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Analysing the Impact of Job Characteristics, Emotional Regulation, and Agreeableness on University Graduates' Job Performance: A Technological Perspective in Guangdong, China



Abstract: - This study Use SmartPLS4.0 explores the impact of job characteristics (JC) on emotional regulation (ER), agreeableness (AG), and job performance (JP) among Guangdong university graduates, emphasizing mediating relationships. Quantitative analyses reveal significant influences on emotional regulation (JC → ER: 0.349, $p < 0.001$) and agreeableness (JC → AG: 0.591, $p < 0.001$). Emotional regulation partially mediates the JC-JP relationship (JC → ER → JP: -0.065, $p < 0.001$), supporting hypotheses H1 and H2. Agreeableness also mediates (JC → AG → JP: 0.134, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3 and H4. Job characteristics directly impact job performance positively (JC → JP: 0.656, $p < 0.001$), affirming H5. Qualitative findings from interviews with 34 graduates using NVivo highlight the importance of job characteristics, emotional regulation, and agreeableness in influencing job performance. Overall, this research sheds light on the intricate interplay of these factors in shaping the job performance of university graduates in Guangdong, China.

Keywords: Job Characteristics, Emotional Regulation, Agreeableness, Job Performance, University Graduates, Guangdong, China.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

COVID-19 has varying degrees of impact on different Chinese enterprises. China's economic growth has slowed, labour demand has decreased, and employment rates have decreased (Li et al., 2020). The State Council of China issued a notice on the employment of university graduates in 2022, requiring them to do their best to do a good job of employment and employment of graduates (The General Office of the State Council of China, 2022). In 2022, there were 10.76 million Chinese university graduates. In the post-epidemic era, the historical high in 2023 will be 11.58 million people, and the employment situation was not promising (Ao & Li, 2023).

According to the literature review, graduates lack certain job skills in the workplace and must address their unfamiliarity with the industry right away. They require employment ability, self-efficacy, and job experience (Abas & Imam, 2016; Plantilla, 2017; Zhang et al., 2023). Job characteristics have a significant impact on university graduates' job performance. Job challenges, autonomy, and job-based feedback on job content, for example, can improve job performance, whereas job pressure, job uncertainty, and job conflict can reduce job performance (Zhao et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2017; Serhan & Tsangari, 2022; Anas & Hamzah, 2022).

Current research on job characteristics and university graduates' job performance focuses on direct effects and ignores intermediary variables. Thus, this study examines how their emotional regulation and agreeableness affect university graduates' job characteristics and performance. This study will help university graduates plan and choose careers, help businesses manage their workforces, and improve their job performance.

The Big Five Model is widely used to assess interpersonal relationships (Pellegrino & Pellegrino, 2012, p.22). Early-adult emotional regulation and agreeableness are unstable (Chernyshenko et al., 2018). Psychologist's study social and emotional skills like emotional regulation and agreeableness, which the economic model ignores. The OECD believes individuals and culture affect employee income and employment. Social and emotional skills greatly impact his job performance (Kautz et al.,

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2014). Employee lack of social and emotional skills increase unemployment risk (OECD, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study assesses university graduates' job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance levels. To build a model based on university graduates' job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance, and to explain a developed model from key stakeholders at the university. An explanatory sequential mixed-method design will be used to collecting quantitative data first. In the first quantitative phase of the study, questionnaires will be collected from university graduates in Guangdong, China to test the theory of job characteristics, and The Big Five Model of personality to assess whether the effect of job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness relate to university graduates' job performance. The second qualitative results to help explain the developed model. In the exploratory follow-up, the tentative plan is to explore the job characteristics, personalities with university graduates in Guangdong, China.

Due to the novelty of the research, the topic focuses on the job performance and contributing factors of university graduates in Guangdong, China. There have been studies on job performance and its antecedents (Lan et al., 2020; Petruzzello et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2022), but this specific combination of variables has yet to be thoroughly examined. Regarding the cultural environment, China needs to conduct significant research (Allik & Realo, 2017; Namaziandost et al., 2023). The research is also conducted in Guangdong, China, with its own cultural and economic environment.

This study affects policy, operations, and academia. The study results improve university students' employment policies and give the government resources to help graduates adapt to the workplace and improve employment quality. Moreover, it boosts students' social and emotional skills and encourages the university's innovative management focus on graduates' job performance.

1.3 Research questions

This study addresses six main issues:

1. What are the levels of job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance among university graduates?
2. Do job characteristics affect the job performance of university graduates?
3. Do job characteristics affect the emotional regulation and agreeableness of university graduates?
4. Do emotional regulation and agreeableness affect the job performance of university graduates?
5. Do job characteristics, emotional regulation, and agreeableness affect the job performance of university graduates?
6. How do university's key stakeholders describe the developed model of job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance of university graduates?

1.4 Research objectives

Four research objectives can be derived from the research questions.

1. To examine the level of job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and the university graduates' job performance.
2. To analyze emotional regulation and agreeableness as mediating variable.
3. To test how emotional regulation and agreeableness collectively play a role in job characteristics and university graduates' job performance.
4. To explain the model by university graduates' job performance stakeholders.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature review

(1) University graduates' job performance

The ability to interact with others at the job is dependent on task competence and job characteristics. They also require emotional regulation and agreeableness. As a result, they have a stronger relationship to output in collaborative settings than in those that only require one-on-one interaction (Mount et al., 1998; Nye et al., 2018). The university graduates' job performance is the perceived level of task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behaviours.

(2) Job characteristics

Five fundamental job features are internal motivations for providing rich job experiences that can boost employees' performance (Zampetakis, 2022). Job characteristics are related to the job environment, job manner, and organizational success (Izquierdo & PÉrez, 2022). It is composed of task and knowledge qualities. Job characteristics include employment activities, duties, allocation, and other factors. The job characteristics are the perceived level of skill variety, task identity, autonomy, task significance, and job-based feedback (Jieru & Khan, 2024).

(3) Emotional regulation

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to deal with negative emotional experiences and stressors and is central to managing emotions (OECD, 2015; Kankaraö & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Therefore, this article defines emotional regulation as an individual effectively managing their emotions and actively optimistic attitudes toward individuals. The emotional regulation is the perceived level of stress resistance, optimism, and emotional control (Li & M.S, 2023).

(4) Agreeableness

Agreeableness is empathy, goodwill, and respect (Abrahams et al., 2019). Agreeableness is empathy, trust, and cooperation, but the opposite is ignoring others' feelings, doubting others, and speaking ill of others (OECD, 2015, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2021). The study concludes that agreeableness belongs to the active family of traits that also includes kindness, empathy, trust, and a propensity to the job well with others. The agreeableness is the perceived level of empathy, trust, and cooperation (Waheed, A. et al. 2023).

2.2 Research hypotheses

Job characteristics and Emotional regulation

Workload (a challenge stressor), emotional demands (a hindrance stressor), and autonomy (a job resource) are related to dedication and resignation intention (Ruyssveldt et al., 2022). To enhance the workplace environment so that employees have more opportunities to be satisfied and motivated at work (Winkelhaus et al., 2022). The workplace's spirituality significantly impacts the workplace's characteristics and environmental sustainability (Iqbal et al., 2021). Although polytonicity and positive affectivity are positively related to employees' job engagement (Gobelna, 2019), the study did not find that emotional regulation capabilities increased the support of job satisfaction in employees' high emotional labor jobs; on the contrary, low emotional regulation capabilities can buffer the negative impact of the source of pressure (Newton et al., 2016).

H1: The job characteristics has an impact on emotional regulation

(2) Emotional regulation and Job performance

Employee job characteristics are influenced by the leader's ability to manage emotions, task performance, and counterproductive work behaviors (Choudhary et al., 2017). The emotional regulation training plan for employees provides favorable resources conducive to their self-regulation and improving their satisfaction (Khan et al. 2022). Through positive re-evaluation, they can increase their positive impact, strengthen respect, and reduce negative effects (Castellano et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence positively affects job performance; it will eventually affect employee job performance through emotional awareness, understanding, and regulation. Increasing the impact of the job needs on the two has an intermediary; male employees' subjective happiness on job performance is greater than women's (Amirian et al., 2023).

H2: The emotional regulation as mediating variable has an impact on university graduates' job performance.

(3) Job characteristics and Job performance

Job characteristics are a method of design work and the content and conditions of employees' job. Studying its five dimensions (skill variety, task identity, autonomy, task significance, and job-based feedback) show that employees can deeply understand the content of the job content, requirement, and other tasks, that is, the characteristics of employees are high, and job performance will be high (Nora & Ustradi, 2022). To use the dimension of the job characteristics to measure the cognition of employees and find that the job characteristics have a significant positive effect on performance, and the job input has an intermediary role between job characteristics and performance (Permatasari et al., 2022). The five dimensions of job characteristics have significant positive effects on the contextual performance of employees. Job characteristics and contextual performance have indirect effects through the intermediary role of organizational commitments (Aryani & Widodo, 2020).

H3: The job characteristics has an impact on university graduates' job performance. (4) Job characteristics and Agreeableness

Employees' job behavior and emotions are perceived through tasks and social job characteristics, reflecting the impact of pleasure on job characteristics (Tanveer et al 2020). High agreeableness employees will choose jobs with better job characteristics based on self-preference and will be affected by the dimensions of job characteristics. The job characteristics and agreeableness are positive (Barrick et al., 2013). For Remote Work Exhaustion (RWE), agreeableness will help employees reduce job pressure, which is a mechanism for protective characteristics (Parra et al., 2022). High-motivation employees have high empathy, which has an intermediary impact on employees' inner motivation and pro-social behavior (Oh & Roh, 2022).

H4: The job characteristics has an impact on agreeableness. (5) Agreeableness and Job performance

Empathy and cooperation positively impact job performance; agreeableness has a significant role in job performance. People can rely on the emotional support of others at the job if one is a team player who excels at collaboration (Chandrasekara, 2019). Employees' agreeableness regulates the impact of conflicts in the job on the performance. Facing conflict at the job, high agreeableness, high job performance, low agreeableness, low job performance (Wei et al., 2020). Studies have found that employees' agreeableness positively affects job performance. However, if agreeableness is included in the organization team, the role of agreeableness could be clearer in job performance, and it needs to play a role (Lim et al., 2023). Agreeableness has a significant positive effect on task and contextual performance, it and the task performance, a contextual performance play an indirect impact through the intermediary of the organization's self-esteem intermediary (Kajbaf et al., 2022).

H5: The agreeableness as mediating variable has an impact on university graduates' job performance.

2.3 Conceptual framework

This study uses job characteristics as the independent variable, emotional regulation and agreeableness as the mediating variables, and the job performance of recent university graduates as the dependent variable. A theoretical structural equation model is constructed based on the literature review, research objectives, and actual employment of Chinese university graduates. Figure 2.1 displays the model's diagram.

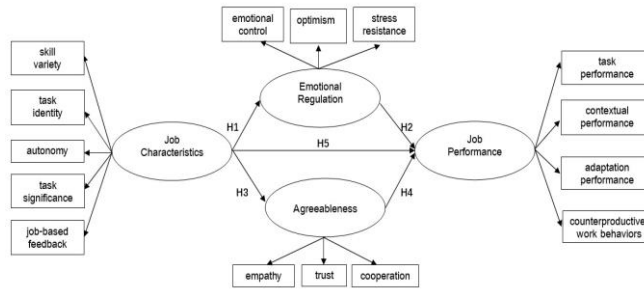


Figure 2.1 Research conceptual framework of job performance

This study intends to use a hybrid method, first quantitative and then qualitative. With the job characteristics of research, how to influence the job performance of Chinese university graduates through emotional regulation and agreeableness intermediary variables. First, by studying the relationship between the above four variables, build a structural equation model and use a questionnaire survey and in-depth interview method for investigation. Second, we explore the assumptions based on the concept of the framework, that is, to assess the level of job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance among university graduates specifically reflected.

3. Research methodology

Job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance among Guangdong university graduates using a mixed methods approach involving quantitative online surveys and qualitative personal interviews/focus groups for comprehensive understanding.

3.1 Quantitative research

This study used SPSS software and Smart-PLS for data analysis and interpretation. The data includes college graduates' job performance (dependent variable), job characteristics (independent variables), and emotional regulation and collaboration abilities (mediating variables).

3.2 Qualitative research

Analyze the model using in-depth interviews using purposive sampling Factors affecting job performance of college graduates.

3.3 Population and sample

The study's population consists of general university graduates who work in nine cities in Guangdong Province within four years of graduation. They're analyzed as individual units. The study focuses on recent university graduates in nine Guangdong cities. This study uses Multistage Sampling for sampling. The Statistics Committee suggests changing from G* power to a different technique due to its lack of dimensionality in sample calculation, which may affect PLS-SEM analysis. The sample size, considering 15 dimensions with at least 20 units each, totals 300 units, boosted by a 50% response rate to 600 units.

3.4 Instruments

The study used a 5-point Likert scale and recommended indicator loading above 0.708 for reliability. Cronbach's alpha revealed strong reliability for variables: Job Performance (0.749),

Job Characteristics (0.863), Emotion Regulation (0.848), and Agreeableness (0.860), meeting the reliability criteria.

(1) University graduates' job performance

The university graduates' job performance describes how well an employee does their job (Baard et al., 2013; Pandey, 2018; Tarmizi & Anggian, 2022). A description of the questionnaire, such as iMy planning was optimal.

(2) Job characteristics

The job characteristics are job activities, tasks, and allocation (Oldham & Fried, 2016; Siruri & Cheche, 2021; Zampetakis, 2022). A description of the questionnaire, such as iThe job is quite simple and repetitive.

(3) Emotional regulation

The emotional regulation as an individual effectively managing their emotions and actively optimistic attitudes toward individuals (OECD, 2015; Kankaraö & Suarez- Alvarez, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021).

(4) Agreeableness

The agreeableness is a kind of active family characteristics of altruism, empathy, trust, and willingness to cooperate with others (OECD, 2015, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2021). A description of the questionnaire, such as iI trust my colleagues.

3.5 Interview questionnaire

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 university graduates to test the research hypotheses. Use open-ended questions to allow the theme fully expresses its own characteristics and key events.

3.6 Data analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0. It was employed for validation factor analysis and model testing. After analysis Indicator reliability, Internal Consistency Reliability, Convergence validity, HTMT, Outer loadings, Assess the structural model for collinearity (The VIF), Assess the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships, Assess the model's explanatory power, in order to draw the conclusion.

4. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Regarding evaluating the reflecting measurement model, the researcher refers to Hiar et al. (2017, pages 104-137) for guidance.

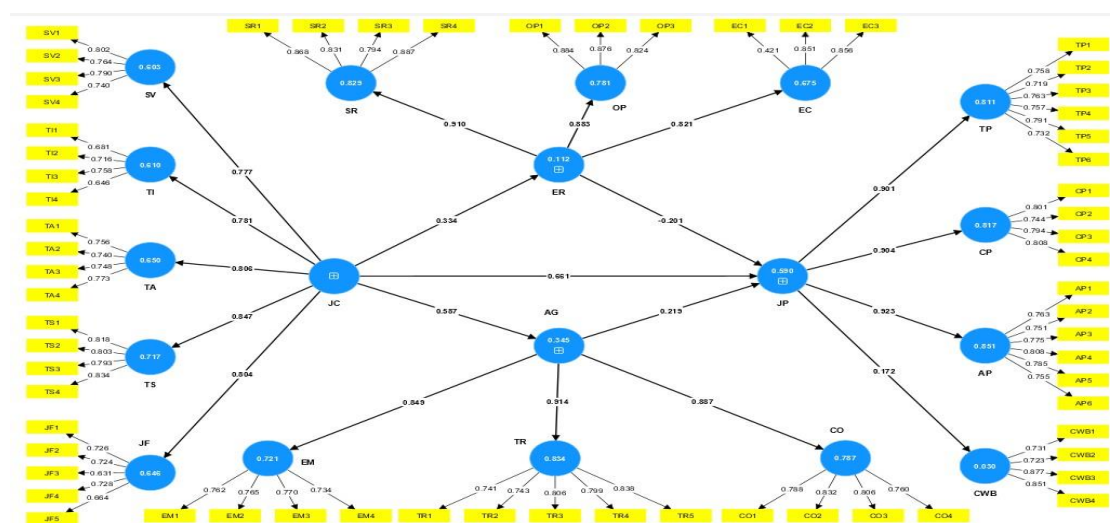


Figure 4.1 Graphical output

Table 4.1 The relationship between first-order dimensions and second-order variables

Variables	Dimensions	Cronbach's	CR	AVE	Outer
Alpha			Value	Value	Loading
Job Performance (JP)	Task Performance (TP)	0.749	0.852	0.629	0.890
	Contextual Performance (CP)				0.920
	Adaptive Performance (AP)				0.914
	Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB)				0.199
Job Characteristics (JC)		0.863	0.901	0.646	
Skill Variety (SV)	Task Identity (TI)	0.848	0.907	0.764	0.778
	Task Autonomy (TA)				0.805
	Task Significance (TS)				0.832
	Job-based Feedback (JF)				0.802
Emotional Regulation (ER)	Stress Resistance (SR)	0.860	0.915	0.781	0.876
	Optimism (OP)				0.860
Agreeableness (AG)	Emotional Control (EC)	0.860	0.915	0.781	0.887
	Empathy (EM)				0.877
	Trust (TR)				0.886
	Cooperation(CO)				0.888

Table 4.1 compares first-order dimensions and second-order variables. All second-order variables have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7, indicating strong correlation and measurement of the same construct. Composite reliability (CR) values above 0.8 indicate internal consistency and reliability. AVE values above 0.6 indicate a well-defined and considerable variance explanation. All first-order dimensions have outside loadings above 0.7, indicating a strong correlation with second-order variables.

Table 4.2 Heterotrait-monotrait ratio [HTMT] - Confidence intervals

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	2.50%	97.50%	Sample mean (M)	Bias	2.50%	97.50%
ER <-> AG	0.215	0.215	0.121	0.314	0.215	0.001	0.122	0.315
JC <-> AG	0.683	0.683	0.59	0.768	0.683	0.000	0.587	0.766
JC <-> ER	0.399	0.397	0.302	0.487	0.397	-0.001	0.304	0.488
JP <-> AG	0.685	0.690	0.583	0.788	0.690	0.005	0.568	0.777
JP <-> ER	0.284	0.308	0.257	0.376	0.308	0.024	0.232	0.316
JP <-> JC	0.927	0.927	0.862	0.984	0.927	0.000	0.856	0.980

According to Table 4.2, The results indicate that for all variable pairs, the HTMT values are below 1, as evidenced by the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence intervals. Specifically, the HTMT values range from 0.215 to 0.927, and none of the confidence intervals include the threshold value of 1. This outcome supports the conclusion that there is sufficient discriminant validity among the variables. The HTMT analysis suggests that the variables ER, JC, and JP are distinct from AG, and JC is also distinct from ER and JP, confirming the validity of the measurement model.

Table 4.3 Collinearity statistics (VIF) - Outer model - List

	VIF		VIF		VIF
AP	2.9	EM	1.981	TA	1.917
CO	2.293	JF	1.883	TI	1.861
CP	3.116	OP	2.196	TP	2.463
CWB	1.015	SR	2.056	TR	2.376
EC	1.945	SV	1.733	TS	2.105

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the dimensions in Table 4.3 indicate the degree of multicollinearity among the observed indicators within each latent variable. Generally, VIF values below 5 are considered acceptable, suggesting low levels of collinearity. In this case, the VIF values for the dimensions AP, CO, CP, CWB, EC, EM, JF, OP, SR, SV, TA, TI, TP, and TS are all within the acceptable range, ranging from 1.015 to 3.116.

5. Results of Hypothesis Testing

5.1 The quantitative results

The study investigated the influence of job characteristics on emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance among university graduates, emphasizing mediating relationships. The analyses revealed significant impacts on emotional regulation (JC → ER: 0.349, $p < 0.001$) and agreeableness (JC → AG: 0.591, $p < 0.001$).

Emotional regulation partially mediated the relationship between job characteristics and job performance (JC → ER → JP: -0.065, $p < 0.001$), with a significant path coefficient ($t = 8.346$, $p < 0.000$) and total indirect effect ($T = 4.591$, $p < 0.000$), support the hypotheses H1, H2. While agreeableness played a significant mediating role (JC → AG → JP: 0.134, $p < 0.001$), found a significant path coefficient ($t = 14.795$, $p < 0.000$), support the hypotheses H3, H4. Job characteristics directly positively influenced job performance (JC → JP: 0.656, $p < 0.001$), it was strongly affirmed with a highly significant path coefficient ($t = 21.641$, $p < 0.000$), support the hypotheses H5.

5.2 The qualitative results



Figure 4: Interview Question Answer Word cloud diagram

Source: This table is compiled from own editing

In the researcher's qualitative study, 34 Guangdong university graduates aged 21-26 were interviewed. Open-ended questions asked participants to discuss Job Characteristics, Emotional Regulation and Agreeableness to express their views on the factors that influence University Graduates' Job Performance behavior. Data analysis uses NVivo to identify, label, classify, summarize and summarize these factors. These keywords indicate that the key factors affecting the Job Performance of university graduates include Job Characteristics, Emotional Regulation and Agreeableness.

6. Discussion, Limitations and Further research

6.1 Discussion

The findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the complex interplay between job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance among university graduates in Guangdong, China. The quantitative results underscore the significant impact of job characteristics on emotional regulation and agreeableness. These results align with existing literature on the influence of job-related factors on individual psychological and behavioral outcomes.

Moreover, our study extends the understanding of these relationships by demonstrating that emotional regulation and agreeableness serve as crucial mediators between job characteristics and job performance. The observed negative indirect effect through emotional regulation suggests that effective emotional regulation partially explains the relationship between job characteristics and job performance. This supports the contention that individuals with specific job characteristics may exhibit distinct emotional regulation strategies, thereby influencing their overall job performance.

6.2 Limitations

While our study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the sample size, although sufficient for our analyses, may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider broader and more diverse samples to enhance the external validity of the results. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents establishing causal relationships definitively. Longitudinal studies could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interactions among job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance over time. The reliance on self-reported measures and the use of a single method for data collection may introduce common method bias. Incorporating multiple data sources, such as supervisor ratings or objective performance metrics, could enhance the robustness of our findings. Moreover, the study

focused on a specific geographical location (Guangdong, China), limiting the generalizability of the results to other cultural and regional contexts.

6.3 Further Research

Future research endeavors could explore the nuanced dynamics of job characteristics, emotional regulation, and agreeableness in different cultural and organizational settings. Comparative studies across various regions and industries would enrich our understanding of the universal and context-specific aspects of these relationships. Additionally, investigating the role of individual differences, such as personality traits, in moderating these relationships could provide a more comprehensive picture.

In conclusion, while this study advances our understanding of the intricate connections among job characteristics, emotional regulation, agreeableness, and job performance among university graduates, future research should address the outlined limitations to deepen our insights and guide practical implications for career development and organizational interventions.

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