

Job motivation on career identity among university logistics staff

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the relationship between job motivation and career identity among logistics staff in Chinese universities. It measures job motivation from the dimensions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, assesses career identity in terms of occupational behavioral engagement, development identity and value identification in the profession, test the significant relationship between job motivation and career identity, and proposes feasible strategies to enhance job motivation and career identity, thereby promoting staff career development and organizational performance. This study used the descriptive type of research and there were 220 who are currently employed logistics staff in universities. The study showed that the logistics staff in Chinese universities career identity is jointly driven by intrinsic motivation (such as job satisfaction and task challenge) and extrinsic motivation (such as job security, incentives, and promotion). Among these factors, behavioral engagement and developmental identification are relatively strong, while value identification is comparatively weak. It is suggested that through task redesign, incentive optimization, and cultural guidance, a systematic enhancement of the synergistic effect between job motivation and career identity can be achieved.

Keywords: job motivation, career identity

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1. Introduction

With the rapid development of higher education, logistics staff in universities are playing an increasingly important role in the operation of higher education institutions. Their job motivation and career identity directly affect work efficiency and service quality. However, there has been relatively little research on logistics staff in universities, especially regarding the relationship between job motivation and career identity. This study aims to fill this gap and provide theoretical support and practical suggestions for university logistics management.

Main variables involved in this study are job motivation and career identity. Job motivation is the internal driving force that individuals exhibit in their work to achieve specific goals. It directly affects employees' work attitudes, behavioral performance, and career development. As a core psychological process, job motivation not only determines the extent of employees' engagement and performance at work but also has a profound impact on their behavioral choices (Wang et al., 2024). Career identity is the positive evaluation and sense of belonging that individuals have towards their professional roles, reflecting the degree of integration between the individual and their career. It involves multidimensional factors such as career cognition, emotions, and values, and has an important impact on employees' work attitudes, job satisfaction, and organizational loyalty (Li, 2022).

According to Self-Determination Theory, there is a close interaction between job motivation and career identity. Job motivation not only affects the formation of career identity, but career identity can also, in turn, enhance job motivation (Geng et al., 2024). Despite the extensive research on job motivation and career identity, studies focusing specifically on the group of logistics staff in universities remain relatively scarce. Existing research has mostly concentrated on teachers or medical personnel, with little attention paid to the relationship between career identity and job motivation among logistics staff in universities. This research gap limits the scientific nature and effectiveness of university logistics management.

This study not only enriches theoretical research on the relationship between job motivation and career identity but also provides empirical support for university logistics management. By gaining a deep understanding of the job motivation and career identity of logistics staff, university managers can develop more effective management strategies to improve work efficiency and service quality, thereby promoting the sustainable development of universities.

Objectives of the Study - This study aims to explore the relationship between job motivation and career identity among logistics staff in Chinese universities. Specifically, assess the job motivation in terms of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation; determine career identity in terms of adaptability, commitment, and professional development; test the significant relationship between job motivation and career identity; propose plan of action to improve job motivation and career identity.

2. Methods

Research Design - This study employs the Quantitative Research method, aiming to reveal the relationship between job motivation and career identity among logistics staff in universities through systematic data collection and statistical analysis. The core of quantitative research lies in verifying hypotheses, assessing the relationships between variables, and drawing conclusions with generalizability through measurable data. Within the framework of quantitative research, this study will utilize the Descriptive Research method to systematically describe the current status of job motivation and career identity among logistics staff in universities. Descriptive research is a type of quantitative research that aims to describe the characteristics, behaviors, or attitudes of a population or phenomenon. It does not attempt to explain the causes or relationships between variables but focuses on providing a detailed and accurate portrayal of the current state of the subject under study. Descriptive research often uses

surveys, observations, or existing data to collect information and relies on statistical analysis to summarize and present the findings (Creswell et al., 2023).

This study collects data on the basic information, job motivation, and career identity of logistics staff in universities through a questionnaire survey. Descriptive statistical methods are then employed to organize and summarize the data, revealing the basic characteristics of the sample and the distribution of the variables. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis will provide the necessary background information for subsequent in-depth statistical analyses and help better understand the relationships between the variables. The questionnaire design is based on established scales related to job motivation and career identity, with appropriate modifications made to suit the characteristics of the participants in this study, ensuring the applicability and validity of the content. Through this approach, the study aims to obtain objective and quantifiable research results, laying a solid data foundation for further analysis.

Participants of the Study - The participants of this study were logistics staff from three universities, namely Guangdong University of Finance, Guangdong Food and Drug Vocational College, and Guangdong University of Technology. A stratified random sampling method was employed to draw samples from the logistics staff of these three universities. In total, there were 306 logistics staff across the three universities, and the sample size of this study was 220 employees, covering various age groups, educational backgrounds, and job position categories. The participants of this study were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: currently employed logistics staff in universities; with at least 1 year of cumulative work experience in the university logistics department; willing to participate in this study and having signed an informed consent form. The following individuals were excluded from the study: labor dispatch employees or part-time workers; Those with less than 1 year of cumulative work experience in the university logistics department; and individuals who did not sign the informed consent form.

Instruments of the Study - The primary instrument used in this study is a questionnaire, which consists of three sections. The first section collects basic personal information of the participants, including age, gender, education level, job position, and other relevant details. The job motivation scale is based on the scale developed by Chen (2022) and is used to assess the job motivation of logistics staff. This scale comprises two subscales: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The career identity scale is adapted from the scale developed by Wang (2023) and is used to measure the career identity of logistics staff. This scale includes three sub-scales: occupational behavioral engagement, occupational development identification, and occupational value identification.

Table 1

Reliability Analysis

Job Motivation Scale	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items	Interpretation
Intrinsic Motivation	0.880	9	Good
Extrinsic Motivation	0.870	10	Good
Career Identity Scale			
Occupational Behavioral	0.924	6	Excellent
Occupational Development	0.902	5	Excellent
Occupation Value	0.885	5	Good

Legend: $a \geq 0.9$ excellent; $0.9 > a \geq 0.8$ good; $0.8 > a \geq 0.7$ acceptable; $0.7 > a \geq 0.6$ questionable; $0.6 > a \geq 0.5$ poor; $0.5 > a$ unacceptable

In terms of reliability, Cronbach’s coefficient for the career identity scale was 0.89, exceeding the standard of 0.8, which indicates high internal consistency reliability. Additionally, the scale’s convergent validity was confirmed: the standardized factor loading coefficients were all above 0.7 and significant, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were all greater than 0.5, and the composite reliability (CR) values were all above 0.8. These results demonstrate that the scale has good convergent validity. The table shows the reliability analysis of the questionnaire. It shows that it is valid to use.

Data Gathering Procedure - Data collection will be conducted through two methods: online questionnaires

and offline distribution of paper-based questionnaires. To enhance the response rate, a two-round distribution strategy will be employed, along with follow-up reminders after the initial distribution. Before the formal survey, a pilot survey will be conducted on a small scale to test the validity of the questionnaire and make necessary adjustments. During the questionnaire survey, ethical standards will be strictly followed to ensure participants' informed consent and the confidentiality of the data.

Data Analysis - The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS software. The analytical methods will primarily include descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to explore the relationship between job motivation and career identity. First, descriptive statistical analysis will be conducted to understand the basic characteristics of the sample. Next, correlation analysis will be employed to identify the preliminary relationship between job motivation and career identity. Finally, regression analysis will be used to further verify the relationship between job motivation and career identity.

Ethical Considerations - This study strictly adheres to academic ethical standards, ensuring informed consent from participants and anonymizing all data to protect their privacy and maintain data confidentiality. Before distributing the questionnaires, participants were informed of the research purpose, procedures, and the principle of voluntary participation. During the data collection and analysis process, efforts were made to minimize any disturbance to participants, ensuring the fairness and scientific nature of the study.

3. Results and discussion

Table 2

Summary Table on the Assessment on the Job Motivation

Dimensions	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Intrinsic Motivation	2.74	Agree	2
Extrinsic Motivation	2.79	Agree	1
Composite Mean	2.77	Agree	

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

Table 2 reveals the relative contribution of intrinsic motivation ($M=2.74$) and extrinsic motivation ($M=2.79$) to employee job motivation through a comparison of composite means. The data shows that extrinsic motivation has a slight edge ($\Delta=0.05$), echoing the "dual-channel model" in contemporary motivation research. This suggests that external incentive systems may have a more direct role in regulating behavior in organizational contexts (Lee et al., 2023). However, it is important to note that both types of motivation fall within the upper-middle range of the "Agree" interval (2.50–3.49), and the difference is not statistically significant ($p>.05$). This implies that they are more likely to be complementary rather than competitive. This finding has dual implications for management practice. First, the slight advantage of extrinsic motivation confirms the immediate effectiveness of the "performance-reward" linkage, especially in goal-oriented organizational environments (e.g., EM2 career advancement, $M=3.04$). Second, the close follow-up of intrinsic motivation (e.g., IM7 self-improvement, $M=2.93$) highlights the importance of job design, indicating that employees' needs for autonomy and competence development should not be overlooked. This balanced characteristic supports the core view of the Motivation Ecosystem Theory (Eccles et al., 2020), that is, an effective incentive system should meet both "instrumental needs" (extrinsic) and "growth needs" (intrinsic).

Table 3 presents the comprehensive evaluation results of the three dimensions of career identity, namely Occupational Behavior Engagement, Occupational Development Identity, and Occupational Value Identification.

Table 3

Summary Table on Career Identity

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Occupational Behavior Engagement	2.69	Agree	1
Occupational Development Identity	2.68	Agree	2
Occupational Value Identification	2.62	Agree	3
Composite Mean	2.66	Agree	

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

The weighted means for these dimensions are 2.69, 2.68, and 2.62, respectively, all falling within the range of 2.50–3.49, indicating that respondents have an “Agree” attitude towards these dimensions. Specifically, Occupational Behavior Engagement has the highest score (2.69), followed by Occupational Development Identity (2.68), while Occupational Value Identification has the lowest score (2.62). This suggests that employees demonstrate a high level of pro-activity and engagement in their job behaviors, such as actively learning new skills and adhering to work regulations. In terms of career development, employees also have a positive attitude towards the relevance of their current work to their future career goals. In contrast, the relatively lower score for Occupational Value Identification may reflect a weaker perception of the social value of their career or organizational recognition among employees.

From an academic perspective, these findings are consistent with Career Identity Theory, which posits that an individual’s career identity is composed of behavioral, developmental, and value identifications. The high score for Occupational Behavior Engagement indicates that employees exhibit strong self-motivation in their daily work, which is closely related to the driving role of intrinsic job motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). The moderate score for Occupational Development Identity shows employees’ optimistic attitude towards their career prospects, but it may also imply higher expectations for organizational support or development opportunities. The lower score for Occupational Value Identification suggests that organizations need to enhance employees’ awareness of the significance and social contribution of their careers, for example, by clarifying role value or increasing organizational identification (Lee et al., 2021). Overall, the data in Table 3 provide a basis for organizations to optimize their career development systems, especially in terms of improving Occupational Value Identification, where further intervention is needed.

Table 4

Relationship Between Job Motivation and Career Identity

Intrinsic Motivation	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Occupational Behavioral Engagement	0.369**	0.000	Significant
Occupational Development Identification	0.441**	0.000	Significant
Occupational Value Identification	0.368**	0.000	Significant
Extrinsic Motivation			
Occupational Behavioral Engagement	0.583**	0.000	Significant
Occupational Development Identification	0.509**	0.000	Significant
Occupational Value Identification	0.508**	0.000	Significant

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The table illustrates the relationship between job motivation and career identity. The computed R-values indicate a strong positive correlation, and the resulting p-values were less than the alpha level. This means a significant relationship exists and implies that job motivation impacts or influences the employees’ career identity and vice versa. The two variables are dependent on one another. The correlations between intrinsic motivation and career identity dimensions ($r = 0.368\text{--}0.441$) confirm the importance of internal drivers—such as personal growth, autonomy, and meaningfulness—in shaping career identity.

According to recent studies, intrinsic motivation enhances employees’ alignment with their occupational values and promotes self-driven engagement (Martínez-Linares et al., 2025). This supports Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that when individuals feel autonomous and competent, they are more likely to internalize their professional roles (Ryan et al., 2020). Interestingly, extrinsic motivation demonstrated even stronger correlations ($r = 0.508\text{--}0.583$), particularly with occupational behavioral engagement. This suggests that tangible rewards—such as compensation, promotion, and recognition—continue to play a crucial role in influencing how employees perceive and engage with their careers (Tanaka et al., 2025). Modern organizational structures that provide structured development programs and performance-based rewards tend to reinforce occupational identity formation, particularly among younger workers (Lee et al., 2025).

These findings align with recent scholarship that frames motivation and career identity as mutually reinforcing. Stronger motivation—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—enhances one’s engagement, developmental

orientation, and identification with occupational values, which in turn fuels sustained motivation (Del Rosario et al., 2025). This cyclical relationship underscores the importance of cultivating both motivational strategies and identity-building experiences in the workplace. Organizations that foster environments supporting both intrinsic satisfaction and external rewards are more likely to strengthen the career identity of their workforce. As career identity becomes more defined, it can lead to increased employee commitment, productivity, and long-term retention (Kwon et al., 2025).

Table 5*Proposed Action Plan to Improve the Instructional Design Process and Employee Performance*

Key Result Area	Strategies	Person/s Responsible	Success Indicator
Job Motivation Intrinsic	Implement structured recognition initiatives that highlight the vital contributions of logistics staff.	Human Resource Department (HR) Department Heads or Supervisors of Logistics Staff Marketing/Communications Office or Public Relations	Boosts morale, affirms professional identity, and increases perceived value across departments.
	Offer training, seminars, and access to short courses that lead to certifications or skill badges.	Human Resource Department (HR) Department Heads / Immediate Supervisors of Logistics Staff Internal Trainers	Increases self-worth, adds formal value to their role, and signals organizational investment in their status.
	Actively involve logistics staff in campus planning and development discussions.	Human Resource Department (HR) Department Heads / Immediate Supervisors of Logistics Staff	Makes logistics staff feel valued and heard, directly addressing low satisfaction with professional status.
Career Identity on Occupational value Identification	Allocate a small portion of work hours (e.g., 1–2 hours per week) for logistics staff to explore new methods, tools, or solutions related to their roles without strict output expectations.	Human Resource Department (HR) Department Heads or Supervisors of Logistics Staff Marketing/Communications Office or Public Relations	Encourages autonomy, experimentation, and ownership—key drivers of curiosity.
	Implement monthly or quarterly challenges such as “Best Process Improvement Idea” or “Innovation of the Month” with small rewards or recognition.	Human Resource Department (HR) Department Heads / Immediate Supervisors of Logistics Staff Internal Trainers	Triggers curiosity through competition and discovery, while reinforcing a sense of value.
	Provide short learning content (videos, infographics, quizzes) that sparks curiosity and relates directly to their tasks or field (e.g., logistics tech, safety hacks, productivity tips).	Human Resource Department (HR) Department Heads / Immediate Supervisors of Logistics Staff	Stimulates continuous exploration and connects learning with performance.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The respondents generally agreed on the job intrinsic and extrinsic practiced by the logistics companies. There is general agreement on career identity in terms of occupational behavior, occupational development identity and value identification. There is a significant relationship between job motivation and career identity. Plan of Action is prepared to improve the job motivation and career identity. The Plan of Action may be discussed to logistics companies for possible use in the company. Future researchers may conduct study on the predictors of career identity.

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