

**A Study on The Mediating Effect of The Working Environment on The Relationship Between Leadership and Faculty Job Satisfaction**

Chantsaldulam Ravdansuren<sup>1</sup>  Altangerel Altanzul<sup>2</sup>  Nyamsuren Purevsuren<sup>3</sup>  Burmaa Otgonbayar<sup>4</sup>  Bolormaa Dorjsuren<sup>5</sup>  Otgontugs Bat<sup>6</sup>   
 Uranbaigal Dejidal<sup>7</sup>  Amgalan Ulzii<sup>8\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Department of Cybernetics, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

<sup>2</sup> Division of Policy for Academic Training & Digital Transformation, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Communications Engineering, Mongolian University of Science and Technology, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>4</sup> Division of Research, Mandakh University, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Computer Programming, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Veterinary Sciences, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Computer Programming, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Management, Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Email: <sup>1</sup>chantsaldulam@muls.edu.mn, <sup>2</sup>altanzul@muls.edu.mn, <sup>3</sup>nyamsuren@must.edu.mn, <sup>4</sup>burmaa.o@mandakh.edu.mn, <sup>5</sup>dbolormaa@muls.edu.mn, <sup>6</sup>otgontugs.b@muls.edu.mn, <sup>7</sup>uranbaigal@muls.edu.mn, <sup>8</sup>amgalanu79@gmail.com

ORCID number: <sup>1</sup>0009-0005-2753-5210, <sup>2</sup>0009-0004-3285-5019, <sup>3</sup>0000-0002-2855-7463, <sup>4</sup>0009-0003-9458-3904, <sup>5</sup>0009-0002-7547-6591, <sup>6</sup>0009-0007-8714-7759, <sup>7</sup>0000-0002-0709-2564, <sup>8</sup>0009-0007-7916-978X

Corresponding Author\*: Amgalan Ulzii

**ABSTRACT:**

One of the most important factors affecting the quality of higher education is teachers' job satisfaction. The job satisfaction of teachers in higher education institutions is directly influenced by their organization's leadership and work environment. Enhancing the quality of higher education in Mongolia requires increased attention to teachers' job satisfaction, which plays a vital role in institutional performance and student outcomes. This study aims to examine how leadership and workplace-related factors influence the job satisfaction of university teachers. A structural equation model (SEM) was developed that includes four mediating variables: working environment, work climate, salary and incentives, and career development policies, all of which are hypothesized to be influenced by university leadership and, in turn, impact faculty job satisfaction. A total of 2,284 faculty members teaching at universities in Mongolia participated in the study, selected through random sampling. The data were analyzed using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method, employing the SmartPLS 4.11 software. The findings confirmed all eight of the proposed hypotheses, demonstrating that leadership plays a significant role in creating favorable working conditions, which ultimately contribute to the job satisfaction of university teachers. The results of this study suggest that leadership was strongly influence work environment (work environment, work climate, salary and career development). The leadership has a strongly affects job satisfaction. Therefore, fostering effective managerial leadership can enhance teachers' job satisfaction, which in turn contributes to the improvement of the quality of higher education.

KEYWORDS: Managerial leadership, Job satisfaction, Work climate, Work environment, Career development, Salary, Higher education

**1) Introduction:**

One of the key factors influencing the quality and sustainable development of an educational institution is teacher job satisfaction. This refers to the extent to which a teacher enjoys their work and feels motivated and fulfilled in carrying out their duties [1],[2]. In recent years, the number of teachers has been declining, and some schools are facing a shortage of qualified professionals, making this one of the pressing challenges in education today. For example, as of 2024, there are about 38,000 teachers working in Mongolia, but it is estimated that this is not enough, and another 3,000 teachers will be needed [3],[4]. This is not just a problem in Mongolia, according to UNESCO [5], the world needs 44 million new teachers in the future. A recent survey tracking the employment of university graduates trained as teachers indicates that less than 70% of these graduates are working in teaching positions [4]. This may be influenced by a range of social and economic factors. Researchers have found that teacher job satisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors, including the work environment [6], salary [7], incentives [8], work climate [9], [10], leadership and management [11], and career policy planning [12]. For higher education institutions (HEIs) in Mongolia, it is important to measure the level of teacher job satisfaction, identify the factors that affect it, create a mechanism, and provide stable working conditions for teachers in the future, thereby preparing teacher succession and forming a proper human resource strategy. Therefore, creating comfortable and satisfying working conditions for teachers in HEIs directly depends on the leadership, behavior, and skills of the institution's management [13], [14], [15], [16]. Since the work environment, work climate, and salary and incentive policies depend on management leadership [17]. While job satisfaction has been widely examined by researchers, limited attention has been given to the job satisfaction of university teachers. In particular, there is a lack of research focusing on Mongolian higher education teachers, and studies exploring the factors influencing their satisfaction remain scarce. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether the managerial leadership of HEIs in Mongolia affects the working environment of teachers (work environment, work climate, salary-incentives, and career policies) and, in turn, contributes to teacher job satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to address the following questions:

1. Does managerial leadership contribute to creating a comfortable working environment for teachers?
2. How does the teacher's work environment (including work environment, work climate, salary, and career development policies) affect their job satisfaction?
3. Does the teacher's working environment mediate the relationship between managerial leadership and teacher job satisfaction?

This study investigated how work environment factors mediate the relationship between leadership and teacher job satisfaction in Mongolian universities, which is an important step in increasing teacher job satisfaction and, consequently, improving teaching quality and productivity. The results of the study will help to understand how leadership affects the organization's employee environment, work climate, salary, and career development policies. Furthermore, it will help to better understand the relationship between the university work environment and teacher job satisfaction. A deeper understanding of the findings and their interrelationships will contribute to further research on higher education management, and will further help educational institutions to learn about the factors that are important to consider in their operational strategies to improve the quality of teacher work, as well as develop strategies that focus on individual leadership skills when selecting future leaders. These implications extend beyond Mongolia and are applicable to universities in other countries as well.

**2) Conceptual Framework**

Our theoretical model proposes that the university work environment serves as a mediating factor between managerial leadership and teacher job satisfaction as shown in Figure 1. The variables considered in our study are based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs [18], [19], Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory [20], Leader-Member Exchange Theory, and behavioral leadership theory [21],[22]. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory [18], the workplace is a crucial environment that fulfills a range of human needs, from basic physiological needs to safety, belonging, esteem, community, and opportunities for career growth. Additionally, Herzberg's two-factor theory suggests that the workplace is a vital and integral part of a person's life, with job satisfaction influenced by two categories of factors: motivators and hygiene factors. These encompass elements such as work climate, a working environment, as well as expectations and trust [20]. Leader-Member Exchange Theory posits that leaders develop and maintain relationships of varying quality with their team members [21]. Good relationships between management and employees ensure equal access to work opportunities, authority, and rewards [23]. According to the behavioral leadership theory [22], the success of an organizational leader is not based on individual characteristics, but on the actions and behaviors of the leader who influences other employees, works together towards a vision, and empowers and inspires others [24], [25], [26]. Moreover, following the behavioral theory of organizational leadership, the quality and investment of the relationship between the management and employees of an organization determines the level of job involvement [27], satisfaction, and productivity [28], [29]. Therefore, in our opinion, above mentioned theories provide an important theoretical basis for studying how leadership in HEIs affects the work environment and satisfaction of teachers. In this study, the relationship between managerial leadership and teacher job satisfaction was determined using structural equation modeling based on the least squares method, with the work environment (work environment, work climate, salary, and career development support) as the mediating variable.

**2.1. Managerial Leadership:** Leadership is the process of enabling people to work together and achieve exceptional results ([25], [26]). Researchers have suggested that managerial leadership is an antecedent to establishing a motivating work environment, fostering a positive work climate and enhancing job satisfaction [30], [31], [32] Managerial leadership is the most important determinant of teachers' working conditions and the overall work climate [33]. Herzberg's two-factor theory suggests that leadership roles can not only improve the external conditions of an organization but also have a broader positive impact by supporting motivational

factors that enhance teacher satisfaction [34],[11]. Recognizing a teacher's efforts, trusting them, delegating authority and responsibility, and providing growth opportunities directly influence a teacher's motivation and commitment to their work [35]. Therefore, researchers suggest that higher education institutions should pay more attention to creating conditions for administrators and teachers to work enthusiastically and with satisfaction in their workplaces.

**2.2. Work environment:** There are many studies by scholars that have studied the work environment from both material and non-material aspects. Physical work environment has been proven to be the primary condition for comfortable working in an employee's workplace, such as ambient, interior design, and necessary equipment, which will affect employee job satisfaction [36], [37], [38]. In addition, researchers have found that non-material workplace environments, such as team spirit [39], organizational culture [40], and organizational trust [41], create opportunities for job satisfaction. As can be seen, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines workplace health and well-being as "a work environment in which workers and managers work together, based on needs, to implement a process of continuous improvement that protects and supports the health, safety, and well-being of employees while maintaining a stable workplace." This means that the work environment should be well-being because it is where most of our lives are spent. Although there are many studies on the impact of employee work environment conditions on job satisfaction in organizations such as businesses, banks, and hospitals [42],[43],[44],[45]. In Mongolia, there is a lack of research on how the work environment of university teachers affects their work and satisfaction. In addition, it is worth studying how the work environment affects the shortage of teacher' jobs. This was suggested by scholar [46], who argued that the lack of attention to the work environment of teachers negatively affects employee performance. In addition, in the reality of modern society, most of people's lives and time are spent at work [47]. Thus, the work environment is the most important issue to consider.

**2.3. Work climate:** One thing that expresses the unity of employees who value their organization's values and beliefs is organizational climate. Organizational climate is a complex of perceptions, feelings, and behaviors that people have about their work environment [48], attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that are part of the organization [49], and on the other hand, it is an important factor that influences job performance [50], and satisfaction [39]. Although a positive organizational climate has been studied as an important factor in employee job satisfaction, job loyalty, and turnover, there has been little research on the impact of organizational leadership on the work climate [51], [52], [53]. Therefore, managerial leadership can foster a positive work climate, which in turn enhances teachers' job satisfaction.

**2.4. Salary:** Within the framework of Herzberg's two-factor theory, researchers have confirmed that hygiene factors such as employee salary, environment, and career development opportunities are important factors that affect job satisfaction [51], [54]. Salary and incentives are the compensation received by an employee in cash or in kind from an employer for a specified period in return for the work performed in a given position [55]. Various policies and programs regarding salary and incentives depend on management leadership, especially on the type of leadership [56]. The leadership of an organization is the main motivation to achieving the vision and goals and plays a key role in shaping the work environment, salary, and incentive system. In order for the compensation system to be sustainable and continuous, it needs to be constantly evaluated, reviewed, and improved [57], [58].

**2.5. Career development support:** The human resource policy of an institution to enhance the professional and personal skills of university teachers is highly dependent on the management style and policies of the university. Continuous professional development of higher education is essential for improving the capabilities of the institution and student achievement through quality teaching methods [59]. University teachers are criticized for having few opportunities for professional development, lack of attention, energy, and follow-up [60]. In particular, research on teacher career development policies and support in Mongolian higher education is lacking. It is essential for university administrations to implement teacher career policies well, improve teachers' knowledge and skills, change attitudes, and improve teaching and research methods, adopt results-based teaching methods, prepare teachers for succession, and stimulate collaboration.

**2.6. Teacher job satisfaction :**In the current context of teacher shortages, job satisfaction is recognized as a critical indicator of teacher job stability. It has been established as an effective means to reduce teacher turnover and enhance retention [61], [62]. Empirical evidence shows that teacher job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including the work environment [63], organizational climate [8], salary [54], and opportunities for career advancement. Teaching positions in higher education institutions uniquely demand greater academic freedom and a supportive culture that allows faculty members to independently pursue their research interests and express ideas more freely than employees in other sectors. Therefore, fostering a healthy, safe, and conducive work environment and work climate within university settings is paramount for the effective conduct of teaching and research activities [64]. Building on established theories and prior research findings, this study proposes eight theory-driven hypotheses within a causal framework:

H1: Leadership has a positive effect on a) work environment b) work climate c) salary d) career development support.

H2: Work environment has a positive effect on teacher job satisfaction.

H3: Work climate has a positive effect on teacher job satisfaction.

H4: Teacher salary has a positive effect on teacher job satisfaction.

H5: Teacher career development policies have a positive effect on teacher job satisfaction.

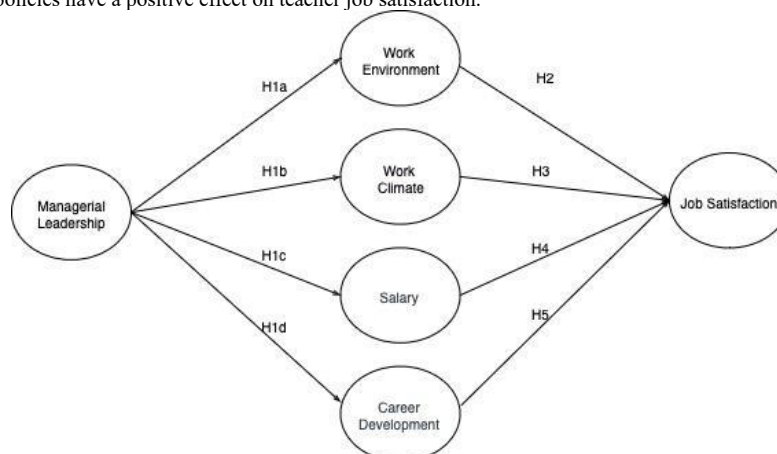


Figure 1. Research proposal model of Factors Affecting Teacher Job Satisfaction

### 3) **Methods and Methodology:**

In recent years, structural equation modeling has been widely used, especially in social sciences such as organizational management [65], human resource management [66], and leadership studies. The least squares-based structural equation modeling approach is recommended when the goal is to test a theoretical framework from a predictive perspective, especially when the structural model involves testing complex relationships among multiple constructs and variables [67]. Therefore, we processed our data using a structural equation modeling approach based on the least squares method.

**3.1. Sample and procedure:**This study was administered to 5151 full-time faculty members working in all 64 universities and colleges providing higher education in Mongolia [3], of whom 2284 responded, representing a total of 44% of the total number of teachers. To ensure accessibility, inclusiveness, and reliability, the survey employed a convenience sampling method and was conducted online through the platform of the Education Evaluation Center <https://high.eec.mn>. By accessing this system, participants have given their consent to participate in the study. Among the participants, 32.5% were male and 67.5% were female. In terms of professional experience, 29% had worked for up to 5 years, 17.4% for 6 to 10 years, and 53.6% for more than 11 years. Regarding academic qualifications, 32.3% held a doctoral degree and 60.1% held a master's degree. In terms of academic rank, 6.9% were professors, 14.5% associate professors, 30.3% senior lecturers, 40.8% lecturers, and 7.4% assistant lecturers (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic Information

		Frequency	Percent
Age	Under 25	96	4.2
	26-40	904	39.6
	41-50	749	32.8
	51-60	535	23.4
	Sum	2284	100.0
Gender	male	743	32.5
	female	1541	67.5
	Sum	2284	100.0
Education level	Bachelor	175	7.7
	Master	1372	60.1
	Doctor	737	32.3
	Sum	2284	100.0
Position	Assistant lecturers	170	7.4
	Lecturers	932	40.8
	Senior lecturers	693	30.3
	Associate professors	331	14.5
	Professor	158	6.9
	Sum	2284	100.0
Working Duration	Less than 1 year	86	3.8
	1-5 years	576	25.2
	6-10 years	396	17.4
	11-20 years	832	36.4
	More than 21 years	392	17.2
	Sum	2284	100.0

**3.2. Measures:** The dependent variable in this study was teacher job satisfaction, the independent variable was managerial leadership, and the mediating variables included the teacher's work environment, work climate, salary, and career development. The survey questionnaire was based on theoretical research. The survey was conducted with a total of 33 questions, 28 of which were expressed by variables and 5 were general information questions. These included 5 questions on managerial leadership, 6 on work environment, 3 on work climate, 4 on salary and incentives, 4 on career development, and 6 on teacher job satisfaction. All scales are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**3.3. Measurement analysis:** The first part of the structural model proposed by the study examines how managerial leadership affects work environment, work climate, salary, and career development policies. The second part of the structural model examines how work environment, work climate, salary, and career development policies affect job satisfaction. The results of the analysis show that all latent variable indicators are > 0.700 or higher, indicating that the indicators are reliable [67]. For example, managerial leadership (5 items, 0.811-0.906), work environment (5 items, 0.822-0.906), work climate (3 items, 0.812-0.918), salary (3 items, 0.921-0.931), career development (4 items, 0.855-0.898), job satisfaction (3 items, 0.924-0.937). In addition, according to Jöreskog[68], the composite reliability coefficient is high and shows a substantial correlation. The AVE value is greater than the threshold value of 0.50 [69], indicating validity. Furthermore, the CR value does not exceed 0.95, indicating that there is no overlap between the indicators. For Managerial leadership: Cronbach's alpha=0.927; CR\_rho\_a=0.929, CR\_rho\_c=0.945, AVE=0.775; Work environment: Cronbach's alpha=0.926; CR\_rho\_a=0.927, CR\_rho\_c=0.944, AVE=0.772; .Work climate: Cronbach's alpha =0.858; CR\_rho\_a=0.875, CR\_rho\_c=0.914, AVE=0.780; Salary: Cronbach's alpha =0.916; CR\_rho\_a=0.916, CR\_rho\_c=0.947, AVE=0.856; Career development, the internal consistency reliability of the latent variable is strong, with Cronbach's alpha =0.905; CR\_rho\_a=0.907, CR\_rho\_c=0.934, AVE=0.778; Job satisfaction: Cronbach's alpha=0.913; CR\_rho\_a=0.913, CR\_rho\_c=0.934, AVE=0.852 (Table2).

**Table 2:** Results of Measurement Analysis

Construct	Items	Loading	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Managerial Leadership (ML)	lead1	0.811	2.086	0.927	0.929	0.945	0.775
	lead2	0.904	3.849				
	lead3	0.906	3.934				
	lead4	0.891	3.155				
	lead5	0.885	3.061				
Work Environment (WE)	wcon1	0.895	3.560	0.926	0.927	0.944	0.772
	wcon2	0.890	3.333				
	wcon3	0.906	3.996				
	wcon5	0.877	2.920				
	wcon6	0.822	2.008				
Work Climate (WC)	wc1	0.812	1.708	0.858	0.875	0.914	0.780
	wc2	0.918	2.832				
	wc3	0.914	2.823				
Salary (S)	sal1	0.923	3.218	0.916	0.916	0.947	0.856
	sal3	0.931	3.507				
	sal4	0.921	3.015				
Career Development (CD)	crer1	0.898	2.968	0.905	0.907	0.934	0.778
	crer2	0.897	3.017				
	crer3	0.878	2.554				
	crer4	0.855	2.314				
Job Satisfaction (JS)	sat1	0.908	2.730	0.913	0.913	0.945	0.852
	sat1	0.937	3.721				
	satt3	0.924	3.313				

The reliability of the variance was considered within the scope of the statistical analysis. As shown in Table 3, it is 0.760-0.925, indicating a high correlation between the variables. According to the Fornell-Larcker results of the variance, the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  values of ML, WE, WC, S, CD, JS: ML=0.880; WE=0.880; WC=0.883; S=0.925; CD=0.882; JS=0.923 are higher than the correlation values between them

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity by Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	CR	JS	ML	S	WC	WE
CR	<b>0.882</b>					
JS	0.786	<b>0.923</b>				
ML	0.811	0.910	<b>0.880</b>			
S	0.848	0.760	0.786	<b>0.925</b>		
WC	0.824	0.827	0.853	0.783	<b>0.883</b>	
WE	0.802	0.803	0.827	0.801	0.833	<b>0.880</b>

Source: research data analysis. Diagonal value bold value is  $\sqrt{AVE}$

Note: CR= career development; JS=job satisfaction; ML=managerial leadership; S=salary; WC=Work climate; WE Work environment

**3.4. Structural Analysis:**After conducting the measurement model analysis of the proposed model, the structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed. The results of study supported all of the research hypotheses. The structural equation model evaluation showed that the path coefficient of the first construct, managerial leadership-work environment (H1a), was  $\beta = 0.833$ ,  $t = 111.558$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , the path coefficient of the managerial leadership-work climate (H1b) was  $\beta = 0.853$ ,  $t = 117.007$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , the path coefficient of the managerial leadership-salary (H1c) was  $\beta = 0.786$ ,  $t = 3.932$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and the path coefficient of the managerial leadership-career development policy (H1d) was  $\beta = 0.811$ ,  $t = 90.801$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating statistical significance. The next structural model hypothesis H2: The path coefficient of the hypothesis of work environment-job satisfaction is  $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $t = 9.943$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , the path coefficient of the hypothesis of work climate-job satisfaction (H3) is  $\beta = 0.380$ ,  $t = 14.347$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , the path coefficient of the hypothesis of salary-job satisfaction (H4) is  $\beta = 0.101$ ,  $t = 3.932$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and the path coefficient of the hypothesis of work career development-job satisfaction (H5) is  $\beta = 0.167$ ,  $t = 5.945$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , which are generally statistically significant (Table 4). However, in our study, the T-values in the hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d are very high, ranging from 82.2 to 117.0, indicating that the statistical significance is very high, but the standard deviation is very small, and on the other hand, the outer loading value is 0.807 to 0.937, indicating that the stability of the indicator is too high, and it is necessary to double-assess the distribution of the data and multicollinearity. The results of the VIF assessment show that 1.311 to 3.996 indicate that there is collinearity in 5 or more cases, and the highest VIF value in our study is 3.996, indicating that the problem is small. (VIF values above 5 are indicative of probable collinearity issues among the predictor constructs, but collinearity problems can also occur at lower VIF values of 3-5 [70]. (Table 2)

**Table 4.** Path coefficients by complete data

Constructs	Original sample (o)	Sample mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Results
ML→WE	0.833	0.833	0.007	117.558	0.000	Supported
ML→WC	0.853	0.853	0.007	117.007	0.000	Supported
ML→S	0.786	0.786	0.026	3.932	0.000	Supported
ML→CD	0.811	0.811	0.009	90.801	0.000	Supported
WE→JS	0.274	0.273	0.028	9.943	0.000	Supported
WC→JS	0.380	0.380	0.027	14.347	0.000	Supported
S→JS	0.101	0.101	0.026	3.932	0.000	Supported
CD→JS	0.167	0.168	0.028	5.945	0.000	Supported

Source: by research data analysis

**Table 5.** R<sup>2</sup> Statistic

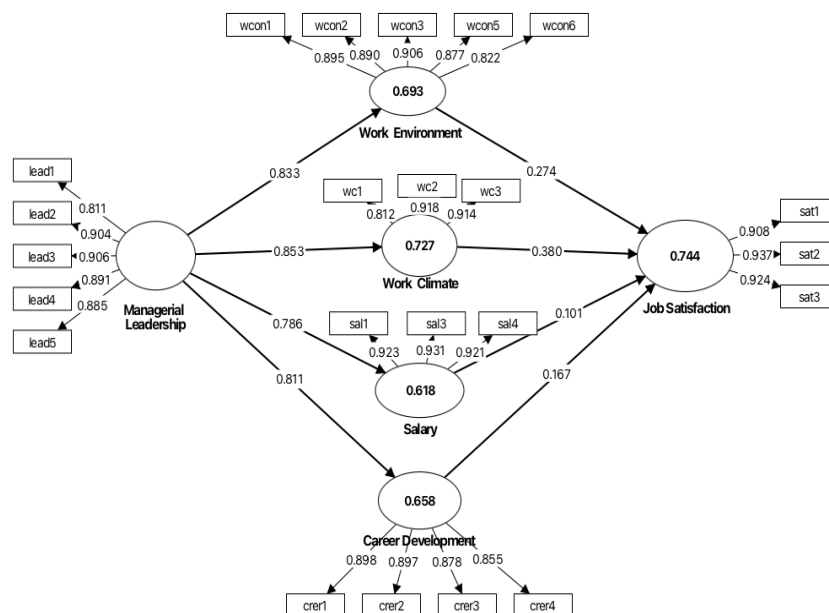
Constructs	R square	R square adjusted
Work Environment	0.693	0.693
Work Climate	0.727	0.727
Salary	0.618	0.618
Career Development	0.658	0.657
Job satisfaction	0.744	0.744

Source: research's data

Table 5 shows that managerial leadership in the research model is an important variable in shaping the work environment of higher education institutions. Managerial leadership has a strong and good correlation with work environment ( $R^2 = 0.693$ ), 69.3%, work climate ( $R^2 = 0.727$ ), 72.7%, salary ( $R^2 = 0.618$ ), 61.8%, and career development policy ( $R^2 = 0.658$ ), 65.8%. In addition, the four selected variables of the work environment explain teachers' job satisfaction together with  $R^2=0.744$ , or 74 percent of satisfaction.

**3.5. Mediation analysis**

According to our theoretical model (Figure 1) the managerial leadership influences job satisfaction through the variables: work environment, work climate, salary, and career development. The results of the study, all mediation variables were statistically significant. 1) The mediation role of WE in the relationship between ML and JS. It was a significant indirect effect of ML on JS through WE ( $\beta = 0.228$ ,  $t=9.719$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), while the total effect ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $t=9.943$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), VAF is 81.4 % indicating a full mediation. 2) Work climate had an indirect effect on managerial leadership and job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.324$ ,  $t=13.541$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the total effect was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.380$ ,  $t=14.347$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The calculated VAF value is 85.2% full mediation. 3) Salary and incentives had an indirect effect on managerial leadership and job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.80$ ,  $t=3.852$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the total effect was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.101$ ,  $t=3.932$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The calculated VAF value is 79.2% a partial mediation. 4) Career development had an indirect effect on managerial leadership and job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.136$ ,  $t=5.813$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the total effect ( $\beta = 0.167$ ,  $t = 5.945$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was statistically significant. The Variance Accounted For (VAF) was 81.4%, indicating full mediation. However, work environment, work climate and career development policy have a statistically significant full mediation role. This results in managerial leadership having a greater impact on teacher job satisfaction than the way it shapes the work environment, work climate of the organization and the way it adopts its career development policy.



**Figure 2.** Results of SEM by SmartPLS 4.1

#### 4) Discussion

In this study, we proposed eight theoretical hypotheses with two structures, assuming that work environment, work climate, salary, and career development policies will play a mediating role in university managerial leadership and teacher job satisfaction.

In the first structure, it was confirmed that managerial leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on the work environment (H1a), work climate (H1b), salary (H1c), and career development (H1d). The results of the study confirmed that managerial leadership plays an important role in creating a comfortable work environment for teachers, creating a positive work climate, and implementing a salary and incentive system and career development policies that encourage teachers to do their jobs well. Moreover, it was found that managerial leadership has a statistically significant effect on teacher job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.767, t=78.648, P < 0.001$ ). This result is consistent with previous studies that have shown that leadership style has a positive effect on employee job satisfaction [71], [72]. Studies about the influence of leadership style on job satisfaction show that school leaders' style plays an important role in influencing teachers' job satisfaction [73], [74]. For higher education researchers, it has been found that university leadership styles, especially transformational, empowering, and support-oriented approaches, have an impact on school teacher satisfaction [75], [16]. Teachers' work climate and career development policies that promote continuous development of teachers in the workplace have become mediating variables that have a complete impact on managerial leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Career development policies and work climate have a more mediating effect on teacher job satisfaction than salary and work environment. The results of the study show that the leadership of HEIs is consistent with the vision and mission of the school, and that listening to the opinions of the team and working honestly are important factors in improving teacher job satisfaction.

The second construct of the study, work environment (H2), work climate (H3), salary (H4), and career development (H5), have a positive impact on teacher job satisfaction. The results of the study show that work climate ( $\beta = 0.380, t=14.347, p < 0.001$ ) was determined to have the highest effect. The satisfaction and productivity of teachers in their workplace are significantly related to a positive work climate, which is consistent with previous research [63], [64]. In addition to the relationship and cooperation between management and colleagues, it is essential to pay attention to the work environment [76]. The result of the study shows that the work environment ( $\beta = 0.274, t=9.943, P < 0.001$ ) has a positive effect on teacher satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary to study and consider the impact of the work environment and work climate in order to increase the satisfaction of Mongolian university teachers. The results also show that teachers have opportunities to develop in the workplace. The effects of career development ( $\beta = 0.167, t=5.945, p < 0.001$ ) and salary ( $\beta = 0.101, t=3.932, p < 0.001$ ) are minimal. The results of the study confirmed that this depends not only on the salary of higher education teachers, but also on the academic freedom to work, flexible working hours, and a team that aims to learn and develop continuously.

Therefore, job satisfaction of university teachers in the Mongolian context largely depends on a favorable working environment and positive psychological support from colleagues and management. In addition, focusing on teacher career development, improving knowledge and skills in the workplace, changing attitudes to improve teaching and research methods, and preparing for one's own succession not only has a positive effect on teacher satisfaction, it creates a sense of pride in one's profession. In this study, the idea that work environment factors play a mediating role in the relationship between leadership and teacher job satisfaction in Mongolian universities was supported, and the eight hypotheses proposed within the framework of the research objectives were fully confirmed. On the one hand, teacher satisfaction in universities affects teacher stability and specialization, and thus has a positive effect on the quality of teaching. In conclusion, our study has shown that teacher job satisfaction is highly dependent on the leadership and work environment of the organization.

#### 5) Conclusions

Based on the results of previous research findings and the objectives of this study, several key conclusions have been drawn: First, policies aimed at promoting the sustainable development of human resources in HEIs demonstrate that theories—such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Leader-Member Exchange Theory and Behavioral Leadership Theory—play a significant role. In addition, managerial leadership is recognized as a critical element in management science [77]. In particular, effective leadership in the educational system can establish a positive work environment and work climate [78]. Therefore, it was confirmed that managerial leadership is a factor that can strongly influence the comfortable working environment of teachers ( $R^2=0.693$ ), work climate ( $R^2=0.727$ ), salary ( $R^2=0.618$ ) and career development policy ( $R^2=0.658$ ), and these findings helped answer the first research question. Second, the study addressed the question: Does the teacher's work environment (work environment, work climate, salary, career policy) affect teacher satisfaction? The results highlight that primary needs—such as salary and incentives—are vital for university teachers. However, the work climate, shaped by interpersonal relationships and supportive development policies, plays an even more critical role in enhancing job satisfaction. Given that university teachers spend most of their time in their professional environment, a supportive and positive work climate is essential for fostering job satisfaction. Third, the study examined whether the teacher's work environment mediates the relationship between managerial leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Mediation analysis showed that the work environment—including work climate, salary, and career development policies—acts as both a partial and full mediator in this relationship. All proposed hypotheses were supported. This indicates that while the work environment is important, managerial leadership has a more substantial impact on teacher job satisfaction, particularly in shaping the organizational climate and career development strategies.

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This research did not receive any financial support.

#### 8) Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author.

To ensure accessibility, inclusiveness, and reliability, the survey employed a convenience sampling method and was conducted in collaboration between the Education Evaluation Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Education of Mongolia, and the Research Institute for Educational Quality (NGO) via an online platform (<https://high.eec.mn>). By accessing this system, participants have given their consent to participate in the study.

#### 9) Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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