

The Influence of Talent Management and Job Engagement on Employee Performance among Universities' Counselor in Jinan

Ling Zhang

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia; Qilu Institute of Technology, No. 3028, Jingshi East Road, Shuangshan Street, Zhangqiu District, Jinan City, Shandong Province, China. E-mail: 21020099@siswa.unimas.my

Helen Sui-Hong Tan

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

Nur Constance Wah

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

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Abstract

University counselors play a crucial role in the education support system, making the optimization of their talent management essential for enhancing support for student learning. This study explores the relationship between talent management, job engagement, and employee performance among university counselors in Jinan, Shandong Province. Based on a sample of 181 counselors, the study employs a quantitative approach to examine these dynamics. The results indicate that talent management significantly improves employee performance, with job engagement also positively impacting employee performance. By

analyzing these relationships, this study provides insights into effective talent management strategies and their impact on university counselors' engagement and performance, offering practical implications for academic institutions in Jinan.

Keywords: talent management, job engagement, employee performance

1. Introduction

In China, college counselors play a critical role in the educational support system. They are not only responsible for providing psychological counseling and life guidance to college students, helping them address issues related to academics, emotions, and more (Zhou & Chen, 2022), but also guiding their career planning and personal development (Lin, 2020). Additionally, they participate in campus affairs management, contributing to campus harmony and stability (Zhou & Chen, 2022).

Becoming a counselor typically requires a background in psychology or education, along with relevant training and certification (Lin, 2020). Some universities require counselors to possess work experience and professional skills to ensure their competency in guiding and managing students (Chen & Yue, 2020).

Counselors not only focus on students' academic performance but also promote their overall development. Through various support services, they enhance students' comprehensive qualities and contribute to higher education management and talent cultivation (Li, 2023). Studying the work environment and performance factors of counselors can help optimize educational policies and improve the quality of university management (Chen & Yue, 2020).

Currently, universities face challenges in enhancing counselors' performance, including worsening mental health issues, insufficient training and development opportunities, and a lack of effective evaluation and management mechanisms (Tettamanzi et al., 2023). According to data from the Jinan Municipal Education Bureau, the number of counselors in vocational colleges is limited, and the significant increase in work pressure affects the quality of management and support (Zhou & Chen, 2022).

In order to optimize counselor management, universities need to strengthen training and career development support, which enhances their professional competence (Chen et al., 2021). Additionally, establishing effective evaluation and incentive mechanisms is essential for improving counselors' motivation and work efficiency (Zhou & Chen, 2022). Universities should fully recognize the core role of counselors in the educational system and ensure students' learning and growth through a more comprehensive talent management system (Chen & Yue, 2020).

2. Literature Review

Talent management (TM) is considered a crucial element in influencing job engagement (WE). Research has indicated a favorable correlation between JE and TM (Kadiri & Jimoh,

2021; Li & Jia, 2021; Kamel, 2019). However, O'Connor & Crowley Henry (2019) noted that unfair TM may undermine employee engagement, while Jung et al. (2021) found that low JE is associated with higher turnover intention. The inconsistency of these findings suggests that further exploration is needed to understand the specific impact of TM on JE.

Effective TM techniques can improve employee performance (EP), according to numerous studies (Al Hussaini et al., 2019; Wickramaaratchi & Perera, 2020). However, some studies have indicated that TM does not always lead to performance improvement in all contexts (Al Aina & Atan, 2020; Achmada & Soetjipto, 2022). This disparity emphasizes the need for additional study to fully understand how managing talent affects employee productivity.

There are discrepancies in the existing research regarding the relationships among TM, JE, and EP, particularly in terms of the mechanisms that may operate differently across various contexts. Therefore, further research on the dynamic relationships among these variables will not only contribute to theoretical improvement but also provide guidance for organizational practice.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research method, using statistical analysis of a large sample data to quantify and examine the relationships between TM, JE, and EP (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). This approach helps provide objective and reproducible scientific evidence, enhancing the credibility and broad applicability of the research.

To ensure the representativeness and accuracy of the sample, this study employs probability sampling, which allows for generalizability of results to the larger population of college counselors in Jinan city, China. They are limited studies on counselors regarding TM, JE, and EP that motivates the researchers to conduct this study. Therefore, the dependent variable of this study is EP, while the independent variables are TM, JE, and EP.

In Jinan city, there are a total of 340 counselors across the colleges. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, the sample size should be 181 respondents to achieve 95% confidence level. This is to ensure the sample is statistically robust and sufficiently to detect meaningful relationships between the study variables. Data collection is conducted through self-administered questionnaires. Therefore, 181 valid college counselors were selected as the sample for this study. The present study also will employ Cronbach's alpha to check the reliability and validity of the model. Relevant literature in the field was also referenced to further explore the factors influencing EP. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this paper. Talent management and job engagement are expected to positively influence employee performance of college counselors in Jinan city, China.

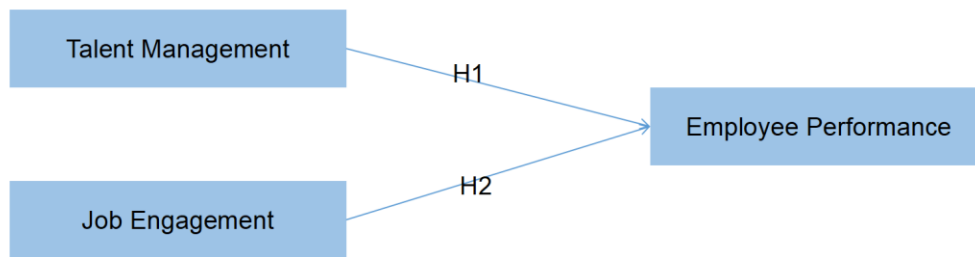


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework, the proposed hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Talent management has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

H2: Job engagement has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability Analysis

This study employs Cronbach's α to assess the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire. Cronbach's α ranges from 0 to 1, and it is generally considered that a questionnaire has good internal consistency when the α value exceeds 0.7. A value above 0.8 indicates high internal consistency, while a value above 0.9 suggests very high internal consistency. Table 1 indicates that Cronbach's α values for the variables surpass the 0.9 threshold, providing evidence of the questionnaire's robustness in terms of reliability and measurement validity.

Table 1. Reliability statistics for study constructs

Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Talent Management	0.952
Job Engagement	0.937
Employee Performance	0.920

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The degree and direction of the correlations between the variables were assessed in this study using Pearson correlation analysis. As shown in Table 2, all three variables are positively correlated. Among them, TM ($r=0.944$, $p<0.05$) has the strongest correlation with EP, indicating that TM is the most critical factor affecting EP. JE ($r=0.932$, $p<0.05$) also shows a significant impact, positively promoting EP. These findings suggest that both TM and JE play a key role in EP.

Table 2. Correlation analysis of variables

	Talent Management	Job Engagement	Employee Performance
TM	1		
JE	.929**	1	
EP	.944**	.932**	1

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $N=181$

4.3 Demographics

In the gender category, the male sample consists of 95 people, accounting for 52.50% of the total sample, while the female sample consists of 86 people, making up 47.50%. It can be seen that the male sample is slightly larger than the female sample, and the overall gender ratio is relatively balanced.

In the "Years of Work in University" category, the most common range is "4-6 years," with 66 participants, accounting for 36.50%. This is followed by "7-10 years" and "over 10 years," accounting for 21.50% and 22.10%, respectively. Samples with "less than 1 year" and "1-3 years" of work experience are fewer, accounting for 8.30% and 11.60%, respectively. This indicates that most participants have longer work experience in the university, with nearly 80% having over 4 years of experience.

In the "Work Experience" category, the sample with "over 10 years" of work experience is the largest, consisting of 108 people, accounting for 59.70%. This is followed by the "7-10 years" work experience group, with 37 people, accounting for 20.40%. The samples with "less than 1 year" and "1-3 years" of work experience are relatively small, accounting for 5% and 5.50%, respectively. This suggests that most participants have relatively extensive work experience.

In the "Highest Educational Level" category, 114 participants hold a "graduate degree," accounting for 63%, while 67 participants have a "bachelor's degree," accounting for 37%. The majority of participants have a higher degree of education, according to the data.

In summary, most participants in the sample have long work tenure at the university, rich work experience, and a high level of education. These characteristics may have some influence on the research results and should be considered during the analysis.

Table 3. Sample profile

Demographic Factor	Response	Frequency	% of Sample
Gender	Male	95	52.50%
	Female	86	47.50%
Tenure at Current Institution	< 1 year	15	8.30%
	1-3 years	21	11.60%
	4-6 years	66	36.50%
	7-10 years	39	21.50%
	>10 years	40	22.10%
	<1 year	9	5%
	1-3 years	10	5.50%
Total work experience	4-6 years	17	9.40%
	7-10 years	37	20.40%
	>10 years	108	59.70%
Educational Attainment	Undergraduate degree	67	37%
	Graduate degree	114	63%

4.4 Regression Analysis

4.4.1 Data Analysis

This study uses multiple regression analysis to evaluate the predictive effect of the JE and TM on EP. Table 4 presents the model's summary. The independent variables may account for 91.3% of the variance in the dependent variable, according to the model's R^2 of 0.913. The adjusted R^2 is 0.912, suggesting that the model fits well and there is no over fitting. The standard error is 0.32090, depicting high prediction accuracy. Overall, the model demonstrates a strong predictive power and explanatory ability.

Table 4. Summary statistics of the study variables

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.949 ^a	0.900	0.899	0.3393

Note: a refers to Predictors: (Constant), ES, EE, EA.

Table 5. Analysis of variance for study variables

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	413.949	3	137.983	1198.606	.000
Residual	46.163	401	.115		
Total	460.112	404			

Table 5 shows the ANOVA results used to assess the significance and contribution of JE and TM to EP. The model has a high explanatory power, as evidenced by the regression sum of squares of 193.374, which makes up the majority of the total sum of squares of 211.704. With a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and an F-value of 938.939, the model appears to be generally significant. The combination of independent variables effectively predicts EP. Table 6 shows that the standardized regression coefficient for TM is the highest ($\beta = 0.573$), highlighting its dominant role in predicting EP. Overall, EP is significantly impacted by both TM and JE, and the model shows good predictive and explanatory power.

Table 6. Coefficients results of variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.122	.089		1.371	.172		
TM	.573	.060	.571	9.576	.000	.137	7.320
JE	.406	.060	.401	6.723	.000	.137	7.320

a. Dependent Variable: EP

The purpose of this study is to investigate how JE and TM affect counselors' performance at Jinan institutions. The empirical results indicate a significant positive correlation between TM, JE and EP which supported our proposed hypotheses. This result indicates that TM significantly improves EP, which is in line with correlation analysis findings. Therefore, H1 is valid in this study, demonstrating the beneficial contribution of TM to raising EP. The result indicates that 1% increase in TM will increase the EP by 0.57% in Jinan city which aligns with the findings of Sopiah et al. (2020) and others.

It is widely acknowledged that TM strategies play a crucial role in improving EP, thereby having a profound impact on the overall performance of organizations (Al Hussaini et al., 2019; El Masri & Suliman, 2019; Wickramaaratchi & Perera, 2020). The interaction between TM and EP is considered one of the key factors influencing employee job performance and driving organizational effectiveness. Numerous studies from various industries and backgrounds have consistently confirmed a significant positive correlation between TM

strategies and EP (Sopiah et al., 2020; Hongal & Kinange, 2020). Through the data analysis of this study, we also confirm that the effective implementation of TM strategies can significantly improve employee job performance, further enhancing the overall performance of the organization.

Table 6 tabulated the findings of the empirical model. The result validated H2, indicating that JE has a significant positive impact on EP. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of many studies. For example, Perangin Angin et al. (2020), and Fidyah and Setiawati (2020) pointed out in their research that there is a positive correlation between JE and EP, and enhancing JE can significantly improve overall EP. Similarly, the study by Ngwenya & Pelsier (2020) also validated the positive effect of JE on EP. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2019) conducted a study on full-time employees in South Korea, further proving the significant positive relationship between JE and EP. These research results consistently support the critical role of JE in enhancing EP (Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Sopiah et al., 2020; Al Hussaini et al., 2019).

5. Implications

This study offers insightful information about the connection between EP, JE, and TM among Jinan university counselors. The findings demonstrate that EP is significantly improved by TM, while JE also plays a key role in improving counselors' performance, consistent with previous research findings. Additionally, the study further reveals the intrinsic connection between TM and JE in promoting EP. Practically speaking, the results have a number of significant ramifications for businesses and university officials.

In particular, university administrators can use these research findings to strengthen techniques for managing talent, such as through systematic training and development, improved performance evaluations, and incentive measures. These efforts can stimulate counselors' JE, thus enhancing their job satisfaction and loyalty, reducing turnover rates, and ultimately improving overall performance (Al Hussaini et al., 2019).

For businesses, the study suggests that by optimizing the work environment, granting more autonomy, and designing challenging job tasks, they can effectively increase counselors' JE, thereby driving improvements in their performance. Such strategies help businesses allocate resources more efficiently and focus on management practices that generate the greatest performance gains, thereby maintaining a long-term competitive advantage in a highly competitive environment (Achmada & Soetjipto, 2022).

To sum up, this study not only deepens theoretical knowledge of how TM and JE influence university counselors' performance, but also provides practical and actionable management recommendations for university administrators and businesses, aiming to continuously optimize EP in practice.

6. Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that its scope is limited to a specific geographic region, Jinan, and a particular occupational group, university counselors. Although this focus helps to gain a deep understanding of the local context and occupational dynamics, it inevitably raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings. The social, cultural, and organizational characteristics of Jinan, as well as the unique professional expectations of university counselors, may not fully represent the experiences of counselors in other regions, cultural contexts, or professional roles. Consequently, the applicability of these results beyond the studied context remains limited. Additionally, this study primarily relies on quantitative research methods, which, while offering clear advantages in statistical analysis and generalizability of results, may overlook some important qualitative details. Qualitative data, such as semi-structured interviews or case study, could offer more detailed background information and nuanced insights, which a purely quantitative approach may not fully capture. Overall, while this study offers valuable empirical insights, its findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research would benefit from comparative studies across regions and occupations, as well as mixed-methods designs that combine statistical analysis with qualitative richness.

7. Conclusion

Through statistical analysis of 181 valid sample data, the results show that both TM and JE have a significant positive effect on EP. These results further support the critical role that TM and JE play in improving university counselors' performance, and they are in line with findings in earlier pertinent literature. This study not only provides solid empirical support for a deeper understanding of improving counselor performance but also offers valuable theoretical and practical references for future university management and enterprises in optimizing JE strategies in TM practices.

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Authors contributions

Ling Zhang and Helen Sui-Hong Tan is responsible for the research design drafting of the manuscript. Ling Zhang was in charge of data collection while Helen Sui-Hong Tan and Nur Constance Wah made the corrections based on the comments given by the editor and reviewers. All the authors read and approved the final draft.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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