

# The Relationship between Professional Competencies, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance among University Counselors in China: A Conceptual Paper

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**Abstract---** *The purpose of this paper is to study the relationship between professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance among university counselors in China through literature review. Although researches have been carried out on counselors' professional competencies and job performance, and their job satisfaction have also caused the attention of researchers, the study of the relationship among these three variables is still neglected, and these are all essential to university counselors. This research uses the previous literature to be the main data. Moreover, it aims to summarize the existing literature containing issues of professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance among university counselors, and tries to provide a conceptual framework for further research.*

**Keywords---** *Professional Competencies, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, University Counselors.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

University counselors are the personnel directly responsible for all student affairs in universities in China. According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, university counselors mainly carry out ideological and political education to help students establish correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, and are life instructors and bosom friends for students<sup>1</sup>. They can provide various services in daily student management, including psychological counseling, assessment of merit, financial policy, class management, dormitory management, etc. Because of the importance of this position, their competencies are particularly important, which will directly affect whether they can meet the needs of the job and the quality of student training<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, the level of counselor's job satisfaction will directly affect the counselor's work enthusiasm and the stability of the entire counselor team<sup>3</sup>. And the job performance of university counselor is related to the construction of the team, the healthy operation of universities, and the overall development of higher education<sup>4</sup>. However, there are several obvious problems about the competencies of university counselors in China, such as poor pressure resistance, inadequate education, and low job loyalty, which make the overall competency level of university counselors is very low<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, most of the university counselors are not satisfied with their job, which are caused by the salary, promotion, opportunities, quantitative assessment and other factors<sup>6,7</sup>. In addition, their performance is not

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easy to be evaluated due to the sophisticated working contents<sup>8-10</sup>. Thus, this paper aims to summarize the previous literatures containing issues of professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance among university counselors and study the relationship among these three variables in the specific position.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

After classifying all the documents as conditions, and taking "counselor's competency", "counselor's job satisfaction" and "counselor's job performance" as keywords respectively in CNKI, which is the largest literature collecting and searching database in China, 1593 retrieved documents are found (up to February 2020). It can be seen that there is not much researches on higher education, especially on university counselors. The literature review in this section mainly briefly expounds the academic research results of competency, job satisfaction and job performance related to counselors, and discusses the relationship among these three variables.

### ***2.1. Professional competencies of university counselor***

Spencer and Spencer defined competencies as an "underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation"<sup>11</sup>. Professional competencies are the capability to perform the duties of one's profession generally, or to perform a profession task, with skill of an acceptable quality.

The research in the professional competencies of university counselors in China is started by Yang and Gu in 2004. Since then, the introduction of competency research into the education industry has attracted researchers' attention. Yang and Gu defined that the professional competencies of university counselors refer to the personality structure, behavior structure, ability structure and knowledge structure that can do a good job in the work<sup>12</sup>. It is of great significance to study the competencies of university counselors, and the competencies include teaching ability, personality traits, knowledge accomplishment and professional character<sup>13</sup>. In this paper, the professional competencies of university counselors refer to the combination of knowledge, skills, traits, self-concepts and motives that are directly related to the performance of university student management and can promote the all-round development and success of students.

### ***2.2. Job satisfaction of university counselor***

Researchers already define job satisfaction in different ways. It is person's actual satisfaction with the internal and external working environment factors that lead to job satisfaction<sup>14</sup>. Meanwhile, job satisfaction is defined as a happy or positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of a person's work or work experience<sup>15</sup>. According to Herzberg Frederick<sup>16</sup>, there are two factors that influence job satisfaction, that is intrinsic factors or motivators and extrinsic factors or hygiene factors. Warr and Inceoglu<sup>17</sup> defined job satisfaction as the willingness of employees to finish various jobs with their best ability and pleasure. It is also the fulfillment that employee derives from daily work<sup>18</sup>.

There are also some researches focus on the job satisfaction of university counselor. Counselors' job quality and job performance are greatly affected by their job satisfaction<sup>19</sup>. Investigations also reveal that university counselors' job satisfaction is affected by various factors, including working environment, personal expectations, career development, salary income, etc.<sup>7</sup>. Zhang and Lv<sup>20</sup> constructed a questionnaire to investigate the job satisfaction of 91 counselors in one university in Hebei province. The result shows that counselors' job satisfaction is relatively high, but some counselors are not satisfied with the salary, status and development prospects. In summary, counselors' job satisfaction refers to the intrinsic feeling and attitude of counselors towards the work they are engaged in and the working environment, that is, a subjective reflection of counselors' satisfaction with their work.

### ***2.3. Job performance among university counselor***

As defined by Campbell<sup>21</sup>, job performance is personal behavior about self-control and will influence the achievement of the whole organizational goals. Job performance refers to the working results achieved by workers when they must meet the quality standards and deliverable quantity arranged by the company in performing their duties or activities within a certain period of time<sup>22</sup>.

In the field of university counselors' job performance, most of the researches pay attention to the appraisal of job performance. The performance evaluation can find the short board of counselors' performance, and then targeted in training, which can further improve the overall quality of counselors and finally improve performance<sup>8</sup>. This evaluation is a process in which universities can assess counselors' performance in their work, including the working process, working behavior and working results<sup>23</sup>. It can also improve counselors' working level through the feedback of evaluation results. Sun and Yang<sup>24</sup> summarized the problems such as lacking of rationality, separating from student groups and improper handling of assessment results in performance evaluation, and put forward the significance of the performance assessment.

### ***2.4. Relationship between professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance***

There is a close relationship between professional competencies and job performance as the results of performance are mainly come from the results of counselors' competencies, and the status of the existing competencies will determine the future performance results<sup>25</sup>. Understanding counselors' competency can help to establish a scientific and effective performance appraisal mechanism, which in turn can effectively guide and help counselors to improve their professional competency and job performance<sup>26</sup>. Meanwhile, job satisfaction has a close relationship with job performance. The level of job satisfaction of university counselors will affect the enthusiasm of university counselors, and the effectiveness of university counselors' job performance and their personal ethics will also be affected<sup>27</sup>. This is in line with the research of Liu<sup>28</sup>, who illustrated that the level of job satisfaction has an important impact on employees' job performance, work behavior, turnover intention, career planning, etc. Higher job satisfaction can promote employees' production enthusiasm and improve their performance, thus improving the comprehensive output efficiency of the organization. Ma<sup>29</sup> also finds that the job satisfaction of university counselors had a positive impact on job performance.

However, very few researchers paid their attention to the relationship between professional competencies and job satisfaction. Actually, the constructs of professional competencies have a close connection with job satisfaction. The content that associated with job itself is the most important situational factor related to job satisfaction, and the personality traits in it may be essential to forecast job satisfaction<sup>30</sup>. In addition, the acquired knowledge can improve job satisfaction because it involves acquiring different knowledge, thus improving the efficiency of task execution<sup>31</sup>. And Su<sup>32</sup> thought that professional quality refers to a comprehensive quality expressed in the process of a profession, including professional ethics, professional behavior, professional style, professional attitude, professional identity and etc. Meanwhile, the higher the degree of professional identity, the easier the counselor's pride, happiness and sense of responsibility to the profession will be stimulated. These factors also can produce higher loyalty to the counselor, which will achieve high satisfaction about this job<sup>33</sup>.

Besides, the research about the relationship among these three variables is rare, especially in the field of university counselor. Therefore, the relationship about professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance still need to be further researched.

### III. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to carry out this study, the proposed conceptual framework below shows relevant variables. Professional competency is an independent variable, job satisfaction is a mediator, and job performance is the dependent variable. The selected three variables are mainly used to study the relationship among them, especially the influence on dependent variables.

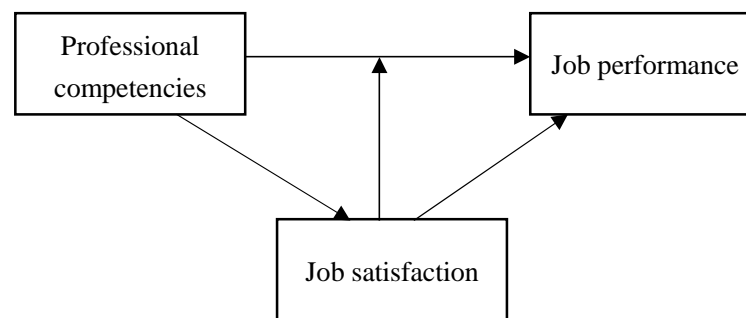


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework of the study

### IV. CONCLUSION

This article gives an overview of counselors' professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance, including the relationships among them. Even though from the previous study, there are lots of researchers did the study in the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance, or the competencies and job satisfaction in many other areas, but the study in the university counselors is very few. This paper tries to give a review of the relationship between the three variables among university counselors. It can be found that they are all essential to this specific position and may have a close interrelationship with each other. At the same time, this paper also provides a conceptual framework for further research, which can provide a foundation for further empirical research. Future

study can adopt a quantitative research using questionnaires to discover the relationship between professional competencies, job satisfaction and job performance and also can check the mediating effect of job satisfaction within the relationship between professional competencies and job performance.

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