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A Study of the Relationship Between Job Satisfaction in the Chinese Public and Private Universities, Mentorship and the Role of College Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT: University staff member satisfaction is strongly tied to the university development, leadership practices, organizational support and career opportunities, as well as working environment. Academic libraries are a significant professional environment in Chinese higher education institutions where librarians and library personnel have to deal with research support, information services, digital resources, learning spaces, scholarly communication, and user-based services. Mentorship can link workers to career resources, expertise, role modelling, social support, and institutional supports. A conceptual model relating mentorship and job satisfaction is developed and tested in public universities, private universities, and college academic libraries in China and mentorship is acted as an explanation mechanism. The conceptual framework has six direct hypotheses: mentorship is associated with job satisfaction in the public universities (H1), private universities (H2), and academic libraries (H3); and guidance is associated with job satisfaction in public universities (H4), private universities (H5), and academic libraries (H6). This is a quantitative cross sectional design, and it is proposed that 420 academic library employees from the public and private libraries of the country be sampled evenly. The reliability, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, sector comparison and bootstrap mediation analysis are indicated. To ensure transparency in the manuscript developmental process, the numerical results presented in this paper are produced based on a synthetic dataset designed based on the proposed design, rather than using the data of observations collected from real Chinese universities. The simulated analysis results in positive and statistically significant direct relationships, for the six hypothesized paths. The strongest direct links with library job satisfaction are for mentorship, and guidance is also a significant predictor following the inclusion of mentorship in the regression models. The results offer a quantitative visualization of the application of mentoring and guidance in the research of human resources and library management in Chinese higher education. The paper ends with a "bench-to-bedroom" model of a measurement structure and implications for institutional mentoring design, library leadership, professional development and comparative public-private university research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Professional staff within a higher education institution plays a vital role in supporting teaching, research, student services, knowledge management, digital transformation and institutional administration. Job satisfaction is therefore relevant to organizational functioning as those who feel that what they do in the job is meaningful, they feel supported in their relationships with others, they feel that they have opportunities for development, they feel they are treated fairly, they feel they are led well and they feel that what they are expected to do is manageable are more likely to have positive attitudes towards their work. These conditions exist in academic libraries, along with specialized professional requirements. There is a growing number of librarians and library staff who are supportive of electronic resources, research data, information literacy, scholarly communication, digital repositories, research impact services, learning technologies, and changing patterns of user engagement (Bilimoria et al., 2006). Therefore, salary or employment status is not the only factor considered in job satisfaction for academic libraries. Other aspects that need to be addressed include work design, leadership, professional identity, learning opportunities, recognition, collegiality, and access to developmental relationships.

One way these conditions can be organized is by means of mentorship. In the literature, mentoring is often separated into career and psychosocial aspects. Career mentoring involves coaching, sponsoring, exposure, challenging assignments, and providing information on progression, whereas psychosocial mentoring involves counselling, acceptance, role modelling, and building confidence. The difference is crucial for university staff as professional development is often tied to the access to tacit knowledge and informal organizational networks. The career and psychosocial functions became established as an important part of Kram's mentoring framework, and more recently, empirical studies focused on the quality of mentoring, satisfaction with mentoring, and relationships with work attitudes. The evidence reviewed using the meta-analytic method has been mixed, with positive relationships reported with a variety of career and attitudinal outcomes, with some effect sizes being modest and others not (Eby et al., 2008). Mentor research also reports positive relationships between provision of mentoring and job satisfaction of mentors (Ghosh and Reio, 2013).

Institutional or professional complexity is added to academic employment. Based on faculty mentoring, the quality of the mentoring relationship has been linked to job satisfaction, and career stage has been shown to impact mentoring access and experience (Dawson et al., 2018). In fact, Xu and Payne (2014) found that job satisfaction was positively associated with mentoring quality which was in turn associated with faculty members' satisfaction with mentoring, which indicates the importance of mentoring relationship quality over just having a mentor. The results of this study serve as a foundation to explore guidance as an operational process to link mentoring relationships to employee satisfaction.

The academic library is certainly one of the most pertinent contexts in which this could be carried out. Library professionals engage in environments that carry the expectations of service, professionalism, technology, collection development, information literacy, research support, and evolving user needs. Previous studies of university librarians have established the relationships between job satisfaction and performance outcomes and the fact that various dimensions of job satisfaction can account for various dimensions of performance (Peng, 2014). Research in all types of libraries have also shown that organizational identification, work culture, colleagues, leadership, pay, workload, meaningful work, recognition and appreciation are all relevant factors that influence job satisfaction (Martin, 2020). There is also library-specific mentoring literature that indicates mentoring can be used to help with early career development, professional participation, career advancement and leadership preparation (Freedman, 2009; Heyns and Nixon, 2020).

An important comparative context is the Chinese higher-education landscape, where public and private universities may be run differently with varying governance structures, resource bases, employment practices, performance expectations and organizational cultures. These differences are not an indication of any absolute order of priority between the two sectors. Rather, they lay the groundwork for determining if the relationships between mentorship, guidance, and job satisfaction are comparable in the various institutional settings. Trust, career counselling, skill development, emotional support, institutional support and organizational condition differences are the themes that have been identified in recent research focusing on mentoring and job satisfaction in Chinese public and private academic libraries (Liu and Draupadi, 2025). This line of inquiry can be expanded with a systematic quantitative framework, which provides measurable constructs, and similar statistical pathways.

The function of the college academic libraries is the focal point of the proposed model as it serves as a place of work and a service unit of the institutions. The professional support that library staff receives could affect the way workers view leadership, professional development, and the importance of their work. The present framework thus does not equate academic-library job satisfaction with the general measure of university job satisfaction, but rather views academic-library job satisfaction as a separate construct.

This study has four aims. First, it identifies the relationship between mentorship and job satisfaction in the Chinese public universities. Second, it investigates the link between mentoring and job satisfaction in private universities in China. Third, it investigates the connection between mentoring and job satisfaction of the employees in the academic library of college students. Fourth, it examines the relationship between guidance and each job-satisfaction outcome and looks at the mediation of the mentorship–satisfaction relationship by guidance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Mentorship

Mentorship is a deliberate/comprehended relationship, where a more experienced mentor offers a less experienced colleague professional, career, psychosocial and/or role modelling support. Current research on mentoring agrees that mentoring can be formal or informal or developmental mentorship may have many forms, such as supervisors, senior colleagues, peers, professional networks, or several mentors. Kram's framework is still relevant because it distinguishes between psychosocial functions and career functions (Dawson et al., 2018). Career functions facilitate progression and organization awareness, whereas psychosocial functions deal with professional identity, self-confidence, inclusion, counseling and role modeling.

Mentorship can also result in reciprocal benefits. Based on the findings of Ghosh and Reio (2013) conducted a meta-analysis study, it is concluded that there is a positive relationship between mentoring and job satisfaction and organizational commitment because mentoring is being reported by the mentors. Based on the findings of Ghosh and Reio (2013), it is concluded that there is a positive relation between mentoring and job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as mentoring is being reported by the mentors; different types of mentoring functions showed different relations with career outcomes (Dyess et al., 2022). In the context of university libraries, the reciprocal relationship is important, as mentoring relationships can allow for senior librarians to gain leadership skills, professional recognition and organizational attachment from mentoring junior librarians. This relationship is thus relevant for both mentors and mentees.

Mentoring quality is more important than just being able to find a mentor. Xu and Payne (2014) identified satisfaction with mentoring to be a significant factor in the link between mentoring quality and job satisfaction for faculty. A mentoring programme that is arranged, but is not accessible, has a lack of goals, feedback, or professional relevance will have limited results. A good developmental relationship, in turn, can be a link to information that would otherwise be hard to find in formal policies.

2.2 Job Satisfaction in Higher Education

Job satisfaction is the extent to which an employee has positive attitudes toward his/her job and work environment (Eby et al., 2008). It may be thought of as a global assessment or it may be considered as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of supervision, co-workers, salary, promotion, work itself, communication, recognition, and procedures. The job characteristics are expanded by higher education to include professional autonomy, academic identity, research expectations, student facing responsibilities, and institutional governance.

Previous research from faculty has been consistently linked with mentoring and institutional support and job satisfaction. Bilimoria et al. (2006) discovered that faculty members' job satisfaction was linked to institutional leadership and mentoring via internal academic resources and relational support. Increased quality of mentoring relationships was found to be linked to greater job satisfaction among faculty members, with patterns differing by career stage, indicating that job satisfaction increased with higher quality of mentoring relationship (Dawson et al., 2018). These findings indicate that mentoring is part of an institutional support network.

The link is not always the same for the various institutional sectors. An employment framework, resource allocation system, governance system and promotion processes can vary between public universities and private institutions. There are

differences in managerial and performance arrangements among the private universities. These context differences may influence the meaning employees make of their career opportunities and supervisory support. Comparative analysis must, therefore, not be used as a quality ranking of the public and private sector. Instead, sector should be considered as an organizational context which might be a moderator of the strength or nature of relationships.

2.3 Job Satisfaction in Academic Libraries

Academic libraries are service organizations with an emphasis on knowledge. The activities librarians and library staff undertake include information discovery, information collection, digital resource management, research services, instruction, customer service, metadata, scholarly communications, archives, and technology-assisted services. These activities involve on-going professional learning and adaptation.

Peng (2014) showed that the satisfaction level of university librarians could be related to the task performance and contextual performance, and various facets of satisfaction correlated with various aspects of performance. Martin (2020) surveyed 770 librarians and library staff to identify factors related to job satisfaction, which included organizational identification/culture and work environment, colleagues, leadership, pay, diversity and inclusiveness, workload, meaningful work, recognition of the library, and personal appreciation. In this regard, the results confirm that job satisfaction is an organizational outcome with multiple dimensions.

Other research among library staff also shows that organizational culture, organizational hierarchy, organizational management, professional development, compensation, and collegial environments impact staff experiences (Dyess et al., 2022). Mentorship can help with many of these dimensions by providing access to professional knowledge, developmental feedback, career information and collegial support. Academic library mentoring programmes have also been created that link professional development and promotion and evaluation systems (Heyns and Nixon, 2020). When gaps in development exist in the traditional mentoring relationship, more recent work in the field of libraries highlights the role of peer support and the communities of practice. These findings help to build an expanded view of guidance that links mentoring to formal and informal professional support.

2.4 Mentorship and Job Satisfaction

There are several strands of evidence for the connection between mentorship and work satisfaction. Eby et al. (2008) undertook a multidisciplinary meta-analysis and found mentoring to be correlated with a variety of positive behavioral, attitudinal, relational, motivational, and career outcomes. In general, the effects were small but statistically significant and academic and workplace mentoring relationships were sometimes more beneficial than youth mentoring. Lee et al. (2013) conducted another meta-analysis of 42 samples and 12,581 employees and discovered positive correlations between the career, psychosocial, and role-modelling mentoring functions and job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment.

There are a number of suggested mechanisms in the literature. Uncertainty can be mitigated by giving mentors information on role expectations and organizational procedures. Mentors can help their peers to enhance their professional competence by providing feedback and access to tacit knowledge. Recognizing and role modelling can help build professional identity for mentors. Employees can benefit from social support offered by mentors to understand workplace issues. Either mechanism can help to have a better assessment of the job (Freedman, 2009).

The impact can also be influenced by mentoring quality, frequency, fit, career stage and support. Mandatory mentoring that is not developmentally relevant and/or trustful is unlikely to have the same impact as those types of mentoring. For this reason, this present model does not equate mentorship to guidance, but rather considers it as a complementary construct.

2.5 Guidance as an Explanatory Mechanism

Guidance in this context is the practical and development assistance given to employees regarding work tasks, professional learning, career planning, institutional procedures, problem solving and decision making. Mentorship is the relational component of support while guidance is the actionable developmental component of mentorship that can impact job attitudes.

The mechanism proposed is in line with social exchange explanations. If resources are provided to employees through organizationally mediated skills, they can experience increased feelings of support and reciprocity (Ghosh and Reio, 2013).

The relational support of a mentor can thus be interpreted as a professional support. Academic libraries may provide guidance on topics such as research-support practices, information literacy instruction, scholarly communication, data management, collection development, service quality, and career progression.

2.6 Public and Private University Contexts in China

There are multiple institutional forms and governance structures in China's higher-education system. Public universities are governed by public sector governance structures whereas private universities may have different governance structures. This comparison is not meant to illustrate that mentoring and guidance have a similar relationship with job satisfaction across different institutional environments, in and of itself, but to see if mentoring and guidance have similar relationships with job satisfaction in different institutional environments statistically.

A recent study on mentoring in Chinese academic libraries found that job satisfaction was linked to mentoring practices that included trust, clear objectives, career counseling, skill development, emotional support, and institutional support, whereas the lack of resources, institutional restrictions, inconsistencies in implementation, and differences between public and private institutions were identified as challenges (Liu and Draupadi, 2025). This offers a direct justification for a quantitative model based on comparison.

2.7 Research Gap

The proposed research is based on three gaps. First, there is a significant body of literature available on mentoring, but there are comparatively fewer that combine mentorship, guidance and academic-library job satisfaction in one comparative model. Second, the second frequently examines organizational culture, leadership, workload or professional identity but does not explicitly test the contribution of mentorship across public vs. private university settings (Heyns and Nixon, 2020). Third, the Chinese context is also specific to the sector since professional development and employee experiences may be affected by organizational arrangements.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The conceptual framework places mentorship as the central explanatory variable, guidance as an intervening variable, and three types of outcomes of job satisfaction for public universities, private universities, and college academic libraries. The framework is in line with the provided conceptual diagram.

The results revealed that there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between mentorship and job satisfaction among the universities in China.

H2: Job satisfaction is positively related and statistically significant with mentorship in China's private universities.

The result shows that mentorship has a significant and positive correlation with job satisfaction in college academic libraries in China.

H4 is supported by a positive and statistically significant relationship between guidance and job satisfaction in China's public universities.

The correlation between guidance and job satisfaction of private universities in China is positive and statistically significant.

H6: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between guidance and job satisfaction in the College Academic library in China.

The framework also includes an indirect path for mentorship to job satisfaction via guidance. The indirect pathway is not considered a separate numbered direct hypothesis, but rather a mediation pathway. The reasoning behind this is that mentorship can open up opportunities to guidance, and guidance can then lead to higher job satisfaction.

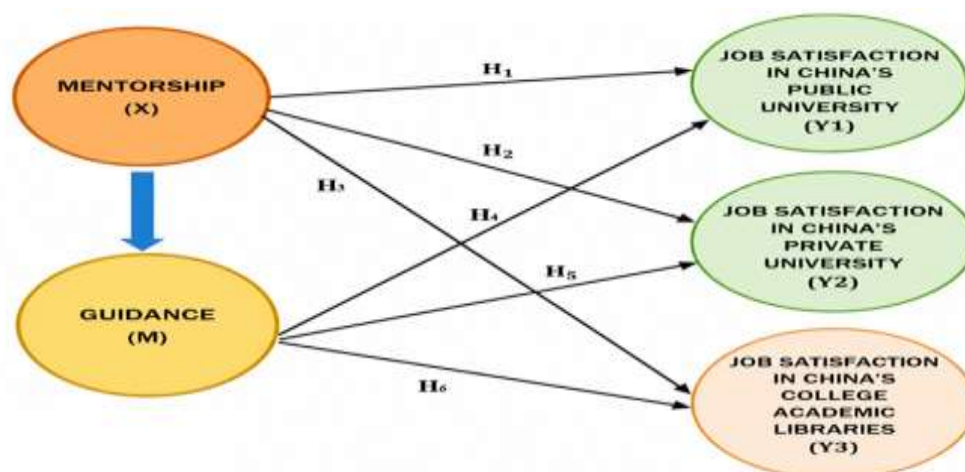


Figure 1. Conceptual framework supplied for the proposed research model.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

A cross sectional research design is identified as quantitative. The design can be used to investigate associations between latent constructs from data from structured questionnaires. The unit of analysis for this proposed unit is the individual employee of an academic library in a public or private university or college in China. The design enables public-private comparison of the design while at the same time having a common measurement structure.

In this manuscript numerical results are simulated for methodological demonstration. It is not stated that 420 employees were surveyed. The simulated data depict a plausible response structure with five points on a Likert scale and are used to illustrate the statistical procedures that would follow actual data collection (Kram and Isabella, 1985). Replacement of the simulated results with field observations and participant data from an ethics-approved study is required for actual thesis or journal submission.

4.2 Population and Sample

The population consists of the following groups: (1) professional librarians, (2) library administrators, (3) information-service staff, (4) technical library staff, and (5) academic-library employees related to information services. A target sample size of 420 is provided with half of the respondents (210) in public institutions and half of the respondents (210) in private institutions. Balanced sample helps to minimize the unequal group-size effect and facilitates comparative regression analysis.

The sampling is intended to be proportionate stratified sampling based on institution type and then institutional and employee level sampling. Eligibility includes working in an academic library, having at least six months of experience with organizational library services and being willing to fill out the questionnaire (Lee et al., 2013). Temporary visitors, external contractors who had no employment status and the respondents who had not completed questionnaires would be excluded.

4.3 Measurement Instrument

The items for mentorship are five Likert scale questions relating to developmental support access, career advice, role modelling, feedback, and professional encouragement. Guidance is assessed with five items related to task guidance, career guidance, professional learning support, problem-solving assistance and access to institutional information. Five items are used for each outcome to represent job satisfaction in the public universities, private universities and academic libraries: overall satisfaction, work content, supervision, professional development, recognition, and working conditions.

Answers are answered on a 5-point scale that ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Higher scores are associated with greater perceived mentorship, guidance and job satisfaction. If a larger validated sample is obtained the

measurement structure can be used with exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and partial least squares structural equation modelling.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency is evaluated by the Cronbach's alpha and values above 0.70 are deemed acceptable for established constructs (Liu and Duraipandi, 2025). Composite reliability, average variance extracted, factor loadings, discriminant validity, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio can be used for a full SEM analysis. Before taking content to the field the content should be determined as being valid by experts and pilot testing.

4.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics used to describe the sample and to build distributions. Pearson correlation is used to estimate bivariate associations. Simple regression tests H1-H3, multiple regression tests H4-H6 with mentorship and guidance entered at the same time. Non parametric bootstrapped confidence intervals are used to provide an estimate of the indirect effect via guidance provided by mentorship. If a 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, it is regarded as evidence of a statistically significant indirect association. An independent-samples t-test is used to compare satisfaction with the academic library for the different sectors, while regression coefficients are compared between the public and private subsamples.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Where actual field research will be carried out there should be agreement for the purposes of institutional ethics, informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, secure data storage, and the right to withdraw before data collection begins. No identifying information should be in the analytical data set. The current numerical analysis is a simulation, so there is no actual representation of the participants in the results.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Sample Profile

The simulated data set has 420 observations, with 210 from public universities and 210 from private universities (Peng, 2014). The balanced sector distribution is suitable for comparative analysis. The profile included in the example is rich with examples of careers and a diverse array of positions in libraries.

Table 1. Illustrative sample profile

Category	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Institution type	Public university	210	50.0
Institution type	Private university	210	50.0
Age	22–30 years	112	26.7
Age	31–40 years	146	34.8
Age	41–50 years	101	24.0
Age	51 years and above	61	14.5
Position	Professional librarian	196	46.7
Position	Library officer/assistant	134	31.9
Position	Senior librarian/manager	58	13.8
Position	Technical/digital library staff	32	7.6
Experience	Less than 5 years	129	30.7
Experience	5–10 years	151	36.0

Experience	11–15 years	84	20.0
Experience	More than 15 years	56	13.3

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

The simulated mean for mentorship is 3.65 and guidance is 3.58. The means of public-university job satisfaction, private-university job satisfaction, and the academic-library job satisfaction are, respectively, 3.78, 3.35, and 3.71 (Ross, 2018). The standard deviations are moderate, which means that there is enough variation to be able to do correlation and regression analysis.

Descriptive values are theoretical and not observed at one of the actual universities. The differences in means are thus merely illustrative and should not be read as indicative of a higher level of job satisfaction at public universities than at private universities within the Chinese higher-education system..

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Construct	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Mentorship	420	3.65	0.67	1.60	5.00
Guidance	420	3.58	0.69	1.40	5.00
Public-university job satisfaction	210	3.78	0.67	1.80	5.00
Private-university job satisfaction	210	3.35	0.67	1.60	5.00
Academic-library job satisfaction	420	3.71	0.69	1.60	5.00

5.3 Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of all simulated scales is above the conventional 0.70. The mentorship alpha is about 0.876, guidance 0.877, public-university job satisfaction 0.876, private-university job satisfaction 0.859, and academic-library job satisfaction 0.884 (Xu and Payne, 2014).

The results show that the simulated items are coherent scales. These are simulated values that need not be used for establishing reliability in actual data collection, but should be used with the final instrument.

Table 3. Reliability analysis

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
Mentorship	5	0.876	Acceptable internal consistency
Guidance	5	0.877	Acceptable internal consistency
Public-university job satisfaction	5	0.876	Acceptable internal consistency
Private-university job satisfaction	5	0.859	Acceptable internal consistency
Academic-library job satisfaction	5	0.884	Acceptable internal consistency

5.4 Correlation Analysis

For the public university subsample, mentorship is positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.475$) and guidance is positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.436$). For the private university subsample, the correlation is around $r = 0.315$ and $r = 0.355$, respectively (Heshan and Duraipandi, 2026). For all respondents, there is a correlation of around $r = 0.405$ between mentorship and academic-library job satisfaction and a correlation of around $r = 0.381$ between guidance and academic-library job satisfaction.

All of the positive coefficients are consistent with the theoretical prediction that higher levels of access to mentoring and guidance are correlated with higher levels of satisfaction with one's job. Although there is a correlation, it is not a causal one, so regression and longitudinal research would be needed for a more robust causal interpretation.

Table 4. Correlation matrix

Context	Variable 1	Variable 2	Pearson r
Public	Mentorship	Guidance	0.470
Public	Mentorship	Job satisfaction	0.475
Public	Guidance	Job satisfaction	0.436
Private	Mentorship	Guidance	0.405
Private	Mentorship	Job satisfaction	0.315
Private	Guidance	Job satisfaction	0.355
Academic libraries	Mentorship	Guidance	0.436
Academic libraries	Mentorship	Job satisfaction	0.405
Academic libraries	Guidance	Job satisfaction	0.381

5.5 Regression Analysis for H1-H3

Simple regression models the linear association between mentorship and each job-satisfaction outcome. Job satisfaction is a significant positive predictor for mentorship for the public-university subsample, $\beta = 0.470$, $R^2 = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$. The subsample of private universities is also significant for mentorship, $\beta = 0.297$, $R^2 = 0.099$, $p < 0.001$. In the entire sample, mentorship makes a significant contribution to the satisfaction of academic-library staff, $\beta = 0.406$, $R^2 = 0.164$, $p < 0.001$.

The simulated data set shows that the public sector coefficient is larger than the private sector coefficient. This difference does not represent an empirical sector effect, but rather a difference in the data constructed (Heshan and Duraipandi, 2026). If this difference turns out to be statistically significant in actual data, it would have to be determined by a formal multi-group SEM or coefficient-comparison procedure.

Table 5. Direct regression results for mentorship

Hypothesis	Outcome	Coefficient	R ²	p-value	Result
H1	Public-university job satisfaction	0.470	0.226	<0.001	Supported in simulated data
H2	Private-university job satisfaction	0.297	0.099	<0.001	Supported in simulated data
H3	Academic-library job satisfaction	0.406	0.164	<0.001	Supported in simulated data

5.6 Regression Analysis for H4-H6

Multiple regression models are used to include both mentorship and guidance. Mentorship ($\beta = 0.343$) and guidance ($\beta = 0.247$) are still important for public-university job satisfaction, with an R^2 of 0.284. For private universities, the job satisfaction relationship with mentorship is $\beta = 0.193$ and guidance is $\beta = 0.275$, $R^2 = 0.161$. In the case of academic library job satisfaction,

mentorship is $\beta = 0.296$ and guidance is $\beta = 0.251$, with $R^2 = 0.215$. In the simulated analysis all of the reported predictors are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Teacher influence, as represented in the models, accounts for additional variance in the outcomes of mentorship beyond the variance of guidance. The larger coefficient for mentorship remains in the public model (Stephen et al., 2022). The coefficient of guidance is higher in the private model. Both predictors are valid in the academic-library model. The patterns reinforce the conceptual separation between the relationship itself and what is offered to the student within that relationship.

Table 6. Multiple regression results for guidance and job satisfaction

Hypothesis	Outcome	Mentorship β	Guidance β	R^2	Guidance p-value
H4	Public-university job satisfaction	0.343	0.247	0.284	<0.001
H5	Private-university job satisfaction	0.193	0.275	0.161	<0.001
H6	Academic-library job satisfaction	0.296	0.251	0.215	<0.001

5.7 Mediation Analysis

One additional mediation study addresses the link between mentorship and guidance and then to job satisfaction. The simulated relationship between mentorship and guidance is positive and the value of $a = 0.440$ and $R^2 = 0.190$. Indirect associations are all positive for Bootstrap estimation of the indirect effect.

In the simulated analysis the confidence intervals do not overlap with zero. The pattern applies for a mediation interpretation of mentorship as being correlated with more guidance and job satisfaction as being correlated with more guidance (Jiang and Wang, 2025). The results of the mediation model are not causal, as the design is cross-sectional and the data simulated. A longitudinal study would be more convincing of the proposed mechanism.

Table 7. Bootstrap mediation results

Outcome	Indirect effect	95% lower bound	95% upper bound	Interpretation
Public-university job satisfaction	0.127	0.064	0.199	Positive indirect association
Private-university job satisfaction	0.103	0.047	0.170	Positive indirect association
Academic-library job satisfaction	0.111	0.067	0.160	Positive indirect association

5.8 Sector Comparison

The mean for job satisfaction among the respondents at public universities is 3.76 and among the private university respondents is 3.66. The independent-samples comparison yields $t = 1.03$ and $p = 0.305$, suggesting that there is no significant difference in the simulated library job satisfaction scores. The result shows an important difference between descriptive mean differences and statistical evidence. When the mean is numerically different across groups, there is not necessarily a meaningful sector effect.

The comparison implies that the principal analytical value of sector might be in the patterns of relationships rather than in the assumption that there is significant difference in the mean satisfaction value (Duffy, 2023). To test whether the path coefficients differ across sectors, but the measurement structures are the same, multi-group structural equation modelling might be applied.

Table 8. Illustrative public-private comparison

Measure	Public mean	Private mean	t-value	p-value
Academic-library job satisfaction	3.76	3.66	1.03	0.305
Mentorship	3.66	3.63	0.42	0.675
Guidance	3.61	3.55	0.86	0.392

6. FIGURES AND VISUAL ANALYSIS

The conceptual model that was provided for the study is summarized in Figure 1. Mentorship is the independent variable, guidance is the intervening variable, and job satisfaction at public universities, private universities, and college academic libraries is the dependent variable (Zilai, 2024).

The simulated sample composition is shown in figure 2. The design includes an equal number of public- and private-university respondents resulting in a 50% public, 50% private distribution. This is a balance that helps with comparative modelling.

Figure 2. Simulated Sample Composition

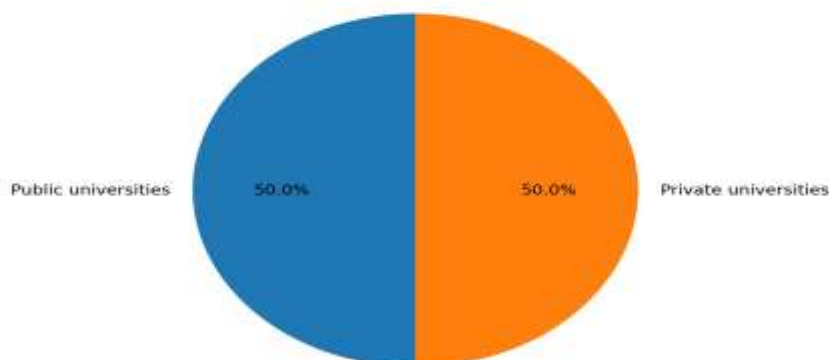


Figure 2. Simulated sample composition.

The simulated mean scores are shown in figure 3. The mentorship and guidance is higher than the 5 point scale midpoint (Ayodo, 2022). In the constructed data, public-university job satisfaction scores are higher than private-university job satisfaction scores, and the scores for academic libraries are higher than the middle range. The aforementioned values are indicative only.

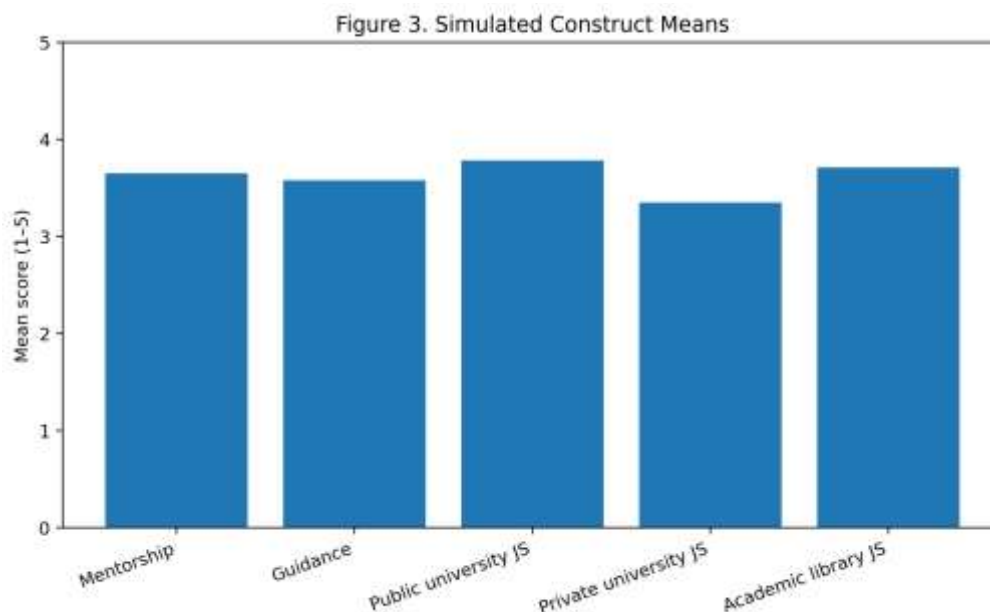


Figure 3. Simulated construct means.

The direct path coefficients are shown in Figure 4. In the public-university model, the mentorship-to-university-job satisfaction coefficient is the highest among the three direct mentorship channels, and the guidance coefficient is the highest for the private-university model (Li et al., 2024). The academic-library model has positive coefficients for mentorship and guidance.

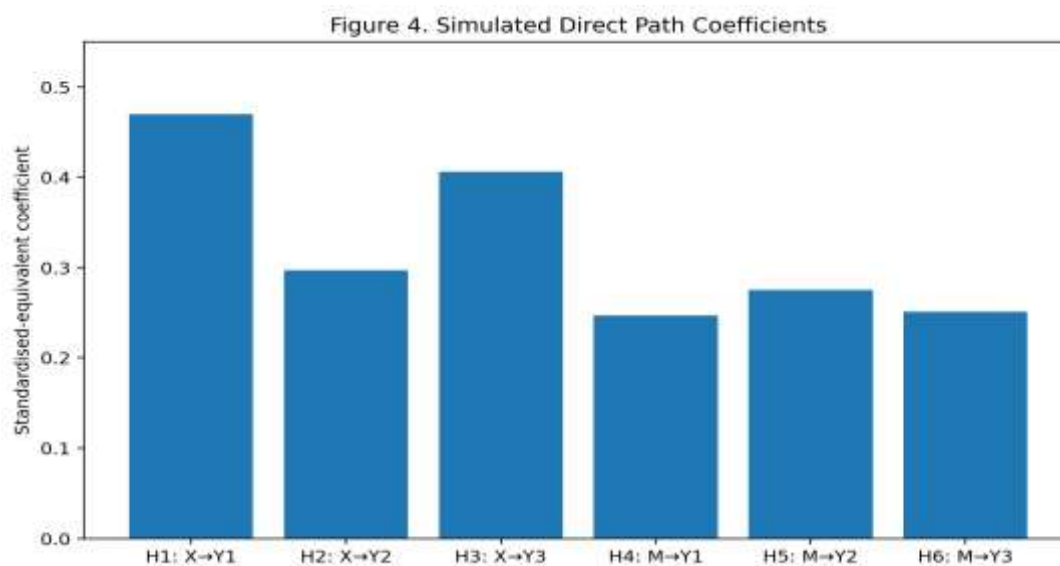


Figure 4. Simulated direct path coefficients.

The bootstrap indirect effects are shown in figure 5. The three indirect effects are all positive and their illustrative 95% confidence intervals continue to be positive.

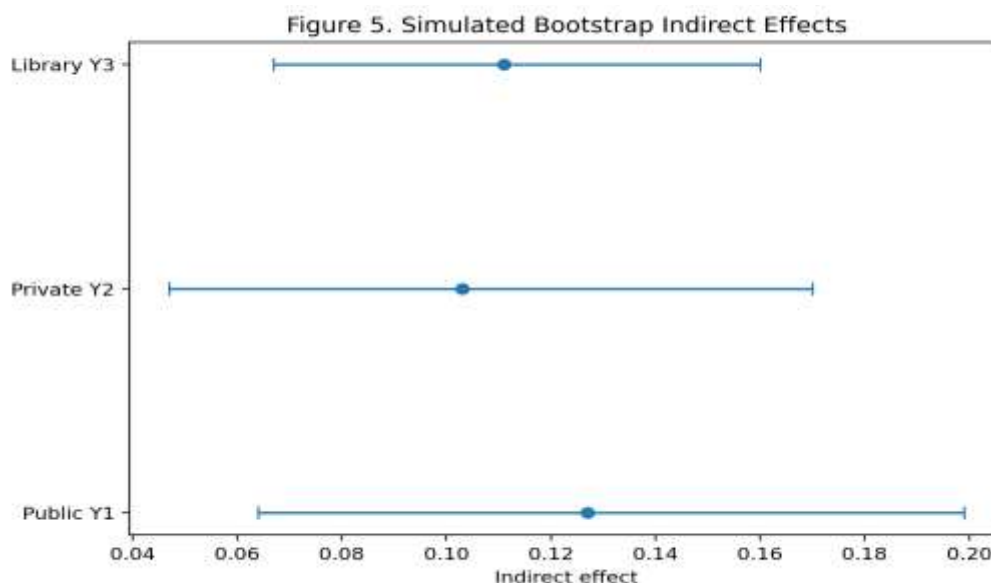


Figure 5. Simulated bootstrap indirect effects.

7. DISCUSSION

The results from the simulation help to offer a quantitative justification for the proposed relationship between mentorship, guidance, and job satisfaction. Mentoring relationships have been found to be associated with career outcomes and attitudinal outcomes, with a positive mentoring coefficient in the public-university job-satisfaction literature, consistent with the general mentoring literature. Eby et al. (2008) found positive relationships among mentoring, and a variety of outcomes, and Lee et al. (2013) found positive relationships between the mentoring functions of career, psychosocial, and role modelling and job satisfaction (Afolayan and Adedokun, 2023). This model is extended to the Chinese academic-library environment in the present model.

Also, the private-university model demonstrates a positive association between mentorship with job satisfaction, but the simulated coefficient is less than the public-university coefficient. This finding should not be seen as an indication of the inherent differences between public and private universities in China. Instead, it illustrates how a comparative model can help to specify the different path magnitudes to be tested empirically. The differences could stem, in theory, from the structure of the organization, management systems, career systems, access to resources, promotion systems or implementation of mentoring. The following explanations need field evidence.

The positive guidance coefficients lend evidence to the notion that mentoring can have value partly due to the resulting actionable professional support. In university libraries, the guidance can range from digital platforms support, research support, information-literacy education, scholarly communication, data management, library collection management, service standards, and career planning etc (Chen, 2023). This kind of support transforms a relational resource into work-relevant support. In order to support the analysis of mentoring quality and the value of mentoring, Xu and Payne (2014) showed theoretically that satisfaction with mentoring could serve as a buffer between these two constructs.

The academic-library outcome is especially significant due to the fact that the library environment is constantly evolving. Peng (2014) correlated librarian job satisfaction with performance, while Martin (2020) found that culture, leadership, colleagues, workload, meaningful work, recognition, appreciation were some of the factors that correlated with job satisfaction. These can be combined with mentorship and guidance. A mentor can offer knowledge and information that only a group or organization can provide, show effective work practice and help an employee interpret the expectations of an organization. Guidance may also be used to help adjust to tech and service change.

The findings also lend credence to the concept of a multi-faceted approach to development of academic-library staff. Freedman (2009) highlighted mentoring as an early-career librarian and leadership development tool. Heyns and Nixon (2020) outlined

a co-mentoring system which combined mentoring with the review and promotion of faculty librarians. Recent peer-supported research suggests that mentoring may not address the entire developmental needs of individuals, and communities of practice can fill in the gaps (Tran, 2025). The messages for institutional design include that mentoring should not be limited to the one-on-one relationship between a senior and a junior. Formal mentoring, peer support, professional learning, supervisory coaching and communities of practice may all co-exist.

This is offered as a further theoretical interpretation by the simulated mediation outcome. Guidance is positively related to mentorship and mentorship is positively related to job satisfaction. The indirect pathways indicate that one aspect of how mentoring relates to satisfaction could be through practical support provided to employees. This process resonates with both social exchange theory and studies that separate mentoring quality from the presence of a mentoring relationship.

Professional identity is also an important consideration for the library context. Academic librarians are increasingly teaching, supporting research, engaging in digital scholarship, managing data, and providing technology-mediated services. Professional learning is thus an ongoing need. The program requires organizational support and mentoring can offer a low cost relational infrastructure for knowledge transfer. Formal program may be administrative exercises if there is no protected time, clear objectives, trained mentors, evaluation procedures and recognition of mentoring work.

8. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The conceptual contribution of the paper is the incorporation of mentorship, guidance and job satisfaction within a sector-sensitive higher-education frameworks. Mentoring is considered a relationship-based resource, mentoring guidance is a relationship based developmental mechanism, and job satisfaction is a multi-dimensional attitude towards work. The framework links mentoring theory to academic-library human resources management and the comparison of public-private institutions (Lai et al., 2025).

The theoretical framework also extends the social exchange theory to the academic-library workforce. Both employees and mentors can gain from mentoring and guidance as an organizational resource, with mentors gaining leadership development, recognition and organizational commitment. Ghosh and Reio (2013) show that mentoring can be beneficial for both the mentor and mentee.

Another theoretical implication is the institutional context. The attitude context of public and private university can be viewed as boundary conditions instead of predetermined employee attitude factors. Career structures, organizational culture, the availability of resources, managerial support, and employee expectations can all be different factors that may lead to a different outcome from the same mentoring practice. These possibilities can be tested more rigorously by comparative SEM.

9. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The model proposed can be considered by university leaders when determining if mentoring initiatives are linked with identifiable employee outcomes (Ngalomba et al., 2025). Mentoring policies may outline the following: criteria for selection of mentors; aims of the mentoring relationship; frequency of meetings; confidentiality requirements; mentoring objectives; feedback protocols; and evaluation processes. Mentor training might involve coaching, feedback, career discussions, inclusive communication, conflict resolution and referrals.

Mentoring can be incorporated into professional development in academic libraries. Structured orientation and access to experienced colleagues for new hires; guidance to mid-career employees regarding specialist services, leadership, research support and professional certification. The Workload Plan and performance review can provide recognition to senior librarians for mentoring responsibilities.

Institutional systems should also be in place to provide guidance. Poor promotion criteria, too much work, not enough resources, and poor communication between members will not be addressed by mentoring (Lee et al., 2013). A mentoring program needs to be in place alongside professional-development budgets, career pathways, training opportunities, clear promotion guidelines, and employee feedback systems.

The proposed approach is comparative, not prescriptive, for public and private institutions. Based on the same organizational context, institutions can make their own judgement about which of the relationships between mentorship and guidance is

comparable with satisfaction. The design of the programme must be based on empirical evidence from employees not making assumptions about employment in the public or private sector.

10. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The major drawback of the present manuscript is that the numerical results are simulated. They show the analytical structure but are no good substitutes for empirical data. The findings will only be presented as evidence on Chinese universities after actual fieldwork.

The proposed design is also a cross sectional design, which also inhibits causality. Job satisfaction might have an impact in the long run on mentorship and mentoring experiences, and more satisfied employees might appraise their mentoring relationships more favorably. Directionality could be examined by measuring employees at more than one point in time in a longitudinal study.

Another limitation is common-method bias as predictors and outcomes are measured with self-report responses in the proposed questionnaire (Liu and Duraipandi, 2025). This risk may be mitigated in future studies by means of time separation, data sources, supervisor ratings and objective career indicators, and by validated measurement scales.

When comparing public and private, measurement invariance testing is necessary. Researchers, before comparing latent means or structural paths, should ensure configural, metric, and scalar invariance. Multi group SEM can then be used to assess if the mentorship/guidance paths are statistically different between public and private institutions (Martin, 2020).

Other factors that could be explored in future research include career stage, professional role, organizational tenure, gender, academic discipline served by the library, digital-skills requirements, leadership style, organizational identification, and perceived organizational support. Qualitative interviews can be used in conjunction with quantitative results to discover specific mentoring behaviors that employees find helpful or hindering.

11. CONCLUSION

This research model is aimed at the relationship between mentorship, guidance and job satisfaction in Chinese public and private universities and college academic libraries. The model centers upon mentorship as the explanatory construct, and includes the intervening developmental resource of guidance as well as job-satisfaction outcomes for public-university, private-university, and academic-library environments.

Positive relationships are obtained in the simulated analyses for all six direct hypotheses. Job satisfaction in public universities, private universities and academic libraries are positively associated with mentorship. After controlling for mentorship, there is a positive relationship between guidance and each of the outcomes. The supplementary mediation analysis suggests that mentorship had indirect pathways that led to the three job-satisfaction outcomes through the guidance construct. The reliability coefficients of the simulated constructs are greater than 0.85, and the statistical structure is proposed to be suitable for empirical testing.

The substance of this paper is the linkage of mentoring research and academic-library employment and comparing public-private universities in China. Academic libraries need to keep developing their professionals due to the multifaceted roles of providing information services, digital resources, research support, scholarly communication, teaching and supporting users' changing needs. The support of these requirements can be provided through mentoring and guidance as a mechanism within the organization, but this is dependent on the design of the organization, the quality of the relationship, resources, workload, career structure and leadership.

The numerical results are representative until they are replaced with field data. The next step in the process of an empirical study that will be publishable is to validate the instruments, get approval from the ethics committee, select Chinese universities, collect data from Chinese universities, validate the measurement process and then replicate the proposed regression or SEM analysis. This evidence can then clarify the extent to which the relationships found in the model are found in both public and private higher education environments and if guidance is a meaningful link between mentorship and job satisfaction.

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