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Psychological Capital as a Mediator in the Link between Organizational Socialization and Job Performance in Chinese Higher Education Teachers

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Abstract: This research examines the relationships between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance within Chinese higher education institutions, with an emphasis on the implications for institutional sustainability. Utilizing a quantitative methodology, this study surveyed 1079 faculty members across various universities in China to assess how organizational socialization influences job performance (task, contextual, adaptive, and counterproductive dimensions) both directly and indirectly through psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience). Statistical analyses with the Process 4.2. Macros for SPSS 29.01 have been conducted using model 4. The analysis indicates that organizational socialization has a positive direct effect on task performance, both contextual and adaptive, but a negative effect on counterproductive performance. A significant positive relationship between organizational socialization and each of the psychological capital components has been found. The psychological capital components each played a unique role in mediating the relationship between organizational socialization and the different performance dimensions. These findings suggest that strategic socialization practices can significantly improve both the immediate and long-term performance outcomes of faculty members. This study contributes to the understanding of how targeted socialization and psychological capital development can serve as levers for optimizing job performance in the academic sector.

Keywords: organizational socialization; psychological capital; academic performance; higher education; Chinese universities; human resource development in education



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1. Introduction

In recent years, the notion of sustainability has increasingly permeated the realm of higher education, emphasizing not only environmental conservation but the broader, holistic development of sustainable institutional cultures and the well-being of the academic community [1,2]. This shift towards sustainable higher education is pivotal in equipping institutions to contribute to global ecological balance, social equity, and economic viability [3]. By integrating sustainability into curricular and extracurricular activities, fostering green campus initiatives, and promoting a culture of sustainability, higher education institutions are uniquely positioned to influence future leaders and drive societal transformation [4]. This study focuses on how these sustainable practices impact organizational socialization and psychological capital within higher education settings, crucially affecting faculty job performance and, by extension, institutional sustainability [5].

The increasing emphasis on sustainability within higher education globally compels a focused examination of internal institutional practices, particularly in China, where rapid educational expansion has raised concerns about maintaining quality education services [2,6]. This study critically examines the interplay between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance in Chinese higher education institutions,

offering insights into how these factors collectively influence the sustainability of educational outcomes. Recent trends in China have highlighted a gap in job performance among university faculty, with implications for the quality of education provided [7]. This gap, characterized by variations in teaching effectiveness and faculty engagement, threatens the educational standards and sustainability of institutions [5].

Organizational socialization in this context is crucial as it shapes faculty members' absorption of institutional values and practices necessary for high-level performance, directly impacting the sustainable development goals of these institutions [8]. Furthermore, psychological capital, encompassing resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy [9], empowers faculty to navigate the challenges posed by the dynamic educational landscape in China [10]. This study explores how robust organizational socialization practices, supported by enriched psychological capital [11], can mitigate performance discrepancies and enhance job effectiveness, thereby contributing to the broader goal of sustainable education in China's higher education system [12].

Despite the recognized importance of organizational dynamics within academic settings, there remains a notable paucity of empirical research focusing on the impact of organizational socialization on job performance, specifically within Chinese universities. This gap is particularly significant given the unique challenges faced by the Chinese higher education system, which is undergoing rapid expansion and transformation. The current body of literature predominantly addresses broad organizational constructs without delving into the specific dynamics of socialization processes that influence faculty performance in this context. This study is therefore crucial as it seeks to fill this research void by systematically examining how organizational socialization affects psychological capital and, consequently, job performance among university teachers in China. By doing so, it not only contributes to the academic discourse but also offers practical insights that can inform policy and administrative strategies aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of educational outcomes in a major global education market. The findings of this research are expected to provide a foundational understanding that can guide the development of targeted interventions to improve faculty integration and performance, which are critical for sustaining the quality and competitiveness of Chinese higher education institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Organizational Socialization and Performance*

The relationship between organizational socialization and job performance is a crucial area of inquiry in the context of higher education in China. Organizational socialization, as conceptualized by Chao et al. [13], is a multifaceted process through which individuals acquire the necessary competencies, knowledge, behaviors, and values to navigate and contribute effectively within an organization. This comprehensive framework highlights the importance of mastering various aspects of organizational life, including performance proficiency, understanding of organizational structures and culture, and the development of interpersonal networks [14].

Recent studies have explored the relevance of this socialization process for faculty members in Chinese higher education institutions [15]. These investigations suggest that successful organizational socialization is closely linked to positive job performance outcomes [16], such as teaching effectiveness, research productivity [17], and overall integration into the academic community [18]. Additionally, research has emphasized the critical role of leadership, organizational culture [19], and knowledge management in enhancing job performance in the higher education context [20].

Given the exploratory nature of the current study, it would be more appropriate to focus on research questions rather than research hypotheses. This approach allows for a more open-ended examination of the relationship between organizational socialization and the multidimensional aspects of job performance [21], including task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive behaviors [22]. By adopting a research question-based framework, this study can delve deeper into the nu-

ances of this relationship within the unique cultural and institutional context of Chinese higher education without relying on predefined hypotheses.

The following research questions (RQ) address the key aspects of this study:

RQ 1a: How does organizational socialization influence task performance among teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

RQ 1b: In what ways does organizational socialization impact the contextual performance of teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

RQ 1c: How does the organizational socialization process shape the adaptive performance of teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

RQ 1d: What is the relationship between organizational socialization and counterproductive behaviors among teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

2.2. Mediating Role of Psychological Capital

Psychological capital is a multifaceted construct encompassing an individual's positive psychological state of development, including self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience [10,23,24]. Recent studies have highlighted the crucial role of psychological capital in enhancing job performance and well-being within the academic setting [20,25,26]. PsyCap comprises four core dimensions: Self-efficacy is an individual's conviction in their capability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and actions necessary to execute a specific task effectively within a given context [9]. Optimism is considered a positive attributional style concerning expectations for future outcomes. Hope is a positive motivational state anchored in both a sense of successful agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (strategies to achieve those goals). Lastly, resilience is an individual's ability to rebound from adversity, conflict, failure, or even positive changes, progress, and increased responsibilities [26].

Collectively, these dimensions signify an individual's psychological resource capacity, which can be harnessed to enhance job performance and well-being within various contexts, including the sphere of higher education [5,20,26].

Within the context of Chinese higher education, PsyCap may play a crucial mediating role in the relationship between organizational socialization and the multifaceted aspects of job performance among faculty members. Organizational socialization equips higher education teachers with the essential knowledge, skills, and values for effective navigation within the academic environment, fostering a sense of belonging, understanding, and support [27,28]. These facets of organizational socialization can potentially enhance the PsyCap of higher education teachers in several ways. Firstly, by providing the necessary resources and support, organizational socialization can bolster the faculty members' confidence in their ability to excel in their academic responsibilities. Secondly, through cultivated optimism, the integration and understanding gained through the socialization process can nurture a positive outlook toward future professional endeavors. Thirdly, organizational socialization can foster the motivation to achieve academic and administrative goals by equipping teachers with strategies and pathways to succeed. Fourthly, the sense of belonging and the ability to navigate the academic environment, developed through socialization, can help teachers overcome professional challenges and setbacks.

This enhancement of PsyCap through effective organizational socialization processes can subsequently influence the multidimensional aspects of job performance among faculty members. Individuals with higher levels of PsyCap are more likely to exhibit adaptive and proactive behaviors, demonstrate resilience in the face of professional challenges, and maintain a positive outlook toward their roles and responsibilities [29]. This enhanced psychological state empowers higher education teachers to more effectively utilize the resources and support provided through organizational socialization, leading to improved task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and reduced counterproductive behaviors.

Moreover, PsyCap can serve as a pivotal mediator by transforming the external resources and support received through socialization processes into internal psychological

strengths [30]. This transformation enables a more direct and substantial impact on job performance, as faculty members are not merely equipped with external resources but are also internally fortified to leverage these resources to their advantage. Through its mediating role, PsyCap emerges as a crucial link that connects the supportive and integrative mechanisms of organizational socialization with tangible enhancements in job performance, emphasizing the importance of nurturing PsyCap within the academic workforce [31].

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the following research questions will guide the investigation of the mediating role of PsyCap.

RQ 2a: To what extent does psychological capital mediate the relationship between organizational socialization and task performance among teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

RQ 2b: What is the mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between organizational socialization and contextual performance of teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

RQ 2c: How does psychological capital mediate the relationship between organizational socialization and the adaptive performance of teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

RQ 2d: In what ways does psychological capital mediate the relationship between organizational socialization and the reduction in counterproductive behaviors among teachers in Chinese higher education institutions?

This research question-based approach allows for a more comprehensive examination of the mediating role of PsyCap in the dynamic interplay between organizational socialization and the multidimensional aspects of job performance within the unique context of Chinese higher education.

The theoretical diagram with the research questions is displayed in Figure 1.

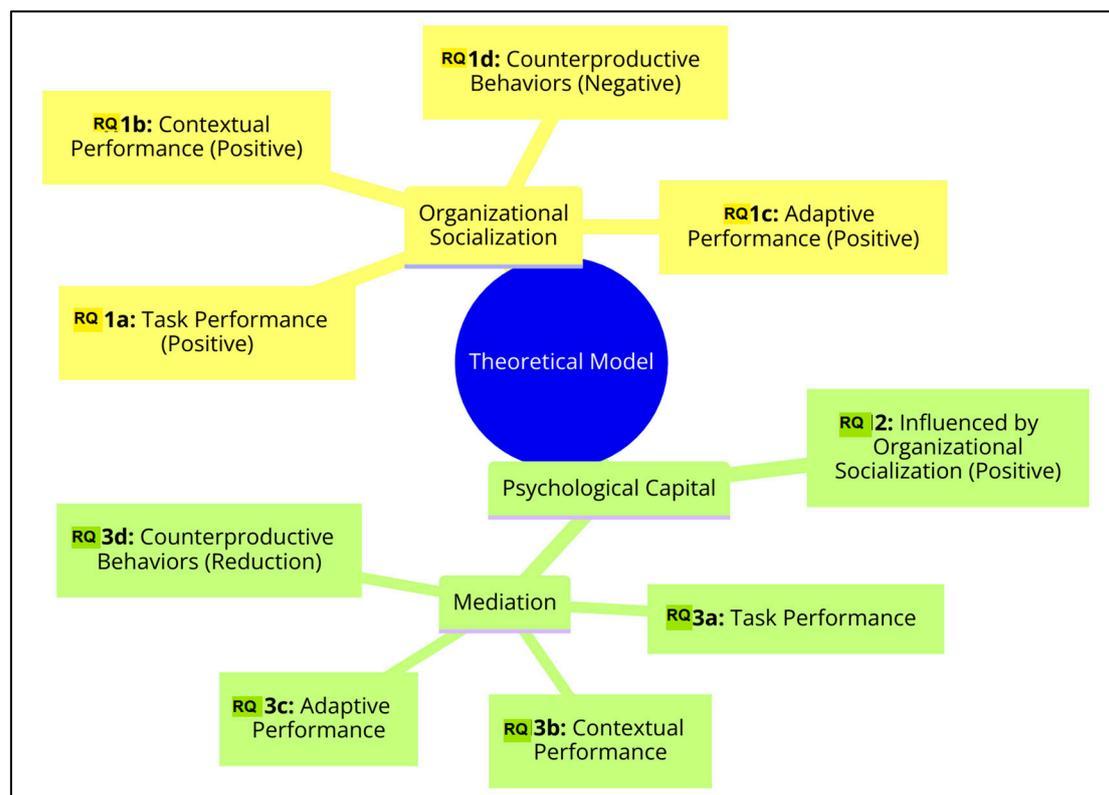


Figure 1. Theoretical and research model.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

This study was carried out among 1079 higher education teachers in China who responded to a quantitative survey. The average age of the participants was 39.12 years, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 3.32, and females comprised 43.7% of the sample. The average tenure of the respondents as higher education faculty members was 5.7 years (S.D. = 2.65). Among the participants, 25.4% possessed a master's degree, while the remainder held a Ph.D. The majority of the respondents held the position of Associate Professor (59.9%), with Professors making up 6% and Assistant Professors or Lecturers accounting for 34.1% of the sample.

3.2. Procedure

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Xi'an Jiaotong University granted approval for this study beforehand. The participants for this study were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The initial pool of participants was identified through professional social networks popular among Chinese educators, such as LinkedIn and ResearchGate, as well as institutional email lists provided by staff at both public and private universities in China. The invitation email sent to potential participants provided a comprehensive overview of the study, including its primary objectives, assurances regarding confidentiality and voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, an estimate of the survey's duration, and a link to access the questionnaire. The starting pool consisted of 1340 individuals who were invited to participate in the survey.

The platform chosen for administering the survey was Wenjuanxing (问卷星), also known internationally as Questionnaire Star, a platform renowned for its utility in conducting surveys within China.

To ensure the representativeness of the sample, the questionnaire was distributed in a random manner, with respondents receiving the items in a randomized order. This approach helped to mitigate any potential bias that could arise from the order of presentation. During the data cleaning process, responses with incomplete data were subsequently removed from the analysis, resulting in a final response rate of 80.52%. The questionnaire required respondents to evaluate a series of items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The sampling strategy and data collection procedures were designed to ensure the representativeness of the surveyed teachers, drawing from both public and private Chinese universities to capture a diverse range of perspectives within the higher education sector. The random distribution of the questionnaire and the exclusion of incomplete responses further strengthened the validity and reliability of the data collected for this study.

3.3. Instruments

Organizational socialization: This variable was assessed with the 28 items of the Organizational Socialization Domains questionnaire designed by Chao and colleagues, with items covering the six factors of organizational socialization: (a) performance proficiency, (b) politics, (c) language, (d) people, (e) organizational goals and values, and (f) history. The scale provides specific means for each dimension, but moderate correlations among some of the socialization content areas have suggested some doubts about their discriminant validity. Hence, as in previous studies [16], in the present research, the global assessment of organizational socialization was used as a predictor. Despite its wide use, there is not a validated version of the questionnaire in Chinese, and the research group applied a back-translation method, as suggested by Pangarso et al. [32].

Psychological Capital: The Chinese version of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24), which was developed by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman [24], adapted to Chinese by Zhang [33], and subsequently used by other studies [34], was employed. As in the original English version, the PCQ-24 included 24 items and four dimensions: self-efficacy (six items), hope (six items), resilience (six items), and optimism (six items). The

instructions given to the participants asked them to answer how they felt “right now”, and higher values indicated higher levels of PsyCap dimensions. Examples of items in English are as follows: I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution; at the present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals; and when things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.

Job performance: This variable was assessed using the Individual Work Performance scale, developed by Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, de Vet, and van der Beek [21], and adapted from Dutch to American English [35] and Swedish, maintaining its psychometric properties [36]. The questionnaire included 45 items that assessed the four original dimensions of performance: tax-related, contextual, adaptive, and counterproductive.

Previous research has established the Organizational Socialization Domains questionnaire and the Individual Work Performance scale as valid instruments for assessing both global socialization and individual performance within organizations (Chao et al., 1994; Chao, 2007) [13,18]. Hence, it is important to note that the existing items in this measure are broadly formulated and have not been specifically adapted to the context of higher education. Despite this fact, the higher education context presents distinct factors and dynamics that shape the socialization experience of faculty members. For example, the emphasis on teaching, research, and service responsibilities, the hierarchical structure of academic institutions, and the importance of navigating institutional politics and culture may require specific modifications to the existing items to ensure their relevance and applicability within the higher education domain.

To address this gap, the current study undertook a rigorous process of adapting the Organizational Socialization Domains questionnaire to the Chinese higher education context. This adaptation involved a thorough review of the existing items and the refinement of the measure to capture the unique nuances of the academic environment, as can be seen in Appendix A, marked with italics. By tailoring the assessment tool to the specific needs and characteristics of Chinese higher education institutions, this study aimed to enhance the validity and contextual relevance of the data collected, providing a more robust foundation for investigating the relationships between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance among faculty members. The Organizational Socialization Domains scale and the Individual Work Performance scale in English and Chinese versions are provided in Appendix A. The Psychological Capital Questionnaire is under the license of the authors, and only three items could be provided as examples.

3.4. Data Analyses

Correlational analyses were conducted using SPSS, and in order to specifically compare the effects of organizational socialization on teachers' performance, total, direct, and indirect, as mediated by the four dimensions of psychological capital, further analyses with Process 4.2. Macros for SPSS were conducted using model 4 [37,38]. If zero was not included in the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval, the parameter was significantly different from zero at $p < 0.05$. Demographic variables were not included as controls in the analyses.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive and Correlational Findings

Organizational socialization showed a positive association with all the psychological capital components, indicating that individuals who are better socialized within their organization tend to exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism (Table 1). Our findings revealed a significant positive relationship between organizational socialization and each of the psychological capital components, indicating that increased levels of socialization within an organization are associated with higher levels of psychological capital among employees. Specifically, the strongest relationship was observed between organizational socialization and psychological efficacy, followed by hope, resiliency, and optimism, in that order. Psychological capital, as a composite construct, demonstrated

significant interrelations among its components. Self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism were all positively correlated with each other. This interrelation underscores the cohesive nature of psychological capital, where each component supports and enhances the others, contributing to a robust psychological state that promotes well-being and effectiveness in organizational settings.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlation matrix ($n = 1079$).

Variables	M	S.D.	Kurtosis	Skewness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Organizational Socialization	3.87	0.402	0.085	−0.172	0.89								
2. PC Self-Efficacy	3.82	0.600	0.816	−0.144	0.609**	0.79							
3. PC Hope	4.00	0.559	0.140	−0.224	0.538**	0.535**	0.82						
4. PC Resilience	3.80	0.502	0.107	−0.145	0.474**	0.448**	0.569**	0.87					
5. PC Optimism	3.64	0.563	1.724	−0.168	0.424**	0.285**	0.477**	0.405**	0.79				
6. Task Performance	3.53	0.470	0.446	−0.112	0.440**	0.291**	0.396**	0.379**	0.391**	0.75			
7. Contextual Performance	3.89	0.466	0.334	−0.119	0.634**	0.559**	0.599**	0.514**	0.499**	0.525**	0.77		
8. Adaptive Performance	3.97	0.490	0.078	−0.011	0.493**	0.472**	0.549**	0.539**	0.358**	0.406**	0.751**	0.78	
9. Counterproductive Performance	2.11	0.591	0.435	0.180	−0.382**	−0.149**	−0.205**	−0.266**	−0.349**	−0.297**	−0.283**	−0.163**	0.77

Note: PC: psychological capital. Values in italics are Cronbach’s Alphas. ** $p < 0.001$.

Task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance were positively related to both organizational socialization and the components of psychological capital. This indicates that individuals who are well-socialized and possess higher levels of psychological capital are more likely to perform well in their tasks, engage effectively in behaviors that support the organizational context, and adapt successfully to changing demands or challenges.

Interestingly, counterproductive performance exhibited a negative relationship with organizational socialization and psychological capital components. This suggests that better socialized individuals and those with higher psychological capital are less likely to engage in behaviors that harm organizational well-being or performance.

These findings highlight the importance of psychological capital in the workplace, not only for individual well-being and development but also for its impact on various performance outcomes. They reinforce the value of fostering a supportive organizational environment that promotes the development of psychological capital among employees, ultimately leading to enhanced individual and organizational performance.

4.2. RQ 1a: How Does Organizational Socialization Influence Task Performance among Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

When examining the outcome variable of task performance, the analysis showed that organizational socialization has a positive direct effect on task performance. This suggests that organizational socialization independently contributes to enhancing employees’ task performance. Moreover, the results from the total effect model highlighted a substantial overall impact of organizational socialization on task performance, encompassing both direct and mediated effects through psychological capital components, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2. Main effects of organizational socialization on psychological capital and task performance.

Variable	R ²	MSE	F	p	Standardized Coefficients (Organizational Socialization)
PC Self-Efficacy	0.3706	0.2268	634.2715	<0.0001	0.6088
PC Hope	0.2891	0.2227	438.0026	<0.0001	0.5377
PC Resilience	0.2246	0.1958	311.9543	<0.0001	0.4739
PC Optimism	0.1796	0.2607	235.7552	<0.0001	0.4238
Task Performance (Model Summary)	0.2711	0.1621	79.7969	<0.0001	-
Task Performance (Total Effect Model)	0.1935	0.1787	258.4346	<0.0001	0.4399

4.3. RQ 2a: To What Extent Does Psychological Capital Mediate the Relationship between Organizational Socialization and Task Performance among Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

The indirect effects analysis further unpacked the nuanced ways in which psychological capital components mediate the relationship between organizational socialization and task performance. Interestingly, while most components had a positive mediating effect, the efficacy component was noted to have a negative indirect effect, although this did not overshadow the overall positive influence of socialization on task performance, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3. Indirect effects of organizational socialization on task performance through psychological capital.

Mediator	Completely Standardized Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total	0.1762	0.0308	0.1145	0.2354
PC Self-Efficacy	−0.0260	0.0231	−0.0724	0.0188
PC Hope	0.0608	0.0207	0.0194	0.1007
PC Resilience	0.0636	0.0164	0.0321	0.0965
PC Optimism	0.0778	0.0159	0.0462	0.1092

4.4. RQ 1b: In What Ways Does Organizational Socialization Impact the Contextual Performance of Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

Focusing on the outcome of contextual performance, the results demonstrated a substantial direct effect of organizational socialization on contextual performance. The total effect model showcased a strong relationship between organizational socialization and contextual performance, as Table 4 shows.

Table 4. Main effects of organizational socialization on psychological capital and contextual performance.

Variable	R ²	MSE	F	p	Standardized Coefficients (Organizational Socialization)
PC Self-Efficacy	0.3706	0.2268	634.2715	0.0000	0.6088
PC Hope	0.2891	0.2227	438.0026	0.0000	0.5377
PC Resilience	0.2246	0.1958	311.9543	0.0000	0.4739
PC Optimism	0.1796	0.2607	235.7552	0.0000	0.4238
Contextual Performance (Model Summary)	0.5499	0.0984	262.1792	0.0000	0.2914
Contextual Performance (Total Effect Model)	0.4025	0.1301	725.6378	0.0000	0.6345

4.5. RQ 2b: What Is the Mediating Role of Psychological Capital in the Relationship between Organizational Socialization and Contextual Performance of Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

This study's findings underscore the complexity of the influence mechanisms, as well as the significant indirect effects through the mediating variables, with organizational socialization directly fostering contextual performance and indirectly shaping it through psychological capital. As Table 5 displays, the mediating role of psychological capital components elucidates the multifaceted ways in which organizational practices and individual psychological resources interact to drive performance.

Table 5. Indirect effects of organizational socialization on contextual performance through psychological capital.

Mediator	Completely Standardized Effect	BootSE (CS)	BootLLCI (CS)	BootULCI (CS)
Total	0.3431	0.0239	0.2973	0.3906
PC Self-Efficacy	0.1051	0.0207	0.0639	0.1451
PC Hope	0.1065	0.0182	0.0717	0.1434
PC Resilience	0.0521	0.0152	0.0237	0.0840
PC Optimism	0.0794	0.0152	0.0505	0.1107

4.6. RQ 1c: How Does the Organizational Socialization Process Shape the Adaptive Performance of Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

Focusing on adaptive performance as the outcome, the analysis presented a nuanced picture. The direct effect of organizational socialization on adaptive performance, while positive, underscored a more complex interplay when considering the mediating role of the psychological capital components (see Tables 6 and 7). These mediators collectively accounted for a significant portion of the relationship between organizational socialization and adaptive performance, indicating that the influence of socialization extends beyond a direct impact.

Table 6. Main effects of organizational socialization on psychological capital and adaptive performance.

Variable	R ²	MSE	F	p	Standardized Coefficients (Organizational Socialization)
PC Self-Efficacy	0.3706	0.2268	634.3	<0.0001	0.6088
PC Hope	0.2891	0.2227	438.0	<0.0001	0.5377
PC Resilience	0.2246	0.1958	312.0	<0.0001	0.4739
PC Optimism	0.1796	0.2607	235.8	<0.0001	0.4238
Adaptive Performance (Model Summary)	0.4176	0.1408	153.9	<0.0001	0.1475
Adaptive Performance (Total Effect Model)	0.2429	0.1823	345.6	<0.0001	0.4929

Table 7. Indirect effects of organizational socialization on adaptive performance through psychological capital.

Mediator	Completely Standardized Effect	BootSE (CS)	BootLLCI (CS)	BootULCI (CS)
Total	0.3454	0.0257	0.2960	0.3969
PC Self-Efficacy	0.0787	0.0187	0.0421	0.1147
PC Hope	0.1243	0.0199	0.087	0.1651
PC Resilience	0.1246	0.0170	0.0914	0.1583
PC Optimism	0.0178	0.0153	−0.0116	0.0481

4.7. RQ 2c: How Does Psychological Capital Mediate the Relationship between Organizational Socialization and the Adaptive Performance of Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

The indirect effects through psychological capital components were notably varied, each contributing differently to the adaptive performance outcome. This variation highlights the distinctive roles that efficacy, hope, resiliency, and optimism play in translating the benefits of organizational socialization into adaptive performance enhancements.

4.8. RQ 1d: What Is the Relationship between Organizational Socialization and Counterproductive Behaviors among Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

Organizational socialization was found to have significant negative direct effects on counterproductive performance. Specifically, organizational socialization had a negative total effect on counterproductive performance, suggesting that as socialization increases, counterproductive behaviors decrease.

4.9. RQ 2d: In What Ways Does Psychological Capital Mediate the Relationship between Organizational Socialization and the Reduction in Counterproductive Behaviors among Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institutions?

This effect was further delineated into direct and indirect effects, with both types of effects being statistically significant. The direct effect highlighted the immediate impact of socialization on reducing counterproductive behaviors, as Table 8 shows.

Table 8. Main effects of organizational socialization on psychological capital and counterproductive performance.

Variable	R ²	MSE	F	p	Standardized Coefficients (Organizational Socialization)
PC Self-Efficacy	0.3706	0.2268	634.3	<0.0001	0.6088
PC Hope	0.2891	0.2227	438.0	<0.0001	0.5377
PC Resilience	0.2246	0.1958	311.9	<0.0001	0.4739
PC Optimism	0.1796	0.2607	235.8	<0.0001	0.4238
Counterproductive Performance (Model Summary)	0.2107	0.2775	57.3	<0.0001	−0.3641
Counterproductive Performance (Total Effect Model)	0.1456	0.2993	183.53	<0.0001	−0.3816

In contrast, the indirect effects, facilitated through the psychological capital components, underscored how socialization indirectly influences counterproductive performance by enhancing individuals' psychological resources, as Table 9 displays.

Table 9. Completely standardized indirect effects of organizational socialization on counterproductive performance through psychological capital components.

Mediator	Completely Standardized Effect	BootSE (CS)	BootLLCI (CS)	BootULCI (CS)
Total	−0.0175	0.0317	−0.0802	0.0451
PC Self-Efficacy	0.0864	0.0240	0.0381	0.1322
PC Hope	0.0488	0.0228	0.0028	0.0927
PC Resilience	−0.0544	0.0186	−0.0920	−0.0179
PC Optimism	−0.0982	0.0182	−0.1359	−0.0639

The psychological capital components each played a unique role in mediating the relationship between organizational socialization and counterproductive performance. Efficacy, hope, and optimism were found to reduce counterproductive behaviors, whereas resilience showed a mixed effect. These findings suggest that enhancing psychological capital through organizational socialization can be an effective strategy for reducing counterproductive behaviors in the workplace.

5. Discussion

The results of the current study underscore the significant role of psychological capital as a mediator between organizational socialization and job performance among Chinese higher education teachers. This study provides insight into how psychological capital—comprising psychological efficacy, hope, resiliency, and optimism—enhances various dimensions of job performance, including task, contextual, and adaptive performance, and helps mitigate counterproductive behaviors.

It is important to clarify that the seminal work of Luthans, Youssef et al. [23], while instrumental in establishing the relationship between effective onboarding and psychological capital, was not specifically conducted within the field of education but rather focused on a broader organizational context. Acknowledging this distinction is crucial as it contextualizes our application of their findings to the educational sector, an extension that contributes originality to our research. Furthermore, their study did not rely on self-reported performance metrics, which differ from our methodological approach where job performance ratings were provided by university teachers themselves. This reliance on self-assessment could introduce bias, a limitation that should be considered when interpreting our findings.

Despite this methodological limitation, the association observed in our study between higher levels of organizational socialization and increased psychological capital suggests that well-socialized employees are more likely to develop a robust psychological resource base, positively impacting job performance. This effect was directly observable in the enhancement of task performance, reinforcing the value of effective socialization practices.

The mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between employee attitudes and behaviors is supported by other research, such as Bakker et al. [39]. However, contrasting findings by Kappagoda et al. [40] suggest that work attitudes may only partially mediate this relationship, indicating that factors other than psychological capital could also be influential. Additionally, alternative mediators, such as the altruistic values proposed by Azila-Gbettor [41], could coexist with psychological capital in influencing contextual performance.

Our findings concerning the efficacy component of psychological capital indicate a complex interplay in its role as a mediator, demonstrating both direct and indirect effects on job performance. This complexity is further echoed in studies by Kappagoda, Othman, Zainul, et al. (2014), which highlight the unique contributions of each psychological capital component. The nuanced effects of these components underscore the need for targeted interventions to cultivate specific facets of psychological capital, thereby optimizing job performance outcomes.

The substantial direct and mediated effects of organizational socialization on contextual and adaptive performance, as well as its significant negative impact on counterproductive behaviors, illustrate the multifaceted impact of socialization practices within educational institutions. These findings underscore the potential of organizational socialization to foster environments that enhance employees' adaptability and commitment to their roles while minimizing behaviors detrimental to organizational goals. The multifaceted impact of socialization practices on task, contextual, and adaptive performance aligns with research by Anjum et al. [42], who identified similar positive effects on performance.

The nuanced role of psychological capital components in mediating these relationships highlights the unique contribution of each component to different performance outcomes [43]. The varied indirect effects through psychological capital components on adaptive performance, in particular, emphasize the distinctive roles of efficacy, hope, resiliency, and optimism. This differentiation points to the value of targeted interventions aimed at developing specific components of psychological capital to optimize job performance outcomes [44].

While the majority of the literature supports the mediating role of psychological capital in enhancing job performance through organizational socialization [45], some studies present findings that diverge or challenge this relationship [46]. Research by

Kappagoda et al. [47] suggests that the mediating effect of psychological capital might be weaker in certain industries. Their study in the service sector found a less significant mediating effect compared to other industries. In conclusion, while our study supports the literature on the beneficial effects of organizational socialization mediated by psychological capital, we acknowledge the divergence in findings across different contexts and industries, as noted by Kappagoda, Othman, Fithri, et al. (2014) [40]. Such variations emphasize the context-dependent nature of these relationships and suggest a potential variability in the strength of psychological capital's mediating role across different sectors. This discussion raises pertinent questions for future research, particularly regarding the methodological robustness and contextual applicability of the psychological capital framework in educational settings.

Our findings emphasize the critical role of organizational socialization in not only directly fostering better task performance but also in enhancing the psychological resources that mediate this relationship. These insights provide valuable implications for organizational practices, suggesting that fostering an environment that promotes socialization can lead to substantial benefits in employee performance, partly by nurturing their psychological capital. This study's comprehensive analysis underlines the complex interplay between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and contextual performance, contributing to the broader understanding of how organizational environments influence employee outcomes. Through highlighting the significance of psychological capital as a mediating factor, this research underscores the potential of organizational socialization as a lever for enhancing employee performance and well-being.

The total effect of organizational socialization on adaptive performance was significant, demonstrating its comprehensive impact when both direct and mediated paths are considered. This finding emphasizes the importance of organizational socialization in fostering an environment conducive to high adaptive performance mediated through the enhancement of psychological capital. This research underscores the importance of organizational socialization processes in fostering an environment that not only promotes positive psychological attributes among employees but also diminishes the likelihood of counterproductive behaviors.

To sum up, the present study contributes to the broader understanding of how organizational environments influence employee outcomes by underscoring the critical role of psychological capital as a mediating factor [48]. The findings suggest that organizational practices aimed at enhancing socialization can yield substantial benefits in employee performance and well-being, partly by nurturing their psychological capital.

5.1. Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study stems from its sampling method and demographic scope. The research was exclusively conducted among higher education teachers in China, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other populations, cultural contexts, or educational settings. The average age and tenure of the participants might not represent the diversity found in the broader academic workforce, potentially biasing the results towards the experiences and perceptions of mid-career faculty members. Moreover, the present sample is not representative of the large population of higher education teachers in China, which the Ministry of Education estimated in 2023 as 2.07 million full-time teachers [49]. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data through a quantitative survey introduces the possibility of response bias, where participants might provide socially desirable answers rather than truthful responses. The use of professional social networks and institutional email lists for recruitment could also skew the sample towards more engaged or technologically adept educators, which may not accurately reflect the entire population of higher education teachers.

Another limitation is the instruments used for data collection. While the Organizational Socialization Domains questionnaire and the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24) are established tools, the absence of a validated Chinese version of the former

and potential cultural nuances in interpreting psychological capital in the Chinese context might affect the reliability and validity of the data collected. Studies like the one by Anglin et al. [50] highlight the need for further research on how we measure psychological capital and its various components, which can impact the observed relationships. We acknowledge the need for further exploration, particularly regarding the unexpected finding with efficacy. This aligns with the broader call for research on the specific conditions influencing how psychological capital components function, as mentioned by Ngwenya and Pelsler [51]. This study's reliance on correlational analyses limits its ability to infer causality between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance. The statistical methods employed can indicate associations but cannot definitively determine if one variable causes changes in another.

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

To overcome the limitations highlighted by this study, future research should expand its demographic focus to include a wider array of educators across different countries, cultures, and educational stages. Adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative with qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could uncover deeper insights into organizational socialization and psychological capital in educational contexts. This methodological expansion could also address the constraints of relying solely on self-reported data by offering a fuller picture of participants' experiences and views.

There is a clear need for the development and validation of a Chinese version of the Organizational Socialization Domains questionnaire to ensure its accuracy and applicability in Chinese academic settings. Further, assessing the cross-cultural reliability of psychological capital measurements would enhance our comprehension of these concepts in varied cultural frameworks. Longitudinal research is crucial for shedding light on the temporal evolution of organizational socialization and psychological capital, along with their sustained effects on job performance. This would aid in elucidating the causative relationships and interactions among these variables over time.

Lastly, implementing experimental or quasi-experimental studies to directly manipulate key variables could provide stronger evidence of causal links between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance. Researching potential interventions aimed at improving these aspects in educational staff can offer actionable strategies for educational institutions to bolster faculty efficacy and well-being.

5.3. Implications for Practice

The insights from our study underscore several practical strategies that higher education institutions can implement to enhance psychological capital and facilitate effective organizational socialization among their faculty. One key strategy involves the development of comprehensive socialization programs. These programs are tailored specifically for both new and existing faculty members, aiming to ease their integration into the academic community. Such programs should offer a structured orientation that introduces faculty to institutional values, norms, and expectations and includes mentorship opportunities with experienced colleagues. Additionally, these programs might incorporate induction sessions that detail available resources and support systems, complemented by ongoing meetings to ensure faculty members receive continuous support throughout their adjustment period.

Further, initiatives aimed at developing faculty's psychological capital, such as workshops focused on resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, are crucial. These interventions are designed to enhance faculty members' capabilities to handle academic challenges effectively, thereby improving their job performance and overall job satisfaction. By providing training that targets these areas of psychological capital, institutions can empower their faculty to achieve higher levels of personal and professional growth, for instance, through job crafting behaviors [52].

Regular monitoring and evaluation of both socialization processes and the levels of psychological capital among faculty also play a critical role in these initiatives. Institutions might implement this through regular surveys or interviews that assess faculty experiences and outcomes, helping identify successful practices and areas needing improvement [53].

Creating a culture that values continuous improvement and learning is another significant aspect of fostering a supportive environment. This involves encouraging faculty to engage in ongoing professional development and collaborative research and teaching initiatives. Such a culture not only motivates faculty to enhance their skills and knowledge but also supports their socialization in the academic community.

Lastly, it is essential to adapt policies to the diverse needs of the faculty. Recognizing the variability in cultural backgrounds, career stages, and individual preferences is crucial when designing socialization and psychological capital development programs. Tailoring these efforts to meet the specific needs of faculty members ensures that the initiatives are effective and inclusive. By focusing on these areas, higher education institutions can leverage the insights from this study to foster environments that enhance job performance and contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of their faculty. Implementing these recommendations requires a commitment to ongoing evaluation and adaptation, ensuring that policies and practices remain responsive to the evolving needs of the academic community [11].

6. Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of psychological capital as a mediating factor in the relationship between organizational socialization and job performance among higher education teachers in China. Enhanced organizational socialization positively impacts job performance across various dimensions by increasing levels of psychological capital—namely, self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. This aligns with the theoretical framework suggesting that well-socialized employees are more likely to develop a robust psychological resource base, which in turn positively affects their job performance. Additionally, our research supports the existing literature on the positive association between effective socialization practices and psychological capital, further highlighting the importance of organizational socialization in immediate task-related performance improvements.

Our study significantly advances the understanding of the interplay between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance in the specific context of Chinese higher education. By exploring the cultural nuances of this relationship, we provide valuable insights into how these dynamics manifest within a unique cultural and organizational setting. We also elucidate the mediating role of psychological capital, offering a deeper exploration into how it bridges the impact of organizational socialization on various dimensions of job performance.

Importantly, the sustainability of higher education institutions is intricately linked to their ability to foster environments that promote psychological capital among faculty. Institutions that invest in comprehensive socialization programs and psychological capital development are better positioned to enhance not only immediate job performance but also long-term faculty well-being and institutional resilience. Such practices contribute to the sustainability of higher education by ensuring that faculty members are equipped to handle challenges and changes in the academic environment, thereby maintaining their effectiveness and reducing turnover.

Our findings also reveal several research gaps and opportunities for future investigation. The nuanced relationship between the components of psychological capital and job performance suggests the need for more detailed exploration into how these elements interact. Additionally, the presence of partially contrasting findings and alternative mediating variables proposed by other studies indicates that the interplay between organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance is complex and may be influenced by other factors.

By addressing these research gaps, future studies can build on our findings to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of organizational socialization, psychological capital, and job performance. This will not only contribute to the theoretical understanding of these constructs but also offer practical implications for enhancing job performance and well-being in educational and other organizational settings. Ultimately, such research supports the sustainability of higher education institutions by promoting a holistic approach to faculty development and performance enhancement.

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Appendix A. List of Items: Organizational Socialization Questionnaire, English and Chinese Versions

"I possess limited knowledge regarding the historical development and background of my academic department."	"我对本学科的历史发展和背景了解有限"
"I am unacquainted with the university's customs, rituals, ceremonies, and significant celebratory events, which are integral to its culture."	"我不了解大学的习俗、礼仪、仪式和重大庆祝活动,而这些都是大学文化的组成部分。"
"I am well-versed in the longstanding traditions of the university."	"我熟知大学的悠久传统。"
"I have not yet mastered the specialized terminology and vocabulary that are specific to my academic discipline."	"我尚未掌握本学科特有的专业术语和词汇。"
"I am not yet familiar with the informal language, slang, and special jargon used within this university."	"我还不熟悉本大学使用的非正式语言、俚语和特殊行话。"
"I do not always understand the meanings of the abbreviations and acronyms commonly used within this academic institution."	"我并不总能理解本学术机构常用的缩略语和首字母缩写词的含义。"
"I have a thorough understanding of the specific meanings of words, terms, and jargon relevant to my academic field."	"我完全理解与我的学术领域相关的单词、术语和行话的具体含义。"
"I comprehend most of the acronyms and abbreviations specific to my academic discipline."	"我理解我所在学科的大部分缩略语和缩写词。"
"I am aware of who holds significant influence within this academic institution."	"我知道谁在这所学术机构中具有重大影响。"
"I have a good grasp of the motivations behind the actions of colleagues and decision-makers within the university."	"我能够很好地把握大学内同事和决策者行动背后的动机。"
"I can identify the key individuals who are crucial for facilitating academic work and achieving objectives within this institution."	"我能够识别对促进学术工作和实现本机构目标至关重要的关键人物。"
"I do not consider any of my colleagues or fellow students as my friends."	"我不认为我的同事或同学是我的朋友"

"I am often not included in social gatherings organized by others within the academic department or university."	"我经常不参加学术部门或大学内其他人组织的社交聚会"。
"Within my academic department, I am easily recognized as 'one of the group.'"	"在我所在的学术部门，我很容易被认作是'群体中的一员'"。
"I am frequently left out of informal networks or gatherings within this university."	"我经常被排除在大学的非正式网络或聚会之外。"
"I am quite popular within the academic community."	"我在学术界很受欢迎。"
"I believe most of my peers or colleagues like me."	"我相信大多数同行或同事都喜欢我。"
"I would serve as an exemplary representative of my university."	"我将成为大学的模范代表"。
"The objectives of my university align with my personal and professional goals."	"大学的目标与我的个人和职业目标一致"。
"I perceive myself as being well integrated into the university culture and ethos."	"我认为自己已经很好地融入了大学的文化和精神。"
"I do not always subscribe to the values espoused by my university."	"我并不总是认同我所在大学所倡导的价值观"。
"I have a clear understanding of my university's objectives and aims."	"我清楚地了解大学的目标和宗旨。"
"I exemplify the qualities and values that my university seeks to embody in its members."	"我是我校力求在其成员身上体现的品质和价值观的典范"。
"I am still in the process of learning the essential aspects of my role within the university."	"我仍在学习我在大学中所扮演角色的基本方面。"
"I have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to perform my academic or administrative duties efficiently and successfully."	"我已经掌握了高效、成功地履行学术或行政职责所需的知识和技能。"
"I have achieved proficiency in the tasks and responsibilities required in my academic or administrative position."	"我已熟练掌握学术或行政岗位所需的任务和职责。"
"I am yet to fully develop the skills and competencies needed for excellence in my role within the university."	"我尚未完全掌握在大学中担任出色职务所需的技能和能力"（由"我尚未完全掌握在大学中担任出色职务所需的技能和能力"修订）。
"I fully understand the scope and responsibilities of my role within the academic institution."	"我完全了解自己在学术机构中的职责范围和责任。"

List of items of the Individual Work Performance scale, developed by Koopmans et al. (2014) [21], English and Chinese versions.

1. The quality of my teaching and research over the last three months has been very good.	在过去三个月中，我的教学和研究质量非常好。
2. The quality of my academic work over the last three months has improved compared to last year.	相比去年，我在最近三个月的学术工作质量有所提高。
3. In the last three months, the quality of my academic contributions has fallen short of my own expectations.	近三个月，我的学术贡献质量未达到我自己的预期。
4. The amount of research I have conducted in the past three months has been appropriate.	过去三个月我进行的研究量是适当的。
5. I have dedicated more time to research in the last three months than I did in the previous year.	我在过去三个月里投入到研究的时间比去年多

6.	I have managed my academic tasks well, ensuring that all were completed on time.	我很好地管理了我的学术任务，确保所有任务都按时完成。
7.	I have been mindful of the outcomes I aim to achieve in my research and teaching.	我对我在研究和教学中旨在实现的成果保持着清晰的认识。
8.	I have faced challenges in prioritizing my tasks in academia.	我在学术任务的优先排序中遇到了挑战。
9.	I have been able to distinguish between primary and secondary issues in my research work.	在研究工作中，我能够区分主要问题和次要问题。
10.	I have been able to perform my academic duties with minimal time and effort.	我能够以最少的时间和努力履行我的学术职责
11.	It has taken me longer than expected to complete my academic duties.	完成学术职责所需的时间比预期长。
12.	I have adhered to my planned schedule.	我遵守了自己计划的日程安排。
13.	I have met my responsibilities in teaching and research.	我履行了教学和研究的职责。
14.	Collaboration with my colleagues has been productive.	与同事的合作是高效的。
15.	My communications with others have been effectively understood.	我与他人的沟通被有效理解。
16.	I have correctly understood the communications from others.	我正确理解了他人的沟通。
17.	My interactions with others have led to the desired outcomes.	我与他人的互动达到了预期的结果。
18.	I have contributed creative ideas to my academic field.	我为我的学术领域贡献了创新思维。
19.	I have taken the initiative when a problem in my department needed to be solved.	当部门需要解决问题时，我主动采取行动。
20.	I have taken the initiative when there was something to be organized within the faculty.	当学院有事情需要组织时，我主动承担责任。
21.	I have independently started new projects after completing previous ones.	完成前项任务后，我自主开展新项目。
22.	I have sought assistance when necessary.	需要时我会寻求帮助。
23.	I have been receptive to criticism of my academic work.	我对学术工作中的批评持开放态度。
24.	I have attempted to learn from the feedback received on my teaching and research.	我尝试从教学和研究反馈中学习。
25.	I have taken on challenging tasks when they were available.	有挑战性的任务可接时，我承担了这些任务。
26.	I believe that my colleagues are satisfied with my contribution to the department.	我相信同事对我在部门的贡献感到满意。
27.	I have aligned my work with the goals set by my department leaders.	我的工作与部门领导设定的目标一致。

28.	I have made efforts to ensure that my knowledge in my field is current.	我努力确保我在领域内的知识是最新的。
29.	I have worked to maintain my physical and mental well-being.	我努力保持身心健康。
30.	I have demonstrated flexibility in my teaching and research approaches.	我在教学和研究方法上显示了灵活性。
31.	I have successfully managed difficult situations and setbacks.	我成功地管理了困难的情况和挫折。
32.	I have quickly recovered from challenging situations in my academic role.	我能从学术角色中的挑战中迅速恢复。
33.	I have offered creative solutions to new challenges in academia.	我为学术中的新挑战提供了创造性解决方案。
34.	I have been capable of handling uncertain and unpredictable circumstances in my work.	我能够处理工作中不确定和无法预测的情况。
35.	I have easily adapted to changes in the academic environment.	我能够轻松适应学术环境中的变化。
36.	I have voiced complaints about aspects of my academic work that were not truly significant.	我曾对实际并不重要的学术工作方面提出过抱怨。
37.	I have exaggerated the severity of problems in my department.	我夸大了问题的严重性。
38.	I have focused on the negative aspects of my work rather than the positive.	我关注工作中的负面方面而非积极方面。
39.	I have discussed the negative aspects of academia with my colleagues.	我与同事讨论了学术工作中的负面方面。
40.	I have spoken with individuals outside the university about the challenges in my work.	我向学院外的人讨论了我的工作挑战。
41.	I have purposely worked slowly on some tasks.	我故意放慢工作进度。
42.	I have left work incomplete for others to finish deliberately.	我故意留下未完成的工作，让别人去完成。
43.	I have behaved unpleasantly towards a colleague.	我对某位同事表现出不友好的行为。
44.	I have engaged in disputes with my peers.	我与同事发生了争论。
45.	I have intentionally made mistakes in my work.	我故意犯错。

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