

# Personality Characteristics' Impact on Job-Life Satisfaction and Motivation in Nankang Manufacturing Workers

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## Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between job-life satisfaction, personality traits, and work motivation among frontline production workers in Chinese traditional private manufacturing enterprises, with a focus on the furniture production sector in Nankang. Utilizing quantitative methods, including structural equation modeling and inferential statistical analysis, the research unveils significant insights into the motivational dynamics shaping this workforce. The findings underscore the pivotal role of job satisfaction in driving work motivation, with personality traits mediating this relationship. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of considering demographic factors such as age and gender in understanding motivational tendencies. By elucidating the complex interplay between individual disposition, job satisfaction, and work motivation, the research offers actionable insights for policymakers, managers, and HR practitioners seeking to enhance employee engagement and productivity in China's traditional manufacturing industry. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the motivational landscape of frontline workers and underscores the importance of tailored interventions that address the unique needs and aspirations of this vital segment of the workforce.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction, Personality Traits, Work Motivation, Traditional Manufacturing Industry

## Introduction

The "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and Long-Range Objectives for 2035" (2021) emphasizes the need to increase investment support for the manufacturing industry, promote high-quality

development of the manufacturing industry, build a manufacturing powerhouse, and guide various high-quality resource elements to gather in the manufacturing industry. Traditional manufacturing is the main body of China's real economy, and China's traditional manufacturing industry accounts for more than 80% of the manufacturing industry (People's Network, 2023). China's labor-intensive traditional manufacturing industries such as the furniture manufacturing industry, light industry and textile industry have very low profit margins and rely heavily on low-skilled workers (over 73% of people were educated below university in 2021) and face pressure to transform (Wei, 2019). The efforts of bottom-tier employees are key to increasing enterprise value, but incentive research rarely focuses on them (Zheng, 2016). Driven by traditional management thinking, companies often neglect the internal needs of frontline employees and only use simple economic incentives to motivate them. Based on Herzberg's two-factor theory, this study explores the impact of job satisfaction and life satisfaction of frontline production workers in Chinese private traditional manufacturing enterprises on work motivation under the mediating mechanism of personality traits. The research aims to provide insights to make greater contributions to incentivizing frontline production workers. Taking furniture production companies in Nankang, China as research samples, the research results will help solve the huge vulnerable workforce in many Chinese labor-intensive manufacturers face incentive challenges, and provide theoretical suggestions for improving the quality of China's manufacturing industry. The gradual development of China's traditional manufacturing industry faces more and more challenges in meeting the needs of competitive and developing times (Wei, 2019). The only way for traditional manufacturing industry to transform and upgrade is to provide high-value products and services (Liu & Li, 2021). It is important to recognize that the value created by the manufacturing industry is mainly attributed to the efforts of frontline employees. Therefore, the value of frontline employees and their output play a vital role in the overall value of the enterprise.

The incentive mechanism plays a crucial role in achieving the strategic goals of the traditional manufacturing industry, making it an integral part of human resource management (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000). The concepts considered are highly correlated with compensation benefits, performance appraisal, employee training, and corporate culture (Jiang et al., 2012). In addition, this topic is of great significance as a research area for human resource managers (Lepak et al., 2006). The implementation of a well-designed and scientifically rational incentive mechanism can significantly enhance the enthusiasm and dedication of frontline employees (Shaw, 2014). In turn, this can cultivate a stronger sense of loyalty to the organization, and ultimately lead to a decrease in employee turnover.

The current academic literature on hiring motivation focuses mainly on knowledge workers and management, with limited attention to lower-level employees (Zheng, 2016; Wei, 2019). Positive work motivation has a direct positive impact on improving work efficiency. Work motivation is influenced by many factors, such as job satisfaction, life satisfaction, organizational identification, corporate culture, personality traits, employee development needs, and so on. This study is based on Herzberg's two-factor incentive theory, taking personality traits as a mediating variable, studying job satisfaction and life satisfaction as independent variables and their relationship with work motivation. Without employees with good satisfaction, it is difficult for companies to output high-quality and high value-added products and services. This research aims to provide new insights into incentives for frontline employees in China's traditional manufacturing industry to help improve the quality of China's manufacturing industry. In view of the different management methods and inherent

characteristics of Chinese private traditional manufacturing enterprises and non-private traditional manufacturing enterprises, it is noteworthy that in 2021, private enterprises contributed 50.4% of the increase in the value added of China's manufacturing industry, and more than 80% of large and medium-sized enterprises in the manufacturing industry are private holdings. Private enterprises also provide nearly 80% of manufacturing employment (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022). Therefore, in order to more representatively understand the living conditions of frontline production workers in China's traditional manufacturing industry, this study takes Chinese private traditional manufacturing enterprises as the research object. The research sample of this study is Jiangxi Nankang City Furniture Manufacturing Cluster, a furniture industry base in central China.

Previous studies have shown that job satisfaction is significantly correlated with work motivation. In Herzberg's two-factor theory, job satisfaction is influenced by both motivational factors and hygiene factors, but when both factors are met, employees will receive positive motivation. In addition to job satisfaction, this study introduces a new variable, life satisfaction, and its significant relationship with work motivation under the influence of mediating factors of personality traits.

By 2035, China will become a manufacturing powerhouse. Chunlin et al (2021)'s research believes that to build a manufacturing powerhouse, companies must further strengthen the cultivation of skilled talents and pay attention to enhancing the enthusiasm and sense of gain of manufacturing practitioners. Since Waters and Roach (1971) pointed out early on that life satisfaction directly affects individuals' work values and work attitudes. As the quality of life continues to improve, this impact will become more important. Judge and Bono (2001)'s meta-analysis found that life satisfaction and job satisfaction can equally predict job performance and work motivation. The influence of life experience on work attitude cannot be ignored. Therefore, it can be predicted that life satisfaction, like job satisfaction, has a significant correlation with work motivation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to study the relationship between life satisfaction and work motivation in order to effectively enhance employees' work enthusiasm and efficiency.

As mentioned earlier, work motivation is the result of employees' mutual influence with the environment. Personality traits are individual factors in this study. Since work motivation is influenced by employees' personality traits, each organization needs to think about incentive issues in combination with employees' internal and external environments. Kanfer et al (2017): "Work motivation is a process of initiating, guiding and sustaining actions related to work goals, so individual differences (such as personality traits) and situational/environmental variables (such as leadership, feedback) can facilitate or inhibit employee motivation." Latham and Pinder (2005): "Work motivation is a set of energy forces stemming from internal and external existence of individuals, which initiates work-related behaviors and determines their form, direction, intensity and duration. Personality is a key factor in arousing intrinsic motivation." Research shows that personality traits are closely related to work motivation, and personality traits have a regulatory effect on work motivation (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Kim et al., 2010; Major et al., 2006). However, empirical data is needed to draw conclusions about all the interactions between these variables of job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and personality traits. Therefore, this study aims to determine the impact of job satisfaction and life satisfaction on work motivation of frontline employees in Chinese traditional manufacturing enterprises under the influence of personality traits.

Based on the transformation and upgrading demands of manufacturing and the value creation of manufacturing enterprises relying critically on low-level staff, the enthusiasm of low-level staff becomes increasingly important. However, current academic literature on work motivation focuses mainly on knowledge workers and management, with limited attention to production low-level staff (Zheng, 2016; Wei, 2019). This drives researchers to further study the impact of job satisfaction and life satisfaction on work motivation, with personality characteristics as a moderating variable.

Work motivation is an important direct influencing factor of labor value creation, since the work motivation of low-level production staff directly relates to the quality and efficiency of their work... Hence it is necessary to conduct this research to obtain specific data on the work motivation levels of low-level production workers in China's private traditional manufacturing enterprises, in order to aid manufacturing enterprise managers, especially private business owners, in ensuring high enthusiasm among low-level production staff.

### **Objectives**

The main purpose of this study is to explore the impact of job satisfaction and life satisfaction on work motivation of frontline production workers in Chinese traditional private manufacturing enterprises under the mediating role of personality traits. From these overall goals, four specific goals were formulated:

- 1) The purpose of this study is to assess the job satisfaction, life satisfaction, personality traits and work motivation levels of frontline production workers in Chinese traditional private manufacturing industries.
- 2) Significant differences in work motivation of frontline production workers in Chinese traditional manufacturing industries in terms of age, gender and personality traits.
- 3) Explore the correlational relationships between life satisfaction, job satisfaction, personality traits and work motivation of frontline production workers in Chinese traditional private manufacturing enterprises.
- 4) Examine the mediating role of personality traits in the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction and work motivation of frontline production workers in Chinese traditional manufacturing enterprises.

### **Method**

This study adopted a quantitative method, because quantitative research is suitable for predicting and controlling the relationships between variables (Creswell, 2017). The choice of research method depends on its applicability, ability to solve the research problem, and ability to achieve the research objectives. The main purpose of this study is to explore the impact of life satisfaction and job satisfaction on work motivation of frontline production workers in Chinese private traditional manufacturing enterprises under the mediating role of personality traits. The focus of this study is to explore the correlational relationships between life satisfaction, job satisfaction, work motivation and personality traits, and to seek quantitative research methods to uncover and predict these phenomena. Quantitative research is the best way to analyze problems of relationships between variables, with the purpose of uncovering, predicting and controlling phenomena. Considering that questionnaire surveys are an effective way to obtain perceptual and attitudinal data (Hong, 2016), we adopted a set of mature survey questionnaires, aiming to infer causal relationships between variables Qiang (2020) through descriptive and inferential statistical methods to respond to research objectives. Therefore, the best research method for this study is quantitative research.

The research objects of this study are furniture industry clusters in Nankang District, Jiangxi Province, with a total of 6,500 furniture production and manufacturing enterprises in the whole area. Geographically, Nankang District has 2 sub-districts, 6 towns, 12 townships, and most of the furniture factories are located in Jingba Town, Dongshan Sub-district, Longling Town, Longhui Town, Tangjiang Town, Rongjiang Sub-district, Longhua Town, Hengzhai Township, Taiwo Township, and Chitu She Autonomous Township; In addition, there are a few furniture companies in Fushi Township and Fengang Town. According to the data from the Science and Technology Innovation Center of Nankang District Government, as of 2023, there are 585 provincial-level and above enterprises in the whole area of Nankang District, among which 505 are furniture industry enterprises, accounting for 86.32%. In this study, the researchers only chose furniture manufacturing enterprises of provincial scale located in the intensive areas of Nankang furniture enterprises, namely Jingba Town, Dongshan Sub-district, Longling Town and Longhui Town, Geographical Distribution Map of Provincial Furniture Enterprises in Nankang District, most provincial furniture enterprises It is located in these four towns of Jingba Town, Dongshan Sub-district, Longling Town and Longhui Town. For the entire furniture manufacturing industry in Nankang District, the external environment of production workers in various furniture manufacturing enterprises is similar. In this study, 3-5 factories were selected from each of the four towns and sub-districts of Jingba Town, Dongshan Sub-district, Longling Town, and Longhui Town to extract worker samples.

This study analyzes research questions and hypotheses. The main methods used are the social science statistical software package (SPSS) and structural equation modeling (AMOS). Data analysis is explained in the form of descriptive analysis and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis methods mainly include calculation of characteristic values (such as mean, mode, standard deviation, etc.) of data, drawing data distribution charts, cross-table analysis of data, etc.; Inferential statistical analysis mainly includes hypothesis testing, Pearson correlation analysis, analysis of variance, regression analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), etc. Data missing value treatment has been performed before this analysis.

### **Findings**

This study's findings provide significant insights into the complex relationship between job-life satisfaction, personality traits, and work motivation among frontline production workers in Chinese traditional private manufacturing enterprises, with a particular emphasis on the furniture production sector in Nankang. The study was conducted in China. The study reveals the numerous dynamics that define the motivational landscape of these workers by applying statistical methods such as descriptive analysis, inferential statistical analysis, and structural equation modeling. This is accomplished through rigorous quantitative analysis.

The findings are based on a sophisticated understanding of the ways in which personality traits, job happiness, and life contentment all interact with one another to influence work motivation. The findings highlight how important it is to take into account both inner and extrinsic elements when making decisions about how to motivate frontline production personnel. One of the most important factors that has a big influence on someone's drive to work is job satisfaction. Workers' levels of motivation are significantly impacted by the several characteristics of their jobs that provide them with a sense of fulfillment. These aspects include recognition, autonomy, and the relevance of the tasks they perform. In addition, the research sheds light on the function that personality traits play as mediators in this



relationship, so revealing the intricate dynamic that exists between an individual's disposition and their attitudes towards their work surroundings.

The significance of life satisfaction as a factor in determining job motivation is highlighted by the findings, which is both important and significant. According to the findings of the study, there is a significant connection between each person's total level of life happiness and their levels of motivation in the profession. The fact that this is the case underscores the interconnectivity between personal well-being and professional engagement, and it suggests that interventions that attempt to improve employees' general pleasure with life could potentially yield substantial benefits in terms of workplace motivation and productivity.

More than that, the study investigates the influence that demographic characteristics like age and gender have on job motivation. It reveals some fascinating insights into the ways in which these elements interact with personality traits to form motivational tendencies. The results of this study indicate that age and gender may play a moderating role in the relationship between personality traits and job motivation. This conclusion highlights the necessity of developing individualized approaches to motivation that are based on the characteristics of individuals and the stages of their lives.

In addition, the study sheds light on the specific difficulties and opportunities that frontline production workers encounter within the framework of China's conventional manufacturing sector. Understanding the motivating dynamics of frontline workers is of the utmost importance in light of the fact that the sector is actively experiencing major transformation and is facing challenges to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the market. The findings highlight the critical role that frontline employees play in driving value creation within manufacturing firms. They also highlight the significance of developing effective reward mechanisms that resonate with the inherent motivations and goals of frontline employees.

Furthermore, the report highlights the significant role that private manufacturing businesses play in China's industrial landscape, stressing the contribution that these enterprises make to the expansion of value-added content and the generation of job opportunities. By concentrating on this particular area of the manufacturing industry, the study provides unique insights into the specific circumstances and issues that are faced by frontline workers in privately owned businesses. The development of focused treatments that aim to improve motivation and productivity in these contexts requires a comprehensive understanding of the context in which they are being implemented.

The findings of this study, taken as a whole, contribute to a more in-depth knowledge of the intricate relationship that exists between job-life happiness, personality traits, and work motivation among frontline production workers in traditional manufacturing businesses in China. The research delivers practical insights for policymakers, managers, and HR practitioners who are looking to create a more engaged and productive workforce in the dynamic landscape of China's manufacturing industry. These insights are provided by understanding the fundamental mechanisms that drive motivation in this context.

## **Discussion**

This study's commentary dives into the implications of the findings within the broader framework of motivation theory, organizational management, and the manufacturing scene in China. Specifically, the discussion focuses on the situation in China. The purpose of this research is to shed light on key considerations for enhancing employee engagement and productivity in the Chinese traditional private manufacturing sector. This is accomplished by

investigating the intricate interplay between job-life satisfaction, personality traits, and work motivation among frontline production workers in these enterprises.

A fundamental aspect of the conversation is the acknowledgment of the complex nature of motivation, which is influenced by a wide variety of elements ranging from the characteristics of an individual's personality to the culture of an organization and the socio-economic conditions that exist in the outside world. Considering that frontline workers are the backbone of China's conventional manufacturing sector, the findings highlight how important it is to understand and address the specific motivational dynamics of frontline workers. The degree to which employees get pleasure and gratification from their jobs within the organization is reflected in the degree to which job satisfaction emerges as a major driver of work motivation in this setting.

The fact that the study places such an emphasis on the function that personality qualities play as mediators in the connection between job-life happiness and work motivation draws attention to the reality that motivation management should be approached in a more individualized manner. In light of the fact that different people have different dispositional tendencies that influence their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace, businesses have to modify their motivational methods so that they are in line with the various requirements and preferences of their workforce. Through the utilization of insights from personality psychology, managers are able to get a more profound comprehension of the intrinsic motivations that employees possess and build interventions that are in tune with the distinctive profiles of their employees.

In addition to this, the discussion dives into the consequences of demographic factors such as age and gender on the incentive to work. Despite the fact that the findings highlight the fact that there are subtle variations in the motivating inclinations of workers across different demographic groups, they also highlight the significance of avoiding simplistic generalizations and acknowledging the uniqueness of each worker. Age-related variances in motivational drivers, for example, may reflect different stages of life and professional objectives. As a result, it is necessary to have adaptable ways to motivation management that can meet a variety of needs. In a similar vein, disparities in motivating patterns between men and women may be influenced by cultural norms, organizational dynamics, and individual preferences. This highlights the necessity of gender-sensitive policies and practices that promote equity and inclusivity in the workplace.

Furthermore, the study's concentration on the furniture production sector in Nankang provides significant insights into the specific issues and opportunities that frontline workers in China's conventional manufacturing industry are confronted with. The industry is currently facing demands to improve efficiency, quality, and innovation in response to global competition. As a result, it is of the utmost importance to gain an understanding of the factors that motivate frontline staff. By making investments in programs that encourage job happiness, encourage work-life balance, and acknowledge the intrinsic worth of frontline efforts, organizations have the ability to develop a culture of engagement and empowerment that supports sustained performance and success.

When it comes to promoting economic development and employment generation in China, the discussion also highlights the crucial role that private manufacturing businesses play. By drawing attention to the one-of-a-kind circumstances and difficulties encountered by frontline employees working for privately-owned companies, the study emphasizes the significance of intervention strategies that are specifically customized to meet the requirements and goals of this particular segment of the labor force. Furthermore, the

findings highlight the potential for private businesses to function as engines of innovation and wealth creation, given that they implement progressive human resource strategies that prioritize the well-being and motivation of their employees.

In conclusion, the discussion of this study brought to light the intricate and multifaceted nature of the nature of work motivation among frontline production workers in traditional manufacturing firms in China. The research provides useful insights for legislators, managers, and HR practitioners who are looking to improve employee engagement and productivity in this dynamic and growing sector. These insights are offered by unraveling the interplay between job-life satisfaction, personality traits, and motivational tendencies. To move forward, organizations need to adopt a holistic approach to the management of motivation. This approach should acknowledge the uniqueness of workers, cultivate a culture of empowerment and acknowledgment, and ensure that the goals of the organization are aligned with the inherent motivations and aspirations of employees. By making such efforts, China's traditional manufacturing industry will be able to realize the full potential of its workforce, which will in turn promote sustainable growth and prosperity in the years to come. This research significantly advances our comprehension of motivation dynamics within the Chinese traditional manufacturing sector, particularly among frontline production workers, by delving into the intricate interplay between job-life satisfaction, personality traits, and work motivation. Through its nuanced examination of the mediating role of personality traits, the study unveils the underlying mechanisms shaping employee engagement and productivity in this context. By focusing on the furniture production sector in Nankang, the research provides valuable insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by frontline workers, offering a contextually rich understanding of motivation management within the industry. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of tailored approaches to motivation that consider demographic factors such as age and gender, underscoring the need for adaptable strategies to meet the diverse needs of the workforce. In the broader context of China's manufacturing landscape, the research emphasizes the pivotal role of private enterprises in driving innovation and employment generation, advocating for human resource strategies that prioritize employee well-being and motivation to foster sustainable growth and prosperity.

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