

## Work orientation and job expectations among Chinese college students

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Received: 20 July 2024

Available Online: 15 August 2024

Revised: 13 August 2024

DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2024.24735

Accepted: 14 August 2024

ISSN: 2243-7703

Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS



### ***Abstract***

The study evaluated the work orientation and job expectations among Chinese college students order to propose a plan of action for an enhanced student career development. It described the profile of the respondent in terms of sex, year level, home location and school type; determined the respondents' work orientation in terms of financial compensation, career advancement and influence, calling, social embeddedness, and busyness; identified the respondents' job expectations in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects; tested the differences in responses when grouped according to profile; tested the relationship between work orientation and job expectation; and proposed a plan of action for an enhanced student career development. The descriptive method was used in this study with 500 Chinese college students with different profiles. Reliable and validated questionnaire was employed to gather data. The gathered data was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA, t-test, and a quantitative descriptive study technique. Based on the findings, majority of the respondents were male in their Senior year living in rural areas going to private schools. Most of the respondents agreed on the indicators regarding work orientation in terms of financial compensation except from Item 1 which showed a disagreement among respondents. A general agreement was indicated on the indicators in terms of career advancement and influence, calling, social embeddedness, and busyness. Most of the respondents agreed on indicators regarding job expectation in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. Findings showed highly significant relationship between work orientation and job expectation. Recommendations for future research were proposed promoting interdisciplinary research collaborations that address the diverse facets of work orientation and employment expectations.

***Keywords:*** work orientation, job expectations, job orientation, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation

## Work orientation and job expectations among Chinese college students

### 1. Introduction

The evolving workplace is significantly influenced by the attitudes and expectations of the upcoming workforce, especially college graduates, who transition into the professional realm after graduation. Understanding the work orientation and job expectations of college students in China is of great relevance considering the country's fast socioeconomic volatility. As China further establishes its worldwide influence, the perspectives and objectives of its upcoming employees have a significant bearing on the country's growth, institutional strategies, and personal paths to success.

According to Mantler et al. (2022), during the mid-career stage, individuals have a clearer understanding of their work orientation, which refers to how they see their work as either a profession, professional path, or calling. Career-oriented individuals distinguish themselves from others based on their shorter time in employment, higher inclinations to switch jobs, strong commitment to work, contentment with their profession, and inclination to compare their career progress with others. There were no notable variations between the work-orientation groups in terms of family prominence, balance between work and personal life happiness, or well-being. This indicates that work orientation is a unique and equally legitimate approach. Work orientation has a strong correlation with job satisfaction and exhibits notable differences across male and female be as permanent and temporary workers (Zou, 2015). A growing proportion of students are prolonging graduation or completing their studies without securing employment because of their lack of preparedness in making a professional option. Professionals who possess distinct work orientations are more adept at establishing significant professional objectives, making well-informed job choices, and pursuing paths that are in line with their abilities, interests, and beliefs (Doo, et. al.,2019).

In a study conducted by Boova et al. (2019), they stated that work orientation and cultural justifications of work are significant aspects of the literature on productive employment. Their research explored the concept of labor's intrinsic value, contending that discussions on significance should be rooted within social culture and the prevailing work orientations seen in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, culture may exert influence on people by affirming certain cultural principles and concepts or empowering individuals to choose certain points of view from a wide range of choices. At the collective level, individuals have the ability to initiate a shift in cultural interpretations. Several crucial unresolved inquiries about valuable research are outlined with the aim of providing directions for future researchers in this domain. Meanwhile, according to Jeong et al. (2023), job expectations are broader concepts than duties or career identities. The study conducted by Molwitz et al. (2023) assessed job expectations, fulfillment, prevalence of weariness, and factors associated with exhaustion among radiologists at various career stages. According to their research, it was determined that the majority of radiologists derive satisfaction from their profession; nevertheless, residents expressed a need for a more organized and comprehensive training program. Implementing measures to guarantee compensation for additional hours worked and promoting employee autonomy can be effective in mitigating burnout in high-risk populations.

The primary job expectations of radiologists in Germany include job satisfaction, a positive work environment, opportunities for professional development, and a well-organized residency program within the designated time frame, which residents believe should be further enhanced. Physical and emotional fatigue are prevalent among individuals in all professional stages, with the exception of chief doctors and radiologists, who practice in ambulatory care settings rather than hospitals. Exhaustion, a significant factor contributing to burnout, is linked to working unpaid overtime and having few opportunities to influence the work environment. Zhang et al. (2019) stated that a significant proportion of the discrepancies in job satisfaction between China and other nations may be attributed to differing job quality and expectations. Specifically, this may be linked to unfulfilled

employment expectations regarding engaging in work, competitive compensation, and prospects for career growth. They further implied that is important to acknowledge that Chinese workers, contrary to popular assumptions, place importance on qualities comparable to Western workers. However, they regard their working circumstances as significantly different from those in Western countries.

Mbise (2016) aimed to analyze and compare the career prospects anticipated by students in programs provided by two business schools in Tanzania, considering market demand, occupational area of expertise, and statistics prior to graduation. The level of student satisfaction with the learning, abilities, and capabilities they obtained was assessed, and it was recommended that their expectations about employment opportunities were managed. When companies meet or exceed students' expectations, they are more likely to remain interested, inspired, and devoted to their careers. This leads to lower turnover rates and helps businesses develop their talent. Students and young people in China are deeply influenced by the country's rich cultural past and major shifts in its socioeconomic landscape, which greatly impact their work attitudes and career goals. Analyzing the work orientation and employment expectations of Chinese college students is crucial for steering strategies, procedures, and initiatives targeted at promoting professional achievement, organizational effectiveness, and socioeconomic development in China. Understanding the motives, expectations, and barriers that college graduates face may allow sectors to collaborate and create an environment favorable to fulfilling the full potential of college students in China and potentially promote long-term and continuous development for the country.

There may be gaps and issues in understanding the precise elements of these interventions that have the greatest impact on students' work orientation and employment expectations, as well as the lasting results of such initiatives. Researches may frequently highlight the importance of educational institutions in influencing students' readiness for their careers through initiatives such as career counseling and internships. Although there may be significant research on student perspectives, there may be a relative scarcity of studies that concentrate on the employer expectations and attitudes of Chinese college graduates. By developing a highly trained, versatile, and internationally oriented workforce, China may strengthen its value for multinational firms, boost development driven by innovation, and solidify its standing as a global economic leader. This study aimed to ascertain the work orientation and employment expectations of Chinese college students. This enabled them to propose a strategic plan of action to enhance their career development.

**Objectives of the Study** - This study examined the relationship among work orientation and several factors such as financial compensation, career advancement and influence, calling, belongingness, and busyness. The study also evaluated the job expectations of Chinese college students in terms of internal and extrinsic elements, and identified the primary components that influenced their professional decision-making processes in order to propose a plan of action for an enhanced student career development. Specifically, this study determined the respondents' work orientation in terms of financial compensation, career advancement and influence, calling, social embeddedness, and busyness; identified the respondents' job expectations in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects; tested the relationship between work orientation and job expectation; and proposed a plan of action for an enhanced student career development.

## **2. Methods**

**Research Design** - The descriptive method was used in this study by describing the work orientation and expectations among Chinese college students. The descriptive method was used because it offered an extensive and meticulous analysis of occurrences, enabling the researcher to gather data that precisely reflected the topic under investigation. This aided in the categorization and explanation of concepts and variables. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter was crucial for its development. According to Nassaji (2015), descriptive research is a type of research used to describe a phenomenon or an individual or group of people and their characteristics. This is a research strategy that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon under study. The emphasis of this descriptive technique is on the subject of the study rather than on the causes of its

activities. To investigate one or more variables, descriptive study designs may employ various research approaches. Researchers, in contrast to experimental investigations, observe and quantify variables without controlling or manipulating them. A survey approach was utilized to investigate the level of work orientation and job expectations among Chinese college students.

**Participants of the Study** - For the study, the researcher selected 471 Chinese college students. The quantitative research method was utilized in gathering data for the study. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator, a sample size of 471 was included from a total of 500 students. The confidence level of this study was 95% and the margin of error was 5%. Simple random sampling techniques was used to select the students to be surveyed.

**Instrument of the Study** - This study utilized a quantitative research approach to collect data. The researcher prepared an online survey using google form. The survey showed four parts . The first part identified the respondents' profile, such as sex, year level, home location and school type. The second part dealt with the respondents' work orientation, and the third section evaluated the respondents' job expectations. In Part I, respondents were asked to provide demographic information about themselves. This included their sex, year level, home location, and school type. Part II focused on determining the respondents' work orientation in terms of financial compensation, career advancement and influence, calling, belongingness and busyness wherein respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was adapted from the study written by Tirza et al. (2019). In Part III, respondents determined their level of agreement regarding job satisfaction in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors using the same scale. The questionnaire was adapted from the study of Tomkiewicz et al. (2011). The contents of the instrument used in this study underwent rigorous verification and validation processes to ensure its reliability. The instrument was first examined and validated by a panel of experts in the field and ensured that it adequately measured the intended constructs. Reliability test of the questionnaires is indicated below:

**Table A**  
*Reliability Test Result*

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Financial Compensation	0.884	Good
Career Advancement and Influence	0.862	Good
Calling	0.849	Good
Belongingness	0.896	Good
Busyness	0.901	Excellent
Intrinsic	0.944	Excellent
Extrinsic	0.931	Excellent

*George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: “\_ > .9 – Excellent, \_ > .8 – Good, \_ > .7 – Acceptable, \_ > .6 – Questionable, \_ > .5 – Poor, and \_ < .5 – Unacceptable”*

Table A showed that indicators of the instrument exhibited excellent to good levels of reliability. These results indicated that the instrument measured the intended constructs and can be relied upon to provide accurate and consistent data. The questionnaire was derived from George and Mallery (2003). The Cronbach's alpha values suggested that the items in each section are interrelated and contribute to measuring the variables effectively. Thus, the reliability of the instrument strengthened the credibility and legitimacy of the research findings.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The data gathering procedure in this study involved the collection of data from the respondents using a validated survey questionnaire with rating scales. The questionnaires were distributed to 500 Chinese university professors using Google Forms. The research instrument was designed with the help of a research adviser and field experts. After the tool was approved, the researcher obtained consent from the school heads of the higher vocational colleges involved. A detailed explanation of the research was provided, including the objectives and possible ethical considerations. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents upon approval. After collecting the responses, the researcher checked for missing responses and input the data into the SPSS software for statistical analysis.

**Data Analysis** - To perform data analysis, the following statistical tools were used. Weighted means and ranking were used to assess the work orientation and job expectation. The result of Shapiro-Wilk Test revealed that p-values of four major variables are less than 0.05 which means that the data set is not normally distributed. Spearman rho was used to test the significant relationship between work orientation and job expectation. The following Likert Scale was used in assessing the variables: 3.50-4.00 – Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49 – Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 –Disagree; and 1.00 – 1.49 –Strongly Disagree. In addition, all data were treated using a statistical software known as PASW version 26 to further interpret the result of the study using an alpha level of 0.05.

**Ethical Consideration** - To safeguard the privacy of respondents, the researcher refrained from disclosing any individual identities. The researcher ensured confidentiality on personal interactions with the participants, respected their privacy and obtained consent before accessing any sensitive information. The analysis was conducted in a manner that will prioritize the well-being of the participants and ensure that their data will be accurately represented in the study. The researchers abstained from expressing personal viewpoints and solely present information and findings derived from the collected data. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and be informed that the survey will solely serve the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the study underwent a rigorous ethics review process and was granted approval.

### 3. Results and discussion

**Table 1**

*Summary Table on Work Orientation*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Financial Compensation	2.66	Agree	5
2. Career Advancement and Influence	2.68	Agree	2
3. Calling	2.68	Agree	2
4. Belongingness	2.67	Agree	4
5. Busyness	2.68	Agree	2
Composite Mean	2.68	Agree	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Gaining information on work orientation may assist college students in demonstrating their job intentions and ambitions. This level of clarity may act as a guiding factor in the selection of academic disciplines, professional work experience, and additional activities outside of regular coursework. This will enable students to make informed decisions regarding their career prospects. Individuals have the ability to synchronize their educational endeavors with their future career goals. Students who prioritize work may cultivate the necessary soft skills such as managing time, interacting with others, and collaboration, which are vital for achieving success in their careers.

PM et al. (2023) presented innovative methods to enhance the job search procedure by clarifying the interconnected process between job orientation and proactive job hunting. A targeted job search driven by perceived employability can assist graduates in effectively launching sustained careers and navigating the employment market. The study revealed that an increased perception of employability significantly influences the level of engagement in active job-seeking activities. Additionally, it has been discovered that expected employability is linked to an aggressive job search via a job-seeking focus on learning objectives and prepared job search behavior. To add, Gong et al. (2023) investigated the impact of a protean career orientation on job-hunting behavior, specifically focusing on the function of professional positivity and the reducing impact of coaching connections. Protean career orientation is a crucial factor in understanding why people strategize and oversee their careers. In the nursing profession, a protean career plan helps nurses with their job searches, career advancement, and ability to adjust to evolving requirements. The findings indicate a substantial correlation between protean career orientation and career optimism as well as a positive correlation with job search. There was a strong correlation between a positive outlook on one's career and actively seeking employment. The indirect impact of protean orientation toward careers on job search, mediated by career optimism, was

statistically significant. The correlation between protean professional orientation and relationships with mentors was also statistically significant with regard to career optimism.

**Table 2***Summary Table on Job Expectation*

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Intrinsic	2.70	Agree	1.5
2. Extrinsic	2.70	Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	2.70	Agree	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Table 2 showed that summarized results of job expectation. The composite mean of 2.70 indicated an overall agreement among the respondents. Based on the results, intrinsic and extrinsic had an equal weighted mean of 2.70 indicated an agreement among respondents. By striking a balance between these expectations, individuals can not only flourish in their professional lives, but also uphold their general well-being and contentment. To attain enduring satisfaction and accomplishment in their professional endeavors, it may be necessary for both students and professionals in college to comprehend and harmonize their career decisions with both internal and external elements.

Both extrinsic and intrinsic expectations may be key to an expansive and satisfying career. Deep involvement, professional satisfaction, and resilience may be fueled by intrinsic expectations such as growth in oneself, fulfilling tasks, and conformity with one's values. Extrinsic expectations, such as monetary remuneration, employment stability, and a conducive work atmosphere, may offer the required reliability, drive, and assets to achieve professional accomplishments. Demazière (2024) investigated the impact of employment experiences on the formation and modification of goals. Engaging in employment search is the process of identifying a specific job that one intends to pursue. Nevertheless, this assumption has received limited research attention, resulting in only two primary findings: jobseekers are motivated to adapt their goals to match the available employment opportunities, and re-entering the workforce often leads to a decline in occupational status. Ultimately, all individuals modify their career aspirations when confronted with the uncertainties of job-hunting and encountering challenges in attaining their top choices. They strive to adjust and establish practical objectives.

**Table 3***Relationship Between Work Orientation and Job Expectation*

Financial Compensation	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Intrinsic	.926**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic	.923**	0.000	Highly Significant
Career Advancement and Influence			
Intrinsic	.893**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic	.904**	0.000	Highly Significant
Calling			
Intrinsic	.910**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic	.906**	0.000	Highly Significant
Belongingness			
Intrinsic	.908**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic	.897**	0.000	Highly Significant
Busyness			
Intrinsic	.900**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic	.901**	0.000	Highly Significant

*Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01*

Table 3 presented the association between work orientation and job expectation. The computed r-values were found to show a substantial direct and indirect connection and the resulted p-values that were generated were beneath the alpha thresholds. This meant that there were significant relationships that existed and implied that the better the work orientation is, the better the job expectation is.

People may consistently modify their employment expectations in response to their changing work

orientation and vice versa. Adjustments in one may often result in modifications in the other, ensuring their coherence. People search for employment opportunities that may cater to their mental and emotional prerequisites, resulting in expectations that correspond to their work orientation. For instance, an individual who prioritizes liberty may envision a career that provides him or them with the ability to work independently and make decisions. Individuals who prioritize career progression and the enhancement of their professional skills may have job expectations that include well-defined avenues for advancement, opportunities for professional growth, and mentorship initiatives. Individuals who place importance on personal development and job fulfillment have workplace expectations that align with their values. This includes seeking roles that provide demanding duties, opportunities to acquire new knowledge, and a work atmosphere that offers support. Wasike et al. (2024) demonstrated the significance of staff dedication in the connection between workplace principles and orientation and job satisfaction in the automotive vehicle sector in Kenya. This study was motivated by observations of performance issues among employees in the sector. The test results revealed that employee commitment plays a partial mediating role in the connection between workplace orientation and job performance. Additionally, the study suggests that the field should implement work ethics, employee passion, and employee competence as combined elements that have a major positive impact on employee job performance.

**Table 4**  
*Proposed Enhanced Student Career Development Action Plan*

Key Result Areas	Objective/s	Strategies	Success Indicators	Persons involved
I. Work Orientation Financial Compensation Career Advancement and Influence Calling Belongingness Busyness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide students with fundamental employment abilities, including résumé composition, interview answering techniques, and networking proficiency.</li> <li>To guide students on setting realistic and feasible career goals.</li> <li>Establish alumni networks to provide current students with job advice and access to professional opportunities.</li> <li>To assist students in understanding diverse career options, prevalent industry trends, and upcoming job market demands.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct workshops focused on creating compelling resumes and cover letters accompanied by individualized feedback sessions and mock interviews with feedback from career advisors and industry professionals.</li> <li>Arrange frequent sessions that showcase external speakers from different sectors to explore job opportunities, industry perspectives, and professional trajectories.</li> <li>Create a comprehensive resource center that is accessible both online and offline. This center will provide career guides, descriptions of jobs, market research, and information on various career paths.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of students are able to set job expectations which are realistic and aligned with their career goals.</li> <li>90% of students to have a full understanding of what is expected as they enter the work force.</li> <li>90% of students are equipped with fundamental skills needed as they enter the workforce.</li> </ol>	School Administrators and Students
II. Job Expectation 2.1 Intrinsic 2.2 Extrinsic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To enhance student understanding and appreciation of job satisfaction, personal development, and meaningful employment.</li> <li>To provide students accurate and practical information on income, benefits job stability, and opportunities for career growth.</li> <li>To ensure that students gain a thorough understanding of the external incentives and conditions related to different career pathways.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set forth a customized career counseling service to assist students in learning how to synchronize their professional decisions with their intrinsic motivations.</li> <li>Utilize contemplative exercises, invite guest speakers, and evaluate case studies to highlight careers that provide intrinsic pleasure.</li> <li>Organize career fairs where students may participate in direct interaction with employers and gain insights about job prospects, pay projections, and employment benefits.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of students are willing to participate in counselling services to guide them in their goals and career pathways.</li> <li>90% of students are motivated to engage sessions to learn about the workforce.</li> <li>90% of students are able to identify the motivators in order for them set their career pathways</li> </ol>	School Administrators and Students

#### 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Most of the respondents agreed on the indicators regarding work orientation in terms of financial compensation except from Item 1 which showed a disagreement among respondents. A general agreement was indicated on the indicators in terms of career advancement and influence, calling, social embeddedness, and busyness. Most of the respondents agreed on indicators regarding job expectation in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. As to the relationship between work orientation and job expectation, findings showed highly significant relationship. This implied that they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. An enhanced student career development action plan for Chinese college students was proposed.

University officials may arrange frequent sessions featuring guest speakers from multiple industries to get students involved in discussions about job opportunities, industry points of view, and corporate trajectories. University officials may organize career expos that encourage direct engagement between students and businesses, and enabling them to acquire information about career possibilities, pay projections, and benefits for employment. University officials may provide courses on the crafting of compelling cover letters and resumes, coupled with tailored discussion regarding employment to train students on the fundamentals of employment. University directors may establish and maintain strong partnerships with a diverse range of businesses to foster partnership and assist students in their employment prospects tied with the said organizations. University administrators may build an extensive resource center that is easily available both online and offline, featuring career guides, descriptions of positions, reports on various industries, and facts on different professions. The proposed enhanced student career development action plan for Chinese college students may be executed and assessed for its efficacy. Future researchers may conduct studies promoting interdisciplinary research collaborations that address the diverse facets of work orientation and employment expectations.

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