Perceived leadership style as a mediator of the relationship between training management influences and self-assessed job performance: Training management for mentors in Guangdong higher education

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Abstract: This study examines the mediating role of perceived leadership style (PLS) in the relationship between training management influences and self-evaluation of job performance (SJP) among university mentors in Guangdong, China. This research utilized a random sampling survey method; mentors were randomly selected from 164 higher education institutions in Guangdong Province, China. An online questionnaire was administered to participants for data collection, ensuring no missing data. A total of 489 participants responded effectively from the 550 distributed questionnaires. Grounded in Path-Goal Theory (PGT), the research investigates how mentors' individual factors, training motivation, and organizational rewards influence SJP, with PLS as a mediator. Training management factors (individual competencies, motivation, and rewards) significantly enhance SJP, corroborating prior research on training effectiveness. Perceived leadership style partially mediates these relationships, with the strongest mediation effect observed between training motivation and SJP (36.3% mediation ratio). Directive and supportive leadership styles were particularly influential in shaping mentors' performance evaluations. The study contributes to leadership and human resource management literature by validating PGT in Chinese higher education and highlighting the critical role of adaptive leadership in mentor training. Practical implications include recommendations for universities to refine leadership development programs and address regional and gender disparities in mentorship opportunities. Future research should expand to diverse geographical contexts and employ longitudinal designs to strengthen causal inferences.

Keywords: Higher education management, Mentors' individual factors, Organizational rewards, Path-goal theory, Perceived leadership style, Self-evaluation of job performance, Training motivation, Training.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, the development of higher education has put forward new requirements for education practitioners to have an international perspective, digital literacy Yuan [1] lifelong learning concepts, as well as innovative and practical abilities Liu and Liu [2] in order to better adapt to the new trends in the development of higher education. As a strategic force, training management has become a key factor in organizational success by developing individual talents and enhancing competitiveness through changing individual behaviors [3]. Training management for mentors is an important part of teacher training in Chinese universities, and the enhancement of mentors' competence and professional growth lays the foundation for them to become excellent professional and specialized university teachers [4]. However, despite mentors' dual role as teachers and administrators in Chinese universities [5] their post-training job performance is generally unsatisfactory. Globally and professionally, they face the impact of world education and industry development trends; within the higher education system, they face the reality of the dilemma of education development; and at the same time, they are constantly changing in their professional self-

development and the student population they are facing, which requires them to make changes and enhancements in order to better engage in education work and life.

With the strong demand for talent in the society, organizations in all sectors are facing complex challenges and trends, and the need for a competitive workforce has increased. This rapid change requires employees to be resilient and talented [6] which creates a strong need to manage human capital to gain a competitive advantage and survive in the marketplace. In most Chinese universities, performance appraisal is not linked to performance management. Faculty promotions and performance appraisals depend largely on the seniority of employees rather than the quality of their performance [4]. As higher education moves from an elitist to a mass and popularized stage, the number of students in higher education continues to increase, and the diversity and complexity of the student body is becoming more and more prominent [7]. Teacher literacy plays an important role in improving student learning outcomes, and the development and effectiveness of teacher training systems determine the quality of training [8] but the lack of qualified teacher resources has become an international problem. UNESCO argues that good TVET systems help countries to invest in youth skills and employment and to address challenges such as climate change and demographic and technological change [9]. China has also issued a series of policy documents emphasizing the importance of tutor training in higher education and setting higher requirements for mentors' professionalism and vocational competence.

1.1. Research Objectives

Higher education mentors play an irreplaceable role in students' growth and development and need to have a more comprehensive knowledge structure, stronger communication skills, and problem-solving abilities to meet the needs of students in various aspects, such as academic guidance, career planning, mental health, and sustainable development. At the same time, the career development of mentors also faces problems such as limited promotion channels and burnout. Through training, they can improve their professional ability, integrate new technologies, and thus change their working mode so that college mentors can better serve students. Training management not only improves mentors' work ability and performance but also supports their career advancement, alleviates burnout, and enhances professional identity and sense of belonging [10]. This study aimed to achieve the general objective of training factors on self-evaluated job performance. Hence, the specific objectives were developed as follow:

1. To examine influence of training management factors on self-evaluation Job Performance.
2. To investigate influence oftraining management factors on perceived leadership style.
3. To determine mediating affect perceived leadership style mediates the relationship between training influences and self-evaluation Job Performance.

This study provides important insights into the role of training management in perceived leadership styles in the training management of tutors in higher education; training management influences and Self-evaluation of job performance. These results can be used by higher education managers to examine training performance satisfaction and organizational management. This study contributes to the research on motivation and job performance in tutor training. The introduction of the role of perceived leadership style as a mediator in the context of the higher education sector is new in the training management literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perceived Leadership Style

The concept of perceived leadership style (PLS) originates from the field of leadership studies and refers to employees' or subordinates' perceptions and evaluations of a leader's behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making styles [11]. Leadership is defined as motivating employees to achieve organizational goals [12]. The way a leader directs, influences, and motivates subordinates is referred to as leadership style. Perceived leadership style usually includes aspects of how leaders communicate with subordinates, how they assign tasks, how they provide support, and how they handle conflict [11]. This perception

directly affects employees' work attitudes, behavioral performance, and performance. Empirical studies have shown that perceived leadership style has a significant effect on employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance [13]. Leadership style is considered to be particularly important for achieving organizational goals, and research has shown that transformational leadership styles are superior to more traditional leadership styles, e.g., in terms of achieving organizational goals [14] and in order to motivate, the leader style is also important [15] however, leadership styles do not fully determine employee performance or organizational achievements.

Employees also play an important role in performance or organizational goals. Employees' perceptions of their supervisors' leadership styles, as well as their feelings about their ability to do their jobs and organizational goals, affect employee performance. As well as their feelings about their ability to do their job and achieve organizational goals, feelings about their ability to achieve organizational goals seem to be important factors. In addition, employees' perceptions of their relationships, particularly the level of support they receive, also appear to have an impact on performance [11]. In the education sector, the relevance and effectiveness of leadership style depends on the state of functioning of school leaders in balancing their style with the tasks of the devotees [16]. Leadership style is one of the most critical factors in the performance of any organization and its employees [17]. Leadership has a great impact on employee performance [18]. In higher education, faculty performance depends on many factors, including leadership style and organizational culture [19]. In this study, for leadership styles in higher education, the focus is mainly on four types guided by the goal path theory; they are directive leadership, supportive leadership, participative leadership, and achievement-oriented leadership.

2.2. Mentors' Individual Factors

The mentors individual factors include knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, abilities, and other elements. mentors' views and attitudes towards themselves incorporate self-perception, self-efficacy, self-evaluation, self-concept, self-control, as well as confidence, self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, and independence. Ability is a fundamental characteristic of an individual that enables them to stand out among their peers. According to Troter's definition, a capable person is one who can complete tasks easily, quickly, and intuitively while making few or no mistakes [20]. Personal characteristics refer to the traits or special qualities that employees possess, allowing them to have abilities distinct from other employees, thus maintaining and enhancing their performance [21]. According to Ardana, personal characteristics include interests, attitudes towards oneself, work, and the work environment; personal needs; capabilities; work knowledge; as well as emotions, moods, feelings, beliefs, and values [21]. The personal characteristics such as age, tenure, and marital status can influence individual performance [22]. Furthermore, Troter also reveals that a capable person completes their work easily, quickly, and intuitively, making few or no mistakes [20]. The relationship between ability and performance has been studied by numerous previous researchers, including [20, 23-25].

The work efficiency of teachers depends on multiple factors, one of which is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete specific tasks [26]. Self-efficacy focuses on how a person believes they are capable of executing a certain course of action, rather than how a person believes in their abilities [27]. It is not about how much a person likes themselves or what skills and abilities they possess. A person's self-efficacy can be measured from three aspects: innovative self-efficacy, persuasive self-efficacy, and adaptive self-efficacy.

Teachers with a high level of self-efficacy are able to provide effective teaching outcomes that promote students to improve students' motivation to learn and are goal-oriented, leading to better academic performance, and teachers with a high degree of self-teaching ability will achieve higher goals, while teachers with low confidence in their ability will be frustrated in the teaching process [28]. Over the past four decades, researchers have studied teachers' self-efficacy in teaching and established it as one of the important effective constructs. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in how teachers accomplish goals and tasks and how they respond to teaching challenges. Teachers with low self-efficacy shy away

from challenging activities, perceive creative activities and situations as difficult to complete, have a negative attitude towards most things, and lose confidence. Loss of confidence in one's own abilities. Teachers with high self-efficacy welcomed challenging activities as something to be mastered and took a greater interest in their activities, while teachers with high self-efficacy saw challenging activities as masterable, developed a stronger interest in their activities, developed a high sense of commitment, and were able to quickly make up for their failures. In this study, combined with the actual work of mentors, we will focus on two aspects: innovative self-efficacy and contingency self-efficacy, which test the comprehensive ability of mentors.

2.3. Training Motivation

Motivation is a force that stimulates, sustains, and directs behavior towards a specific purpose, whether from internal or external sources, and encourages a person to achieve desired goals [29]. Motivation is what drives employees to improve their performance and enables them to achieve the goals set by the company [30]. In the field of management studies, motivation is usually defined as the driving force that initiates, directs, and sustains desired business behaviors. The main objective of motivation is to ensure that employees act voluntarily and effectively in accordance with the organization's goals. Therefore, increased employee motivation has a direct impact on organizational performance and ultimately drives organizational success [31]. Motivation at work has been thoroughly studied by previous researchers, including [32, 33]. From some of the points mentioned above, it can be concluded that motivation is the urge to act on a set of processes of human behavior by considering the direction, intensity, and perseverance to achieve a goal. This can be measured through two dimensions, namely 1) intrinsic; 2) Extrinsic. The indicators of intrinsic motivation are achievement, recognition, responsibility, and work accomplished. Whereas the indicators of extrinsic motivation are supervision, salary, physical working conditions, working relationships, security, and opportunities.

The findings showed that school leadership style and teacher motivation are important factors that influence teacher performance [34]. These findings contribute to our understanding of teacher motivation based on PGT theory and emphasize the importance of creating a positive and supportive work environment to enhance teacher motivation. Recognizing and addressing the factors that influence teachers' attitudes, commitment, perceptions of rewards and punishments, and interest can help to increase motivation and engagement in the teaching workforce [35].

In this study, we define the first intrinsic motivation for mentors to participate in training as the love and recognition and pursuit of the teaching profession by mentors. According to the concept of multidimensional workaholism proposed by Clark, et al. [36] it includes four dimensions: motivational, cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Among them, the motivation dimension, based on self-determination theory, refers to the intrinsic pressure and drive to work [36]. Combining with the scenario of college mentors' participation in training, we define the second intrinsic motivation of mentors' participation in training as pressure and drive, and the two intrinsic motivations are measurable through the Motivation Scale with the Multi-Dimensional Workaholism Scale [36]. Extrinsic motivation is the motivational response to receiving extrinsic rewards and is reflected in the organizational reward variables, defined in this study as career advancement and career planning for mentors attending the training or access to bonuses and welfare policies. The extrinsic motivation items can be measured through the Motivation Scale.

2.4. Organizational Rewards

The survival and growth of an organization are determined by the strength of its funds or capital and the success of its human resource management [37]. Ghaffari's and others' research explains that among the factors that enhance employee work performance, the most important work incentive is responsibility, followed by additional benefits [38, 39]. Human resource management can use various plans or factors to motivate employees, but it must remember that different work incentive plans have different effects on different employees. Managers must consider that various incentive plans can

influence employees in different ways at different positions and times. Changes occur constantly in different situations, needs, and personal goals. Human resource management must understand the differences in values, needs, tasks, and employee satisfaction to improve work performance and productivity [40].

The incentive mechanism serves as a connecting means for enterprises to transform their lofty ideals into concrete facts. It is "the process of maximizing employees' commitment to the organization and their work through specific methods and management systems" [41]. According to the expectancy theory, when employees believe that rewards are contingent upon good performance, their efforts and performance are expected to increase [42]. When employees perceive that the organization is interested in their welfare and willing to protect their interests, they will establish a connection with the organization [43]. An individual's choice of a career and the decision to join a specific organization within that career are influenced by the perceived rewards available in that career or organization [44]. The reward system affects employees' decisions to come to work or stay in the organization [45] thus, the reward

The goal-path leadership model states that leadership consists of two basic functions, one of which is to provide support and attention to subordinates' needed needs in the form of rewards (appreciation) so that high work ethic and motivation become a responsibility to complete tasks [46]. For the situational factors in the environment, the path-goal theory explains that the leader will be a motivating factor for the subordinates. If the leader's behavior meets the subordinate's needs, always provides training to maintain the employee's performance, provides support in the form of rewards to appreciate the performance, and guides with a high level of cooperation and leadership. Organizations and institutions are better in terms of quality of work and environment if employees are properly motivated by their leaders [47].

In this study, organizational motivation refers to the whole process in which educational authorities and school management provide teachers with various conditions and take measures to motivate, guide, and regulate their behavior according to their different needs in order to promote the achievement of educational and pedagogical goals. Through policy analysis, literature review, teachers' interviews, and experts' suggestions, and taking ERG theory and achievement needs theory into consideration, it is believed that organizational incentives include four aspects: salary and benefits incentives, appraisal and promotion incentives, growth support incentives, and cultural atmosphere incentives, which correspond to survival needs, achievement needs, growth needs, and relationship needs, respectively.

2.5. Self-Evaluation of Job Performance

Work performance, also known as job performance, performance, and actual performance [48] refers to work ability, and work attitude of an employee or team that can be evaluated in the work process. Among them, job performance is the extent to which the results of the work meet the organizational goals; job competence refers to the quality of the employee or team in the process of work completion; and job attitude is a reflection of the values of the employee or team [17]. Job performance consists of several aspects, not just the completion of tasks, and reflects the different ways in which employees contribute to organizational goals. From previous studies, most researchers have categorized job performance into two dimensions: task performance and situational performance [49] task performance focuses on the proficiency of the skills required to complete the task and the extent to which the goals are achieved. Situational performance emphasizes the interpersonal relationships between organizational members that support task performance, organizational climate, organizational environment, organizational social networks, and psychological climate.

Employee performance can be assessed in terms of the following aspects: 1) quality of work; 2) workload; 3) responsibility; 4) cooperation; and 5) initiative. Meanwhile, the assessment aspects to measure a person's performance based on the findings of Lazer and Wikstrom can be categorized into three areas, namely: 1) technical competence; 2) conceptual competence; and 3) interpersonal

competence. Many previous researchers have studied their performance, including [20, 23, 25, 46]. It can be concluded from several theories about performance that performance is a worker's achievement of work results in his/her field of work or the level of success, which can be directly reflected in quantitative and qualitative outputs according to the criteria applied to the job.

Combined with the workplace of this study's higher education institution, the group characteristics of educators and college mentors' job performance have both task performance and situational performance, and at the same time, it is also necessary to detect the mentors' self-perceptions and beliefs under the influence of different leadership styles and organizational cultures through the training and management. Therefore, this study measures three aspects of task performance, situational performance, and mentors' job satisfaction. In this study, based on the path-goal theory, the job performance of mentors is mainly assessed in terms of job satisfaction, acceptance of leadership, i.e., adapting to work choices and environmental changes, performance implementation and motivational behaviors, and the three main aspects of the performance of college mentors are assessed in terms of the degree of mastery of knowledge and technical competence, support for the organization, job adaptability, and job satisfaction.

3. Path-Goal-Theory (PGT)

The Path-Goal Theory (PGT) was proposed by House [50] and is an incentive-based leadership model. Its core idea is that leaders adjust their behavior to meet the needs of employees and the work environment, helping employees clarify their goals, eliminate obstacles, and enhance their motivation through the provision of support and resources, thereby improving job performance and satisfaction [50]. PGT integrates the concepts of expectancy theory and contingency theory, emphasizing the flexibility and situational dependency of leadership behavior. PGT has proven effective in enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance and is widely applied in various fields such as business management, education, and healthcare, assisting leaders in adjusting their behavior according to specific situations.

The PGT categorizes leadership behavior into four types: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. Directive leadership provides clear guidance and performance standards; supportive leadership focuses on employee well-being; participative leadership encourages employee involvement in decision-making; and achievement-oriented leadership sets challenging goals House [50]. House [51] revised the PGT and proposed the "empowerment theory of work units," emphasizing the enhancement of team performance through delegation and coordination, and introduced the concept of "uncertainty management," indicating that leaders need to reduce employees' feelings of uncertainty through informal coordination in complex environments [51].

4. Studying the Relationship Between Variables

4.1. The Effect of Individual Mentor Factors on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between counselors' individual factors and Self-evaluation of job performance and to elucidate the mechanisms behind them. The study will cover competencies and beliefs in counselors' individual factors . In the field of higher education, individual faculty competencies (e.g., subject matter expertise, teaching skills) constitute an objective benchmark for self-assessment. Bastari, et al. [33] extended social cognitive theory suggests that high-competency faculty members' self-assessments are significantly more congruent with expert evaluations due to the presence of more sophisticated metacognitive monitoring mechanisms. This finding was validated in a cross-school study by Link and Guskey [52]: by analyzing classroom assessment data from 3,214 college and university teachers, it was found that teachers with a doctoral degree in education (a marker of professional competence) had lower discrepancies between their self-ratings and their students' ratings than the other groups. However, differences across disciplines were significant, with teachers in STEM fields having higher self-assessment accuracy than teachers in the humanities and social sciences due to more quantifiable outcomes [53].

According to the competency framework for college teachers constructed by Zhou, et al. [54] self-assessment bias was reduced when the training content matched teachers' core competencies (e.g., curriculum design, multiple evaluations) [54]. Longitudinal tracking showed that novice teachers generally overestimated teaching effectiveness and that teachers with high self-efficacy rated themselves at a higher mean than the low-efficacy group [55]. This bias is even more pronounced in online teaching [56]. Training programs that integrate teaching competency enhancement with belief adjustment lead to increased self-assessment accuracy [57]. Competency-oriented feedback design with reduced teacher self-assessment overconfidence. The critical role of organized support counteracts assessment bias in low-competency teachers [58]. Based on the above evidence, personal competence determines the baseline of self-assessment, competence moderates the situational sensitivity of assessment, and belief systems introduce motivational bias, which interact together to predict final assessment quality [59]. Based on the research, we can formulate the hypothesis:

H_1: *Individual mentor factors have an impact on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance.*

4.2. The Effect of Organizational Rewards on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance

Organizational incentives in the field of higher education are mainly embodied in the following three categories and show differential impact:

a) Material incentives (e.g., performance bonuses). The study found that a reward system directly linked to research results would lead to a "result inflation effect" in teachers' self-assessment. In the 12 universities that practiced thesis incentives, faculty members overestimated the quality of their own research on average, but had no significant effect on the accuracy of their assessment of their teaching performance [60].

b) Developmental incentives (e.g., training opportunities). Longitudinal tracking data showed that faculty self-assessment of "calibrated ability" increased each year at institutions that offered study abroad opportunities, an effect that was particularly pronounced among early career faculty.

c) Recognition incentives (e.g., honors). When faculties publicly recognize the top 10% of faculty, the self-assessment of the non-awarded group can appear to overestimate their own performance in a way that is positively proportional to the gap between the winners [54]. Based on the research, we can formulate the hypothesis:

H_2: *Organizational rewards have an effect on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance*

4.3. The impact of training motivation on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance

Motivation is a psychological process that provides goals and direction for employee behavior or serves as an internal driver for meeting employee satisfaction, as well as internal processes and external forces related to organizational behavior [61]. Employee job satisfaction bridges the gap between the rewarding roles of work engagement, so it can be said that the antecedents of engagement come from a sense of satisfaction with the job [62]. Employees need constant passion, encouragement, and support to function, bond, grow, or develop [63]. Employees seem to be less motivated due to their unmet life, physical, and family needs; their unmet existential needs; unmet social needs for social interaction; and unmet relational needs. Work, production, and creativity needs are not met, and thus growth needs are not realized. This is the root cause of employees' lack of motivation to be happy at work and to improve their performance.

In higher education teacher training, participant motivation significantly influences the accuracy and development of self-assessment through goal-oriented pathways. Recent research has categorized teacher training motivation into autonomous and controlled [64]. Autonomous motivation, as it promotes deep reflection, is significantly and positively associated with accurate self-assessment [65] and tracking of teachers in 985 colleges and universities showed that those with autonomous motivation had elevated consistency between post-training self-assessment and student evaluations of their teaching; controlling motivation, which leads to defensive self-assessment, manifests itself as systematic overestimation [66]. Longitudinal studies have shown that highly motivated teachers have more

rigorous self-assessments at the end of training due to their greater sensitivity to new standards. Teachers who are overly concerned with peer comparisons have increased self-assessment bias on the teaching innovation dimension. When training outcomes were decoupled from title review, the proportion of self-motivated teachers increased and overall assessment accuracy improved. Based on the study we can formulate the hypothesis:

H_3: *There is an effect of training motivation on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance*

4.4. Impact of Perceived Leadership Style on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance

There are many types of leadership styles that have different effects on employee performance. In higher education, faculty performance depends on many factors, including leadership style and organizational culture [67]. Leadership has been reported to have a significant impact on employees' attitudes towards work. Transformational leadership consists of striving to make changes that improve organizational effectiveness and follower performance by changing self-concept and personal values [68]. A transformational leadership style can demonstrate all attributes to increase the willingness of employees to show greater commitment and job performance [69]. Leaders consider each supporter's growth needs and their problems, and by helping them to see previous difficulties in a unique way, they are able to encourage, develop, facilitate, and motivate followers to make extra efforts to achieve group goals [70].

Empirical research in higher education based on goal-path theory has shown that directive leaders increase the dimensional integrity of faculty self-assessment by specifying performance standards, but overuse can lead to assessment rigidity and systematic underestimation of innovativeness [66] supportive leaders decrease the "resource constraint bias" in faculty self-assessment by supplying resources. Supportive leaders reduce resource constraint bias in faculty self-assessment through the provision of resources, especially in interdisciplinary research, and this effect increases the accuracy of teamwork self-assessment. Transformational leaders inspire faculty to be more rigorous in their self-assessment of developmental metrics through the provision of vision, and this "high standards effect" is particularly pronounced in the tenure review stage [71]. Based on the study we can formulate the hypothesis:

H_4: *The effect of perceived leadership style on Self-Evaluation of Job Performance*

4.5. Mediating Relationships of Perceived Leadership Style

Research on the relationships between perceived leadership style and mentors' individual factors, perceived leadership style and training motivation, leadership style and organizational motivation, and leadership style and job performance has been published frequently. However, there are some gaps in the research on whether perceived leadership style mediates the relationship between individual factors, training motivation, organizational incentives, and Self-evaluation of job performance. In other words, there is a gap in the existing literature on leadership style mediating between training management factors and Self-evaluation of job performance. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H_5: *Perceived leadership style mediates the effects of individual mentor factors, training motivation, and organizational incentives on organizational effectiveness.*

H_6: *Perceived leadership style mediates the effects of mentors' individual factors and self-assessed job effectiveness.*

H_7: *Perceived leadership style mediates the effect of training motivation on self-assessed job effectiveness.*

H_8: *Perceived leadership style mediates the effect of organizational motivation on self-assessed job effectiveness.*

5. Research Tools

The self-efficacy scale includes three subscales: innovation self-efficacy, persuasion self-efficacy, and resilience self-efficacy, and innovation. Self-efficacy and resilience self-efficacy were selected for the measurement of mentors' individual factors. Work motivation is a psychological state that refers to a set

of internal and external forces that stimulate behaviors related to work performance and determine the form, direction, intensity, and duration of these behaviors. The items for measuring training motivation were selected from the Work Motivation Scale [72] and the Knowledge Sharing Training Scale [55] for development.

In this study, organizational motivation refers to the whole process in which educational authorities and school management provide various conditions and take measures to stimulate, guide, and regulate the behavior of mentors according to the different needs of mentors in order to promote the achievement of educational teaching and student management goals. Through policy analysis, literature review, and other means, taking ERG theory and achievement needs theory into consideration, it is believed that organizational incentives include four aspects: salary and benefits incentives, appraisal and promotion incentives, growth support incentives, and cultural atmosphere incentives. Which correspond to survival needs, achievement needs, growth needs, and relationship needs, respectively. In this study, only two aspects of organizational incentives for mentors are considered: salary and benefits incentives and appraisal and promotion incentives. For salary and benefit incentives, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire short-form scale involving compensation-related questions was used to indirectly reflect the salary and benefit incentive effects through employees' satisfaction with salary levels, benefit policies, and other aspects. For appraisal and promotion incentives, the Job Evaluation and Satisfaction Scale (JDS) is used, which involves the measurement of appraisal and promotion-related elements such as promotion opportunities at work and fairness of performance evaluation.

The Leadership Behavior Descriptive Scale (LBDQ), which was proposed by Hemp hill and Coons at Ohio State University and subsequently summarized by Hatpin and Winer into two important constructs, was divided by Stogdill into two major orientations and twelve constructs, and in this study, persuasive elicitation, integrative, and caring compassionate were measured. three dimensions. Job performance was measured according to the PGT theory using the Job Satisfaction Scale (JAS) and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (OCB), and organizational citizenship behavior was categorized into five dimensions: company identification, helping co-workers, initiative, interpersonal harmony, and protection of company resources.

Table 1.
Measurement scale.

| Variables	Measurement Scale
MIF	The self-efficacy scale
TM	Motivation Scale Knowledge Sharing Training Scale
OR	Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire short-form scale Job Evaluation and Satisfaction Scale (JDS)
PLS	The Leadership Behavior Descriptive Scale (LBDQ)
SJP	Job Satisfaction Scale (JAS)Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (OCB),

6. Methodology

In order to achieve the main objectives of the study and to test the variables in the survey, the researcher adopted a positivist research philosophy followed by a deductive research design. A quantitative research method was used in which data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire, which was distributed electronically online to the target participants. The primary data collection was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26 (SPSS). The study sample was selected using a convenient sampling technique in order to collect data from 164 randomly administered questionnaires from higher education institutions of different sizes and levels.The colleges and universities selected for this study were from the Pearl River Delta (PRD), Eastern Guangdong (EGD), Western Guangdong (WGD), and Northern Guangdong (NGD) regions of Guangdong Province, China. A total of 550 mentors in higher education institutions received the questionnaire

electronically, of which 489 validly answered questionnaires were returned, representing an effective response rate of 89.88%. A response rate of 60% or more is generally considered acceptable to ensure representative and reliable data [73]. In the field of social science research, a response rate of 60-70% is usually required. In the field of educational research, a response rate of 70% or more is recommended to ensure representative data [74]. This survey had a high response rate.

7. Method of Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses of this study and to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher conducted four different stages of data analysis using SPSS 26. The first stage aimed at checking the reliability analysis of all survey variables through the Cronbach alpha method. Thus, the second stage dealt with the demographic part of the questionnaire regarding the sampled respondents. Among others, descriptive statistics were used in this particular stage. The third stage was to test the direct relationship between the independent variables (individual mentor factors, training motivation, and organizational rewards). The dependent variable (Self-evaluation of job performance) and the mediator variable (perceived leadership style) by means of correlation coefficients and regression analyses in order to determine the degree of association between pairs of variables. The final stage aimed to test the indirect relationships between the study variables and to determine whether perceived leadership style was considered to be a mediator of the relationship between training influences and Self-evaluation of job performance in the management of mentors' training in Guangdong universities in China. In this stage, correlation analysis with validation factor analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses.

8. Conceptual Framework
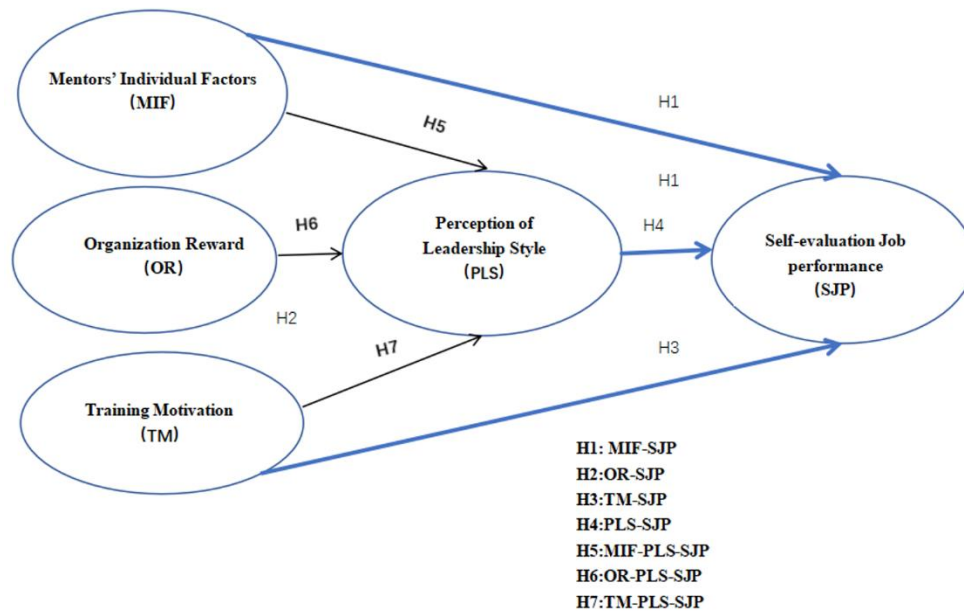
Figure 1.
Conceptual framework.

9. Results

9.1. Descriptive Statistics

The description of the demographic analysis of this study shown in Table 2 indicates that 76.5% of the survey respondents were female and 23.5% were male. In addition, it was found that the majority of the sample of respondents were 22 years of age (18.2%), 22-30 years of age (35.6%), 30-40 years of age (17.4%), or 40-50 years of age (27.8%), and only 1.0% of the respondents were 50 years of age or older.In addition, 55% of the respondents obtained a postgraduate level of education, 41.1% had a bachelor's degree, and only 3.9% had a doctoral degree. Finally, the survey results showed that 84.5% of the respondents were from the PRD region, 5.1% from Eastern Guangdong, and 10.4% from Western and Northern Guangdong. (Table 2: Descriptive statistics of basic information)

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics of basic information.

Demographic information	Grouping	Frequency	Percentage
Sexes	Male	115	23.5%
	Female	374	76.5%
Age	22	89	18.2%
	22-30	174	35.6%
	30-40	85	17.4%
	40-50	136	27.8%
	>50	5	1.0%
location	Pearl River Delta Region	413	84.5%
	Eastern Guangdong	25	5.1%
	Western and Northern Guangdong	51	10.4%
Education	Bachelor's	201	41.1%
	Master's	269	55.0%
	Doctorate	19	3.9%

Table 3 shows that all the variables of the survey were found to be highly reliable. The Cronbach alpha results for measuring the internal consistency of the variables coincide with previous scholarly recommendations for acceptable levels of reliability analysis. On the other hand, Table 3 shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the following variables.

Table 3.
Correlation analysis.

	MIF	TM	OR	PLS	SJP	Cronbach alpha
MIF	1.000					0.915
TM	0.384**	1.000				0.924
OR	0.446**	0.354**	1.000			0.941
PLS	0.368**	0.399**	0.353**	1.000		0.935
SJP	0.378**	0.400**	0.378**	0.415**	1.000	0.928

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$.

9.2. Testing The Research Hypotheses

Table 4 shows the direct relationships between variables, and Table 5 shows the mediated relationships between variables. For the direct relationships between variables, seven relationships were defined. (1) There is a direct relationship between individual mentor factors and perceived leadership style. (2) There is a direct relationship between training motivation and perceived leadership style. (3) There is a direct relationship between organizational motivation and perceived leadership style. (4) There is a direct relationship between individual mentor factors and Self-evaluation of job performance.(5) There is a direct relationship between training motivation and Self-evaluation of job performance. (6) There is a direct relationship between organizational motivation and Self-evaluation of

job performance. (7) There is a direct relationship between perceived leadership style and Self-evaluation of job performance.

Table 4.
Path analysis.

Path	SE	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
MIF→PLS	0.187	0.195	0.055	3.541	***
TM→PLS	0.243	0.235	0.051	4.567	***
OR→PLS	0.154	0.143	0.047	3.011	0.003
MIF→SJP	0.121	0.136	0.056	2.452	0.014
TM→SJP	0.123	0.13	0.052	2.498	0.013
OR→SJP	0.124	0.125	0.047	2.625	0.009
PLS→SJP	0.289	0.313	0.052	6.001	***

9.3. In Terms of the Direct Relationship, the Study Found that
(1) the mediating role of perceived leadership style on the relationship between mentors' individual factors and Self-evaluation of job performance.

In the effect of perceived leadership style on mentors' individual factors and Self-evaluation of job performance. The total effect was 0.175 (p=0.006) with a 95% CI not including 0, indicating that the overall effect of MIF on SJP was significant; the direct effect was 0.121 (p=0.046), indicating that MIF still had a direct effect on SJP after controlling for PLS; the indirect effect: 0.054 (p=0.004 with a 95% CI of [0.019,0.114]), with a mediation effect was significant and the interval did not contain 0; PLS partially mediated between MIF and SJP with a mediation ratio of about 30.9% (0.054/0.175).

(2) The mediating role of perceived leadership style on the relationship between training motivation and Self-evaluation of job performance.

In the effect of perceived leadership style on training motivation and Self-evaluation of job performance. The total effect was 0.193 (p=0.008), the overall effect of TM on SJP was significant; direct effect: 0.123 (p=0.044), the direct effect of TM on SJP still existed; indirect effect: 0.070 (p=0.003, 95% CI [0.027,0.133]), the mediating effect was significant. PLS partially mediated between TM and SJP role, with a mediation ratio of about 36.3% (0.070/0.193).

(3) The mediating role of perceived leadership style on the relationship between organizational motivation and Self-evaluation of job performance.

In the effect of perceived leadership style on Organizational reward and Self-evaluation of job performance. Total effect: 0.168 (p=0.009), significant overall effect of OR on SJP; Direct effect: 0.124 (p=0.021), significant direct effect of OR on SJP; Indirect effect: 0.044, (p=0.002, 95% CI [0.015,0.1101]), significant mediation effect. PLS partially mediated between TM and SJP role, with a mediation ratio of about 23.8% (0.040/0.168).

The above data show that the p-values for all indirect effects are <0.05 and the 95% CI do not contain 0, supporting a robust mediating role for PLS. PLS was shown to be a partial mediator in all three paths (both direct and indirect effects were significant). The strongest indirect effect was the effect of perceived leadership style on training motivation and self-assessment (INDIRECT effect: 0.070), and the weakest was the effect of perceived leadership style on mentors' individual factors and self-assessment of job performance (INDIRECT effect: 0.054).

The findings suggest that perceived leadership style mediates the relationship between tutor training management factors and self-assessed performance in Guangdong higher education institutions in China. Again, this whole ending relationship is supported by the hypotheses previously mentioned in this study.

Table 5.
Mediation effects test.

Path	Effect	SE	S.E.	P	95%CI	
					LB	UB
MIF→PLS→SJP	Aggregate effect	0.175	0.058	0.006	0.057	0.279
	Direct effect	0.121	0.057	0.046	0.004	0.225
	Indirect effect	0.054	0.023	0.004	0.019	0.114
TM→PLS→SJP	Aggregate effect	0.193	0.060	0.008	0.060	0.304
	Direct effect	0.123	0.058	0.044	0.006	0.241
	Indirect effect	0.070	0.026	0.003	0.027	0.133
OR→PLS→SJP	Aggregate effect	0.168	0.057	0.009	0.045	0.269
	Direct effect	0.124	0.053	0.021	0.021	0.224
	Indirect effect	0.044	0.021	0.002	0.015	0.101

10. Discussion

This study examined the mediating role of perceived leadership style (PLS) in the relationship between training management influences and self-evaluation of job performance (SJP) among university mentors in Guangdong, China. The findings support existing literature by confirming that:

Training management factors (mentors' individual factors, training motivation, and organizational rewards) positively influence Self-evaluation of job performance. Perceived leadership style partially mediates these relationships, reinforcing the importance of leadership behaviors in shaping mentors' self-assessment of performance. Demographic factors (gender, age, education level, regional distribution) significantly influence career development, with most mentors concentrated in the Pearl River Delta, highlighting regional disparities in training accessibility. The strongest mediation effect was observed between training motivation and SJP, suggesting that leadership interventions are particularly impactful when mentors are intrinsically motivated. This aligns with Path-Goal Theory (PGT), where supportive and achievement-oriented leadership enhances clarity and motivation, thereby improving performance evaluations.

11. Practical Implication

Universities should adapt leadership training to align with mentors' needs, emphasizing directive leadership for task clarity and supportive leadership for resource provision. Gender and regional **imbalances** in mentor opportunities call for policy adjustments to ensure equitable professional development.HR strategies should integrate leadership behavior adjustments to optimize training outcomes and reduce self-assessment biases.

12. Theoretical Contributions

This study extends PGT by validating its applicability in Chinese higher education, particularly in mentor training contexts. It also enriches the literature on self-evaluation mechanisms, demonstrating how leadership perceptions bridge training inputs and performance outputs.

13. Conclusion

This study confirms that perceived leadership style mediates the link between training management and self-evaluated job performance among Guangdong's university mentors. Key conclusions include:

Training management (individual factors, motivation, rewards) directly enhances SJP, but its efficacy is amplified through effective leadership.Leadership styles (especially supportive and participative are critical in translating training into performance gains.Structural inequities (e.g., gender skew, regional concentration) necessitate targeted interventions to ensure inclusive mentors development.

14. Recommendations for Future Research

Expand geographical scope beyond Guangdong to compare regional disparities. Longitudinal designs to assess how leadership and training effects evolve over time. Mixed-methods approaches (e.g., interviews) to explore qualitative nuances in mentors' perceptions.

15. Limitations

Regional Bias: Data were limited to Guangdong, potentially limiting generalizability to other Chinese provinces. Self-Report Bias: Reliance on self-assessed performance may inflate correlations due to subjective interpretations. Cross-Sectional Design: Causal inferences are constrained; longitudinal data could better capture dynamic relationships. Cultural Specificity: Findings may not apply to contexts with differing educational policies or leadership norms.

16. Final Statement

Despite limitations, this study underscores the pivotal role of leadership in training efficacy and offers actionable insights for higher education institutions aiming to enhance mentor performance through tailored leadership and equity-focused policies. Future research should address these gaps to refine theoretical and practical applications.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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