criteria. Wang and Deng (2023) found that the competence requirements for young teachers need to be differentiated. For example, teachers in research positions should focus on academic output, while those in teaching positions should emphasize strategies to enhance student engagement. Wu et al. (2023) proposed development pathways, including enhancing practical skills through school-enterprise collaboration and promoting cross-school resource sharing via virtual research rooms. Future research should focus on the interaction between competence and organizational support, such as how the provision of digital training resources can enhance teachers' technological adaptability (Chen & Xin, 2023).

2.2. Job performance

Job performance refers to the behavior exhibited by employees in the course of their work and the results thereof, and is an important indicator for evaluating employee contributions (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). In the field of higher education, teacher job performance typically includes multiple dimensions such as teaching performance, research performance, and social service performance (Ding, 2013; Jia et al., 2017).

Some scholars have conducted research on the measurement dimensions of teacher job performance. For example, scholars such as Jia et al. (2017) proposed that the job performance of teacher in research universities mainly consists of task performance and contextual performance. Task performance refers to the behaviors and outcomes of teachers in teaching, scientific research, and technological application, such as the quality of teaching completion, the quantity and quality of published papers, and the effectiveness of horizontal scientific research promotion. Contextual performance refers to the potential factors affecting the work outcomes of teacher, such as personal qualities, interpersonal communication, work attitude, and professional contributions. Subsequently, Jia et al. (2017) further proposed the innovation performance of teacher in research universities and developed a scale for measuring innovation performance. The division of measurement dimensions for teacher job performance in universities not only follows the competence framework of organizational management and the performance dimensions of employees in enterprise organizations but also integrates the functional characteristics of

universities, thus better meeting the needs of teacher job performance evaluation in higher education institutions.

Previous studies have shown that there is a significant positive correlation between university teachers' competence and their job performance (Liang et al., 2012; Ismayilova & Klassen, 2019). This relationship suggests that the higher a teacher's overall competence level, the better their performance typically is in teaching, research, and social services. For example, Rahmatullah (2016) further revealed the significant correlation between teacher competence and job performance in a study of 150 teachers in Indonesia. The findings indicated that teachers with better performance often came from backgrounds of continuous learning and competence enhancement. This suggests that teachers' self-development and continuous learning have a positive impact on their job performance. Additionally, Castillo-Gualda et al. (2019) found that in the university teacher competence model, dimensions such as knowledge and skills, interpersonal interaction, and moral characteristics are important predictors of job performance. These findings consistently emphasize the critical role of teacher competence in job performance.

2.3. Perceived organizational support

Organizational Support Theory (OST) was first defined by American social psychologists Eisenberger et al. (1986) from a perceptual perspective. This theory is based on social exchange theory, the principle of reciprocity, and the concept of organizational personification. It posits that employees attribute human characteristics to the organization, inferring the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their interests—including both material and non-material concerns—and transform this perceived support into their commitment, loyalty, and performance toward the organization. In short, it refers to the support employees perceive from the organization. According to Robert and colleagues (1990), organizational support provided to employees merely represents "the organization's commitment to employees." However, if employees do not POS, they will not develop "commitment to the organization." Therefore, employees' perception of organizational support is a prerequisite for enhancing and fulfilling their commitment to the organization. Organizational support theory also posits that after employees POS, they will activate mutually beneficial behavioral norms, evaluate and respect their organization, work harder, and demonstrate better performance in terms of attendance and productivity; simultaneously, they will also emotionally identify more with the organization and be willing to exert greater effort for the organization's interests.

The positive correlation between organizational support and job performance has been confirmed in numerous studies. Organizational support not only directly influences job performance but also plays a significant role in employees' work attitudes and behaviors. For example, Susita et al. (2021) found that organizational support significantly enhances employee job performance, particularly in terms of supportive leadership and employee engagement. This supportive environment provides employees with the necessary resources and psychological safety, thereby promoting improvements in their job performance. Kumar et al. (2018) also noted that organizational support has a significant positive impact on employee job performance,

particularly in terms of supportive leadership and employee engagement. They found that when employees feel supported by the organization, they are more likely to invest greater effort into completing work tasks, thereby improving job performance. Karaalioglu and Karabulut (2019) also found that organizational support has a significant positive impact on employee job performance, with job satisfaction playing an important mediating role between organizational support and job performance. This suggests that organizational support not only directly influences job performance but also indirectly promotes improvements in job performance by enhancing employees' job satisfaction.

Although previous studies have confirmed the positive impact of teacher competence on job performance and the positive effect of POS on employee job performance, research combining these three factors, particularly exploring the mediating role of POS in the process of teacher competence converting into job performance, remains relatively scarce. This study aims to adopt a quantitative research method by collecting data from a sample of university teachers to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relationships among teacher competence, POS, and job performance. Based on the aforementioned literature review, this study proposes the following research hypothesis:

POS mediates the relationship between teacher competence and job performance in university teachers.

3. Research methods

3.1. Subject of study

This study randomly selected 968 university teachers from Chinese undergraduate institutions for a questionnaire survey, ultimately recovering 879 valid questionnaires, with a valid recovery rate of 90.81%. Among the respondents, 45.28% were male and 54.72% were female. In terms of educational attainment, 24.00% held a doctoral degree, 48.81% held a master's degree, and 27.19% held a bachelor's degree or other qualifications. Regarding academic titles, 10.24% were professors, 33.90% were associate professors, lecturers accounted for 41.30%, and teaching assistants accounted for 14.56%; in terms of academic disciplines, natural sciences accounted for 31.97%, humanities accounted for 45.05%, and social sciences accounted for 22.98%; in terms of years of work experience, 0–9 years accounted for 58.59%, 10–20 years accounted for 29.35%, and over 20 years accounted for 12.06%. Overall, the sample in this study aligns with the demographic characteristics of university teachers in terms of gender, education level, professional title, academic discipline, and years of experience, demonstrating a certain degree of scientific rigor and representativeness.

3.2. Research tools

1. University Teachers' Competence Scale

Based on the teacher competence scales developed by Christopher et al. (2010) and Xue Qin (2010), this study developed a university teacher competence scale. The scale covers four dimensions: basic competence, teaching competence, research competence, and innovation competence, with a total of 21 measurement items. In this

study, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's α) for the total scale was 0.96. The foundational competence dimension included 5 measurement items (α = 0.93), the teaching competence dimension included 6 measurement items (α = 0.97), the research competence dimension included 5 measurement items (α = 0.96), and the innovation competence dimension included 5 measurement items (α = 0.95).

2. Teacher Job Performance Scale

Combining the Job Performance Scale developed by Walter et al. (1997) and Ding Zhitong (2013), the Job Performance Scale for university teachers was developed for this study. The revised scale includes three dimensions: task performance, relationship performance, and adaptive performance, with a total of 18 measurement items. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient Cronbach's α for the total scale was 0.93, with task performance comprising 9 measurement items (α = 0.96), relational performance comprising 5 measurement items (α = 0.91), and adaptive performance comprising 4 measurement items (α = 0.92).

3. Perceived Organizational Support Scale

Based on the organizational support perception scales developed by Eisenberger et al. (1990) and Ling et al. (2006), the POS scale used in this study was developed. The revised scale includes three dimensions: organizational institutional support, school colleague support, and superior leadership support, with a total of 17 measurement items. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient Cronbach's α for the total scale was 0.93, with organizational institutional support comprising five measurement items (α = 0.94), school colleague support comprising six measurement items (α = 0.95), and superior leadership support comprising six measurement items (α = 0.97).

Additionally, considering that personal attribute variables such as gender, educational attainment, professional title, academic discipline, and years of work experience may influence the effect relationships between the study variables, this study included these variables as control variables in the analysis.

3.3. Data processing

This study utilized SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 21.0 statistical software to process the collected data. First, the data quality was assessed through variance inflation factor (VIF) tests to ensure no severe multicollinearity issues existed. Second, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on each scale to examine the validity of the research variables. Next, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were performed on the research variables and their dimensions. Finally, structural equation modeling and multiple hierarchical regression analysis were employed to validate the mediating mechanism and marginal conditions of POS between University Teachers' Competence and Job performance. The existence of the mediating effect was determined based on SOBEL tests and the significance of regression coefficients ($P < 0.05$).

4. Founding

4.1. Reliability and validity testing

Given that the University Teachers' Competence Scale, Job Performance Scale, and POS Scale are all adapted measurement tools, this study employed structural equation modeling for confirmatory factor analysis to validate the appropriateness and rationality of the structural dimensions of these scales and assess their validity. Following the recommendations of relevant scholars (STBER J., 2001), this study employed both convergent validity and discriminant validity methods in the confirmatory factor analysis to examine the structural validity of the scales. Convergent validity primarily assesses the degree of association between the results measured by a scale and the results measured by other scales assessing the same characteristic, while discriminant validity focuses on the lack of correlation between the results measured by a scale and the results measured by other scales assessing different characteristics. For this purpose, this study selected standardized factor loadings of measurement indicators, composite reliability of latent variables, and average variance extracted as indicators for examining convergent validity. Discrimination validity was verified by comparing the correlation coefficients between two latent variables with the square root of the average variance extracted. Statistical software was used to analyze research variables such as University Teachers' Competence, Job Performance, and POS, with results shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Results of confirmatory factor analysis of study variables.

	Research Vriables	RMSEA	AGFI	CFI	NFI	PNFI	λ	CR	AVE
University teachers' competence	Basic competencies	0.06	0.90	0.97	0.96	0.84	0.81~0.88	0.93	0.74
	Teaching competencies						0.90~0.92	0.97	0.84
	Research competencies						0.90~0.92	0.96	0.83
	Innovation competencies						0.88~0.91	0.95	0.80
Perception Organizational support	Organizational and institutional support	0.07	0.89	0.97	0.96	0.82	0.86~0.89	0.94	0.76
	Support from senior management						0.86~0.89	0.95	0.76
	Support from school colleagues						0.88~0.93	0.97	0.83
Job performance	Task performance	0.07	0.90	0.97	0.96	0.83	0.78~0.92	0.97	0.76
	Relationship performance						0.77~0.87	0.91	0.68
	Adaptability performance						0.84~0.92	0.93	0.76
	Reference values	<0.05, Good <0.08, Reasonable	>0.80	>0.90	>0.90	>0.80	>0.60	>0.60	>0.60

The results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that the absolute fit indices for the University Teachers' Competence model were RMSEA = 0.06, AGFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.96, and PNFI = 0.84, all of which met the reference values, indicating that the model fit well overall. The standardized factor loadings for each dimension ranged from 0.81 to 0.98, the composite reliability (CR) of the latent variables was greater than 0.90, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.70, indicating that the scale has good convergent validity.

4.2. Descriptive analysis and correlation matrix analysis

Prior to conducting hypothesis testing, this study performed descriptive statistics and pearson correlation analysis on university teachers' competence, POS, job

performance, and their dimensions. The results of the analysis of means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis results of study variables.

Research variables	M±SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Basic competence	3.81±0.66	(0.86)									
2. Teaching competence	3.63±0.78	0.56**	(0.91)								
3. Research competence	3.36±0.88	0.52**	0.45**	(0.91)							
4. Innovation competence	3.58±0.84	0.47**	0.40**	0.71**	(0.89)						
5. Task performance	3.84±0.78	0.38**	0.70**	0.35**	0.31**	(0.87)					
6. Relationship performance	3.42±0.56	0.70**	0.49**	0.57**	0.52**	0.27**	(0.82)				
7. Adaptive performance	3.49±0.91	0.41**	0.37**	0.68**	0.77**	0.31**	0.49**	(0.97)			
8. Perceived school institutional support	3.30±0.72	0.33*	0.74**	0.35**	0.33**	0.72**	0.23**	0.22**	(0.87)		
9. Perceived support from superiors	3.13±1.08	0.39**	0.31**	0.75 *	0.77**	0.32**	0.37**	0.76**	0.32**	(0.87)	
10. Perceived support from school colleagues	3.40±0.76	0.72**	0.48**	0.53**	0.45**	0.29**	0.76**	0.46**	0.29**	0.45**	(0.91)

According to the analysis results in **Table 2**, the square root values of the AVE for each dimension of University Teachers' Competence are all higher than the corresponding row and column correlation coefficients of their respective variables. This indicates that the dimensions exhibit good discriminant validity, effectively distinguishing the characteristics of different dimensions. Additionally, the scales measuring POS and Job Performance also demonstrate good convergent validity and discriminant validity, suggesting that these scales accurately measure their intended conceptual targets. Furthermore, the mean values of University Teachers' Competence, POS, Job Performance, and their respective dimensions all exceed 3 (based on a 5-point rating scale), and the standard deviations are small, indicating that the data distribution is relatively concentrated and consistent with the assumption of homogeneity of distribution, providing a foundation for subsequent hypothesis testing. The results of Pearson correlation analysis show that there are significant positive correlations between these variables and their dimensions, providing the necessary prerequisites for subsequent testing of the mediating effects between variables.

4.3. Testing the mediating effect of perception organizational support between university teachers' competence and job performance

This study uses latent variable structural equation modeling to examine the mediating effect of POS between university teachers' competence and job performance. To this end, a complete mediation effect model was constructed as a comparison model. The main difference between the comparison model and the modified model lies in whether a complete mediation effect is assumed. In the modeling process, basic competence, teaching competence, research competence, and innovation competence were set as exogenous latent variables, while task performance, relational performance, adaptive performance, and POS were set as endogenous latent variables. The three dimensions of POS were integrated into three measurement items. The specific mediation effect fit indices are detailed in **Table 3**.

Table 3. POS on the mediation effect of research variables Fitting index.

Fit index	RMSEA	AGFI	CFI	NFI	PNFI
Competitive model fit index	0.07	0.77	0.91	0.89	0.84
Corrected model fit index	0.06	0.82	0.93	0.91	0.84

According to the results in **Table 3**, all the fit indices of the revised mediation effect model meet the reference standards and perform better than the competing model of complete mediation. This indicates that the revised mediation effect model has a good fit and is suitable for further analysis. Specifically, basic competence, teaching competence, research competence, and innovation competence not only have a significant direct impact on relational performance and adaptive performance but may also exert a significant indirect impact on relational performance and adaptive performance through the mediating variable of POS. To further validate this mediating effect, the researchers conducted a SOBEL test, the results of which are detailed in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Comprehensive analysis results of the mediating effect of POS on research variables.

	Influence path	Direct effect	Mediation effect	SOBEL test value	P value	Total effect	Mediation effect /Direct effect
1	Relationship performance <—Perceived organizational institutional support <—Basic competence	0.66	-0.44*0.22=-0.09	-2.64	0.008	0.75	13.64%
2	Adaptive performance <—Perceived organizational institutional support <—Basic competence	-	-0.18*0.22=-0.04	-2.08	0.037	0.04	-
3	Relationship performance <—Perceived organizational institutional support <—Teaching competence	0.13	-0.44*0.20=-0.09	-2.47	0.013	0.22	69.23%
4	Adaptive performance <—Perceived organizational institutional support <—Teaching competence	0.06	-0.18*0.20=-0.04	-2.00	0.045	0.1	66.67%
5	Relationship performance <—Perceived organizational institutional support <—Research competence	0.38	-0.44*0.46=-0.20	-2.93	0.003	0.58	52.63%
6	Adaptive performance <—Perceived organizational institutional support <—Research competence	0.36	-0.18*0.46=-0.08	-2.23	0.026	0.44	22.22%
7	Relationship performance <— Perceived organizational institutional support <— Innovation competence	0.33	-0.44*0.43=-0.19	-2.91	0.003	0.52	57.58%
8	Adaptive performance <— Perceived organizational institutional support <— Innovation competence	0.70	-0.18*0.43=-0.07	-2.21	0.027	0.78	11.43%

After testing the mediating effect of POS on the relationship between university teachers' competence and job performance using latent variable structural equation modeling, the following conclusions can be drawn:

(1) When task performance is used as the dependent variable, no significant mediating effect of POS was found between university teachers' competence and task performance.

(2) The results of the mediation effect test with relational performance as the dependent variable indicate that foundational competence, teaching competence, research competence, and innovation competence all have a significant positive impact on relational performance. Specifically, POS has a significant positive

effect on foundational competence (b = -0.09, Z = -2.64, P < 0.01), teaching competence (b = -0.04, Z = -2.08, P < 0.05), research competence (b = -0.09, Z = -2.47, P < 0.05), and innovation competence (b = -0.04, Z = -2.00, P < 0.05) and relational performance, validating part of the research hypothesis.

(3) The results of the mediation effect test with adaptive performance as the dependent variable showed that teaching competence, research competence, and innovation competence have a significant positive impact on adaptive performance. POS has a significant positive impact on adaptive performance through basic competence (b = -0.02, Z = -2.93, P < 0.01), teaching competence (b = -0.08, Z = -2.23, P < 0.05), research competence (b = -0.19, Z = -2.91, P < 0.01), and innovation competence (b = -0.07, Z = -2.21, P < 0.05) on adaptive performance, which also validated part of the research hypothesis.

5. Discussion

Without distinguishing between the specific dimensions of university teachers' competence and job performance, POS typically exhibits a partial mediating effect between the two (Liu et al., 2015). This study delves into the specific mechanisms through which POS influences university teachers' competence and job performance by categorizing the dimensions of university teachers' competence and job performance. The results reveal three distinct scenarios：

5.1. Perception organizational support does not have a mediating effect

The POS did not exhibit a significant mediating effect between basic competencies, teaching competencies, research competencies, and innovation competencies and task performance. Model analysis indicates that while these competence dimensions significantly positively influence POS, the direct impact of POS on task performance is not significant. Task performance, as a measure closely tied to the specific job responsibilities of university teachers, often relies on quantifiable evaluation metrics and represents the work tasks that teachers must complete (Qiu & Yang, 2015). This characteristic may weaken the mediating role of POS in this context.

5.2. Perception organizational support has a partial mediating effect

The POS has shown a partial mediating effect between basic competence, teaching competence, research competence, innovative competence and contextual performance, as well as between basic competence, teaching competence, research competence, innovative competence and adaptive performance. Specifically, POS has a significant mediating effect between basic competence (b=-0.09, Z=-2.64, p<0.01), teaching competence (b=-0.04, Z=-2.08, p<0.05), research competence (b=-0.09, Z=-2.47, p<0.05), innovative competence (b=-0.04, Z=-2.00, p<0.05) and contextual performance, and between basic competence (b=-0.02, Z=-2.93, p<0.01), teaching competence (b=-0.08, Z=-2.23, p<0.05), research competence (b=-0.19, Z=-2.91, p<0.01), innovative competence (b=-0.07, Z=-2.21, p<0.05) and adaptive performance. This finding is consistent with other research conclusions on POS (Sheng et al., 2010), indicating that the higher the level of POS of university teachers, the more it can stimulate their competence, and then achieve higher job performance. According to the

social exchange theory, when university teachers perceive that the organization attaches importance to their contributions and cares about their lives, they tend to repay the organization by improving job performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986). At the same time, the internal motivation theory also points out that when university teachers are driven by internal motivation to engage in a certain job, their behavior will be more active, thus producing higher job performance (Zhao et al., 2016). The results of this study further support the POS theory, social exchange theory and internal motivation theory.

5.3. Perception organizational support has a complete mediating effect

POS exhibits a complete mediating effect between foundational competence and adaptive performance, meaning that after controlling for POS, the direct effect of foundational competence on adaptive performance is no longer significant. Foundational competence primarily refers to university teachers possessing good scientific ethics, a correct worldview, and values. Adaptive performance emphasizes university teachers' abilities in handling emergencies, creatively solving problems, and learning new knowledge and technologies. Although previous studies have typically viewed POS as merely having a mediating effect between university teachers' competence and job performance, this study found that in the relationship between foundational competence and adaptive performance, the signs of the direct effect and mediating effect are opposite, suggesting a possible masking effect of POS, meaning it increases the total effect between the independent and dependent variables. After controlling for POS, the direct effect of foundational competence on adaptive performance is weakened, indicating that POS plays a fully mediating role in this specific relationship (Yang & Guo, 2023).

6. Conclusion

In summary, this study used data analysis and model testing to reveal the complex relationship between POS and university teachers' competence and job performance. The results showed that POS exhibited different mediating effect patterns between different competence dimensions and job performance dimensions, including no mediating effect, partial mediating effect, and complete mediating effect. These findings not only enrich the theoretical framework of university teacher management but also provide practical guidance for universities to improve teacher job performance.

For university management, this study suggests that we should establish a competence-based human resources management system, clarify the competence standards for teachers positions, and provide scientific basis for teachers recruitment, training, and compensation management. Additionally, we should pay close attention to teachers needs, strengthen their POS, and stimulate their work enthusiasm and creativity through measures such as providing necessary resources, focusing on career development, and creating a positive work environment. Furthermore, we should reasonably define job performance, establish a multi-dimensional evaluation system with diverse evaluators and multiple criteria to comprehensively and objectively assess teachers job performance, covering dimensions such as task performance, relationship performance, and adaptability performance, to promote the overall optimization and sustainable development of the university teachers team.

Future research could further explore the impact of factors such as cultural background and organizational type on the mediating effect of POS, as well as investigate other potential mediating or moderating variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between university teachers competence and job performance.

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