

A Study on the Relationship Between the Career Motivation and Professional Identity of Young Social Workers——An Empirical Investigation Based on Social Work Service Agencies in City Z, Guangdong Province

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Abstract

Accurately grasping the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers is of great significance for building a high - quality social worker team. According to the self - determination theory, the employment motivation of young social workers can be divided into four types: internal drive type, external attraction type, composite motivation type, and motivation - lack type. Through a questionnaire survey, combined with survey questions on employment motivation types and a professional identity scale, a survey was conducted on young social workers in social work service agencies in City Z, Guangdong Province. The research found that there is a correlation between different employment motivations and the professional identity of young social workers. Among them, young social workers of the motivation - lack type have relatively low professional identity, while those of the internal drive type, composite motivation type, and external attraction type show higher professional identity. Based on the research results, it is proposed that social work service agencies should give play to the leading role of young social workers of the composite motivation type, stimulate the internal enthusiasm of young social workers of the internal drive type, strengthen the external incentives for young social workers of the external attraction type, and guide the motivation exploration of young social workers of the motivation - lack type. While enhancing the professional identity of young social workers, a high - quality and high - efficiency young social worker team should be built.

Keywords: youth social workers, employment motivation, professional identity

1. Introduction

Since 2010, documents from the central government and relevant ministries and commissions have clearly stated that the professional social work talent team should be regarded as an indispensable professional social force (Li, 2017). With the government's continuous promotion of social work participation in social governance, social workers have gradually become the core force in the field of social services. In recent years, the construction of the social work talent team has progressed rapidly and is generally becoming younger. According to incomplete statistics, in 2008, the total number of social work talents with professional and specialized qualities in China was only 110,000 (Shen , 2011). However, by the end of 2022, the number of licensed social workers in China had soared to 931,000, among which assistant social workers accounted for the majority, reaching 725,000, and social workers numbered 204,000 (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2023). Meanwhile, young social workers account for the vast majority of practitioners. The results of a sampling survey of youth affairs social workers in Shandong Province showed that professional social workers under 35 years old accounted for as high as 94.2%, and relevant practitioners under 35 years old also accounted for 88% (Wang et al., 2022). In addition, the data from the 2019 China Social Work Longitudinal Survey also indicated that social workers aged 35 and below accounted for 74.3% (CSWLS, 2019). Young social workers are full of vitality and innovative spirit, which have a profound impact on the future development of this industry. However, to fully tap their potential, it is necessary to deeply understand their employment motivation and the degree of influence between these motivations and their professional identity. As a vibrant city in Guangdong Province, in recent years, social work service institutions in City Z have emerged in large numbers, attracting a large number of young talents to join. Why do these young social workers choose this industry? Is it out of love for society, pursuit of public welfare, or consideration of their own career

development? More importantly, how do their employment motivations affect their professional identity, and further affect their work performance and job satisfaction? Based on this background and problem awareness, this study conducts an in - depth exploration of the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers in Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province through empirical investigation, reveals the relationship and influence degree between employment motivation and professional identity, so as to provide targeted management and development strategies for social work service institutions in Zhanjiang City and even more extensive areas, better motivate and retain young talents, further improve service quality and efficiency, and promote the sustainable and healthy development of the industry.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

Systematically reviewing the previous literature on professional motivation and professional identity can provide a theoretical basis for further exploring the relationship between the professional motivation and professional identity of young social workers.

2.1 Research on the Motivation for Engaging in the Profession

As a type of human behavioral motivation, professional motivation is an internal psychological process in which individuals, stimulated by specific needs, drive themselves to participate in professional activities to meet these needs. It profoundly reflects each person's career pursuit and the possible level of effort they may invest to achieve this pursuit (Li, 2020). In short, when certain needs ignite people's inner desires, they tend to choose the corresponding career path. When exploring professional motivation, foreign scholars mainly conduct in - depth analyses from two dimensions: internal and external. Internal professional motivation stems from the desire for personal growth and contribution, while external professional motivation is more associated with the pursuit of external goals such as money and status (Sheldon, 2019). Further breakdown shows that intrinsic professional motivation involves the driving force generated for obtaining inner satisfaction, which includes factors such as personal interests, recognition of the intrinsic value of the profession, and personal experiences. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is the pursuit of specific outcomes, such as seeking social influence, being driven by others' expectations, or pursuing a specific professional lifestyle (McLean, 2019). The professional motivation of young social workers can be divided into four types according to their level of enthusiasm and altruism: the identification type, the development type, the maintenance type, and the casual type. Different types of young social workers exhibit different professional characteristics (Wang et al., 2022). It is worth noting that when young social workers make career choices, they are more guided by internal motivation, and the power of this internal motivation is significantly stronger than the influence of external motivation (Tong, 2023). In a broader professional field, the professional motivation of civil servants covers multiple aspects such as power and status, growth and development, environmental influence, and work treatment (Song, 2017). For newly - recruited rural teachers, compound motivation dominates, while pure internal motivation is relatively rare (Cao, 2022). Another interview study on visually impaired people reveals the diversity of their professional motivation: some consider survival pressure and material rewards, some are inclined to contribute and help others, some pursue autonomy and satisfaction in work, some aspire to personal growth and improvement, or to avoid certain external unfavorable factors (Yang, 2022). In conclusion, the professional motivation of young social workers stems from their own professional needs. This motivation not only stimulates their career choices but also dominates and sustains the entire process of their engaging in social work. This motivation is influenced by numerous factors and plays a key role in the whole process of individuals' choosing and engaging in social work. Based on the research results, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The professional motivation of young social workers is mainly internal-driven and composite motivation types, followed by external-attraction and motivation-lack types.

2.2 Research on the Influence of Professional Motivation on Professional Identity

The formation of professional identity is a dynamic and complex process, which is profoundly influenced by the continuous interaction between individual experiences and the professional environment and evolves with changes in individual and situational factors. When exploring the relationship between career motivation and professional identity, research has found that the public - service orientation, job - seeking environment incentives, and professional comfort attraction motivation of young civil servants all have significant positive impacts on their professional identity, especially the public - service orientation, which has the most significant predictive effect. However, the motivation influenced by social capital has a significant negative impact on professional identity (Li et al., 2021). Currently, the professional identity of young social workers is generally low, accompanied by mild job burnout. Notably, there is a significant negative correlation between professional identity and job burnout. Compared with unmotivated young social workers, those with internal motivation, external motivation, or

compound motivation show higher professional identity and lower job burnout (Fu & Ren, 2020). Another questionnaire survey of 342 teachers from 9 middle schools in Tibet shows that, compared with teachers with internal motivation, unmotivated and externally motivated teachers bear higher professional pressure and show lower professional identity (Li et al., 2015). In addition, in the study of full - time junior college nursing students, a statistical association was also found between different types of career - choice motivation and professional identity scores (Duan & Tang, 2016). In summary, career motivation is a key factor shaping and influencing the formation, change, and development of young social workers' professional identity. Professional identity is gradually constructed and developed under the conditions of continuous interaction between an individual's own needs, experiences, and the external environment. Based on the research findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: There is a correlation between the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers.

H3: Different professional motivations have different degrees of influence on the professional identity of young social workers.

In summary, the theoretical model constructed in this paper is shown in Figure 1.

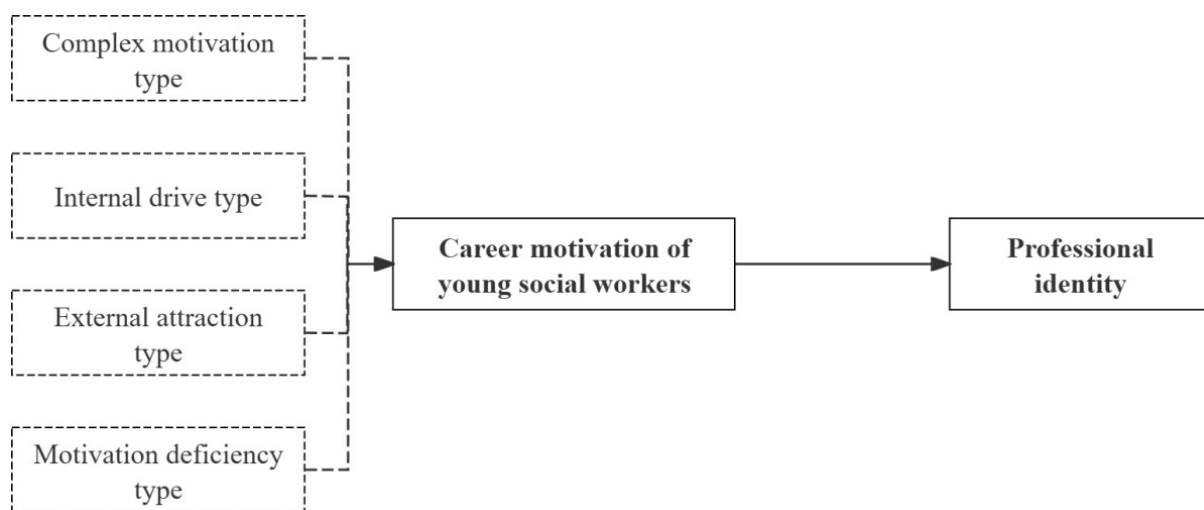


Figure 1. Theoretical model

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Subjects

The meaning of "youth" varies across different societies and organizations and changes with the political, economic, and socio - cultural environment. According to the "Medium and Long - Term Youth Development Plan (2016 - 2025)" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, young people are defined as those aged between 14 and 35 (inclusive) (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). Therefore, this study adopts the age - range definition of "youth" in this plan. Youth social workers are defined as those aged between 20 and 35, who have received professional social work education or obtained social work professional qualifications and are engaged in professional social services. City Z is one of the pioneers in the development of professional social work services in Guangdong Province, China. Not only has its social work services been at the leading level in the country, but it also has numerous social work institutions and practitioners. Thus, City Z was selected as the survey site, and young social workers aged between 20 and 35 in social work service institutions in this city were randomly chosen as the survey subjects. A total of 190 questionnaires were collected, and 12 invalid questionnaires were excluded, resulting in 178 valid questionnaires with an effective response rate of 93.7%. Among the 178 young social workers surveyed, 52 were male and 126 were female. In the data, it is notable that there were more females, most of them were front - line social workers, the majority of them did not major in social work, and most of them had an income level between 2000 and 3000 yuan. The basic information of the surveyed young social workers is shown in Table 1. Considering all the basic information, the sample is highly representative.

Table 1. Basic information of the survey subjects

Statistical items		Percent age (%)	Statistical items		Number of people	Percent age (%)
Gender	male	29.2	Professional Background	Non-social work	161	90.4
	female	70.8		Professional Social Work major	17	9.6
Age	20-25 years old	13.5	Years of service	Less than one year	1	0.6
	26-30 years old	36		1-3 years	137	77
	31-35 years old	50.6		3-5 years	30	16.9
Culture Degree	College degree and below	46.1	Monthly income level (yuan)	More than 5 years	10	5.6
	Auxiliary Personnel	0.6		2,000 and below	4	2.2
	Other positions	1.7		2001-3000	115	64.6
Marriage Status	unmarried	40.4		3001-4000	42	23.6
	Married	57.9		4001-5000	14	7.9
	Divorced	1.7		6001-8000	3	1.7

3.2 Research Tools

Drawing on relevant foreign studies and some domestic literatures, and referring to the questionnaires used in relevant literatures, a questionnaire on the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers was designed independently. Before conducting a large - sample survey, a small - sample pre - test was first carried out on 50 young social workers in City Z. SPSS was used to analyze the obtained data. According to the analysis results, the original scale items were appropriately modified, and 5 inappropriate questions were deleted. The questionnaire officially used in this survey mainly includes the following three aspects:

General information questionnaire. It was self - designed based on demographic characteristics and includes basic information such as gender, age, educational level, professional background, status of holding a social worker certificate, current position, years of employment, workplace, and income level.

Occupational Motivation Questionnaire. In the Self-Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan proposed a trichotomy of motivation: amotivation, external motivation, and internal motivation. Based on this classification and relevant literature review, a questionnaire with a total of 8 items was developed to meet the objectives and actual situation of this study. Multiple choices were allowed. The motivations were divided into four types: internally-driven, externally-attracted, compound motivation, and motivation-lacking. The specific type was determined according to the reasons for engaging in the social work profession selected by the research subjects.

Occupational Identity Scale. This scale draws on the "Questionnaire Survey on Professional Identity and Job Burnout of Social Workers" compiled by the Shenzhen Social Workers Association to form the scale for this study. The scale consists of a total of 28 items, covering three dimensions: occupational value cognition, occupational emotional belonging, and occupational behavioral tendency. The questionnaire uses a five - point scoring system, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", with scores from 1 to 5. The score range is 28 - 140 points. The higher the score, the higher the occupational identity of young social workers.

3.3 Survey Methods

Due to realistic factors of force majeure, in this survey, electronic questionnaires for internal - driven, externally - attracted, motivation - lacking, and compound - motivation types were created on the Wenjuanxing platform. The questionnaires were distributed in the form of QR codes through social work service agencies in City Z and relevant WeChat and QQ groups related to social work. To enhance the diversity and coverage of the sample, the researchers tried to cover different types of social work agencies when distributing the questionnaires.

3.4 Reliability and Validity Tests

In this study, the SPSS quantitative analysis software was mainly used to conduct reliability and validity tests on the used occupational identity scale. The items of occupational value cognition are items 1 - 10 of the scale, those of occupational emotional belonging are items 11 - 20, and those of occupational behavioral tendency are items 21 - 28.

3.4.1 Reliability Test

The Cronbach's α coefficient of the professional identity scale is greater than 0.7, indicating that the scale has high internal consistency and good reliability. Meanwhile, the reliability level of the data in this study is excellent, with sufficient internal consistency. Regarding the "Cronbach's α if item deleted", it can be found that the α coefficient will not increase after any item is deleted, suggesting that no measurement item needs to be removed. For the "corrected item-total correlation (CITC) value", the CITC value of any item is greater than 0.3, and most are greater than 0.5, indicating a good correlation among the items in each dimension and good reliability of the scale, as shown in Table 2. In summary, the reliability of each dimension of the professional identity scale is of high quality.

Table 2. Reliability test table

Variable	Items	Corrected correlation (CITC)	total	The α coefficient of the item that has been removed	Cronbach α coefficient
Occupational value perception	1. I think social work is a profession	0.324		0.829	0.828
	2. I think social work is a highly specialized profession	0.542		0.811	
	3. I think a career in social work requires a strong sense of values and passion	0.474		0.817	
	4. As a social worker, I need to strictly adhere to professional ethics	0.545		0.814	
	5. I think it takes love to work as a social worker	0.533		0.816	
	6. I think social work is a noble profession	0.648		0.798	
	7. I think social work is of great social value and significance	0.705		0.797	
	8. I think the career of social work is very promising	0.574		0.811	
	9. I think the social status and prestige of social work are very high	0.392		0.841	
	10. I think social workers can really help others	0.745		0.789	
Professional emotional belonging	11. I love the social work profession	0.855		0.973	0.974
	12. I'm proud to be a social worker	0.849		0.973	
	13. Being a social worker makes me happy	0.922		0.97	
	14. I have a strong sense of belonging to the social work profession	0.877		0.972	
	15. Social work brings me a sense of happiness	0.939		0.969	
	16. I think it's very fulfilling to be a social worker	0.906		0.971	
	17. I feel that devoting myself to a career in social work can help me realize my personal value	0.864		0.972	
	18. I get excited when I engage in social work services	0.897		0.971	
	19. If I were to choose again, I would still choose a career in social work	0.825		0.974	
	20. I'd love to tell others that I'm a social worker	0.855		0.973	
Occupational behavioral tendencies	21. I will introduce or promote the social work position positively to others	0.807		0.919	0.932
	22. I give enthusiasm, passion and vitality to my work	0.855		0.915	
	23. I will strictly adhere to the code of professional ethics for social workers in my work	0.733		0.925	
	24. I will do my best to complete my work	0.713		0.927	

25. I am willing to take social work training and constantly improve my service skills	0.783	0.922
26. I have a clear career plan for social work	0.756	0.923
27. Unless there are special circumstances, I am willing to work as a social worker for a long time	0.707	0.932
28. I will strive to become an excellent social worker	0.847	0.916

3.4.2 Validity Test

The KMO values of the professional identity scale were all above 0.7, and the P - values of the Bartlett's test of sphericity were all less than 0.001, indicating that the scale had good validity and met the requirements. The cumulative variance explanations of each dimension were 60.13%, 81.55%, and 69.51% respectively. Therefore, the measurement items of each dimension had good structural validity. The specific validity test data are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity test table

Variable	Number of items	KMO	Bartlett sphericity test P value	Cumulative interpretation(%)	variance
Occupational value perception	10	0.833	< 0.001	60.13	
Professional emotional belonging	10	0.956	< 0.001	81.55	
Occupational behavioral tendencies	8	0.9	< 0.001	69.51	

3.5 Data Processing

In this study, SPSS was used for data processing. First, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the collected data to understand the basic situation of variables. Subsequently, the correlation analysis method was employed to explore the relationship between career motivation and professional identity.

4. Research Results and Analysis

4.1 Analysis of the Professional Motivation of Young Social Workers

In the statistical results, "wanting to help people in need" was the primary motivation for young social workers to choose this profession, with the proportion of those who selected it reaching as high as 58.40%. In contrast, only 12 young social workers chose the option of "relevant professional background or internship experience", accounting for 3.40% of the total, which reflects that the professional backgrounds of this group are diverse, and most of them do not have direct professional backgrounds or internship experiences in social work. In addition, other factors such as "having a strong interest in social services", "pursuing a meaningful career", and "being influenced by family, friends, or mentors" also influenced their career choices to a certain extent. Although "good career development prospects" and "salary and welfare benefits" contributed to career choices, they were not the dominant factors. The specific data results are shown in Table 4, which presents the frequency statistics of the career motivations of young social workers.

Table 4. Frequency statistics of the employment motivation of young social workers

	Responses		Percentage of cases(%)
	Number of cases	Percentage (%)	
A relevant professional background or internship experience	12	3.40	6.70
B Have a strong interest in social service	59	16.50	33.10
C wants to help people in need	104	29.10	58.40

D Pursue a meaningful career	48	13.40	27.00
E Be influenced by family, friends, or mentors	54	15.10	30.30
F Good career prospects	21	5.90	11.80
G Salary and benefits	22	6.10	12.40
H Others	38	10.60	21.30
Total	358	100	201.10

In this study, the options A - G in the professional motivation questionnaire were divided into internal - driven type and external - attractive type. Options B, C, and D were classified as internal - driven type. Respondents who only selected B, C, or D were regarded as internal - driven type, those who only selected A, E, F, or G were considered external - attractive type, and those who selected both B, C, or D and A, E, F, or G were categorized as composite motivation type. Meanwhile, this study analyzed the subjects who filled in other reasons. If the reason was blank or something like accidentally discovering the social work industry (i.e., no motivation reasons), they were classified as motivation - lacking type; otherwise, they were assigned to one of the other three types according to the reason. Among different motivations, more respondents chose internal - driven type and composite motivation type. The specific classification results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequencies of young social workers with different professional motivations.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Effective percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Internally driven	62	34.8	34.8	34.8
Compound motor type	64	36	36	70.8
External attraction type	45	25.3	25.3	96.1
Lack of motivation	7	3.9	3.9	100
Total	178	100	100	

In summary, the career motivations of young social workers present significant diversification characteristics. Among them, the internally - driven type dominates. In particular, a profound interest in social services and a strong desire to help others have become the core driving forces for them to engage in this industry. Meanwhile, although the externally - attractive type has influenced the career choices of social workers to some extent, it is not the main motivation. It is also worth noting that the career motivations of young social workers are mainly internally - driven and compound motivations. They are not only driven by internal values and personal pursuits but also comprehensively consider multiple factors, including career development and social responsibility. Although external attractive factors such as career development prospects and salary and welfare benefits also play a certain role, their influence is relatively limited. In addition, the proportion of young social workers lacking motivation is relatively small.

4.2 Analysis of the Professional Identity Status of Youth Social Workers

The professional identity status of young social workers is higher than the theoretical average of 3 in all three dimensions of professional value cognition, professional emotional belonging, and professional behavioral tendency, all showing a relatively high level, as shown in Table 6. Therefore, it is speculated that social workers have a strong sense of professional identity. First, from the dimension of professional value cognition, the scores of 178 young social workers participating in the survey ranged from 2.4 to 5 points, with an average score of 4.3725 points. This data indicates that young social workers generally have a high sense of value recognition for the profession they are engaged in. They are well aware of the significance and value of social work and believe that their work can bring positive changes to society. Second, in the dimension of professional emotional belonging, the scores of young social workers also showed a relatively high level. The score range of this dimension was from 1 to 5 points, with an average score of 3.9882 points. This shows that young social workers have a strong sense of identity with their professional status. They are enthusiastic about their work and are willing to closely connect their careers with social work. Finally, from the dimension of professional behavioral tendency, the scores of young social workers also showed a relatively high level. The score range of this dimension was from 1.25 to 5 points, with an average score of 4.3195 points. This data shows that young social workers show a positive tendency in professional behavior. They are willing to take social responsibilities actively and actively engage in social work, practicing their professional concepts and values with practical actions.

Table 6. Overall Situation of Professional Identity among Young Social Workers

	N	Minimum value	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Occupational value perception	178	2.4	5	4.3725	0.47225
Professional emotional belonging	178	1	5	3.9882	0.82997
Occupational behavioral tendencies	178	1.25	5	4.3195	0.6489

4.3 Correlation Analysis Between the Professional Motivation and Professional Identity of Young Social Workers in Youth Work

In this study, one-way analysis of variance was employed to conduct a comparative analysis of the professional motivation and professional identity scores of young social workers. Based on different professional motivations, young social workers were divided into four categories: internally driven type, compound motivation type, externally attracted type, and motivation - lacking type. Table 7 presents the professional identity scores of young social workers with different professional motivation types. It can be seen from the table that there are significant differences in professional identity scores among different professional motivation types ($F = 8.7$, $P < 0.001$). Specifically, the compound motivation type has the highest professional identity score (13.3066 ± 1.39), followed by the internally driven type (12.8282 ± 1.76), then the externally attracted type (11.8161 ± 1.98), and the motivation - lacking type has the lowest professional identity score (11.1964 ± 1.87).

Table 7. Comparison of professional identity scores for different career motivations. ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Project	Number of cases	Professional identity score	Statistics	P
Internal drive type	62	12.8282±1.76	$F = 8.7$	< 0.001
Complex motivation type	64	13.3066±1.39		
Complex motivation type	45	11.8161±1.98		
Motivation deficiency type	7	11.1964±1.87		

5. Discussion and Suggestions

5.1 Discussion

The types of career motivation among young social workers are mainly internally-driven and composite motivation. According to the results of this study, the top four motivations for young people to choose a career in social work are "wanting to help those in need", "having a strong interest in social services", "being influenced by family, friends, or mentors", and "pursuing a meaningful career". The bottom four are "salary and welfare benefits", "good career development prospects", "relevant professional background or internship experience", and "others". According to the statistics of the career motivation frequency chart, the proportion of those who choose internal driving factors is about 60%, the proportion of external attractive factors is about 30%, and the proportion of other options is about 10%. This data shows the status of internal driving factors in the career choice of young social workers. Based on the overall data, the career motivation of young social workers is mainly internally-driven and composite motivation. The motivation of this group of young social workers may stem from their concern for social issues, strong desire to help others, and pursuit of social justice. It may also combine multiple factors such as career development and family influence. Compared with internally-driven and composite motivation, externally-attractive motivations such as "good career development prospects" and "salary and welfare benefits" account for a relatively low proportion among young social workers, indicating that they attach more importance to the intrinsic value and meaning of work rather than simply pursuing material benefits. The proportion of those with a lack of motivation is relatively small, indicating that most young social workers have clear career motivation and goals.

Different motivations for entering the profession have a certain degree of influence on the professional identity of young social workers. The research results show that different types of motivations for entering the profession have a certain impact on the professional identity of young social workers. Among them, young social workers with compound motivations have the highest scores in professional identity, followed by those with internal-driven motivations and external-attracted motivations, while those with motivation deficiency have the lowest scores, which is consistent with the research hypothesis. Young social workers with compound motivations and internal-driven motivations are driven by their internal values, so they have a relatively high sense of identity and value towards their profession. They firmly believe that their work can bring positive changes to society, and this belief and enthusiasm encourage them to be more engaged and focused in their work. In contrast, young social workers

with external-attracted motivations may have relatively weak professional identity, as their career choices are more influenced by external factors and they lack internal drive and enthusiasm. Young social workers with motivation deficiency show the weakest professional identity. Due to the lack of clear motivations and goals for entering the profession, they lack a sense of belonging and satisfaction in their work, and their professional identity is lower than that of the other three types of motivations.

5.2 Suggestions

This study explored the relationship between the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers. Based on the research results, the following suggestions are put forward to enhance the professional identity of young social workers and promote the healthy development of the social work industry.

5.2.1 Give Full Play to the Leading Role of Young Social Workers with Compound Motivation Types

Create leadership opportunities. Establish a clear selection mechanism for young leaders, and select young social workers with compound motivation through comprehensive evaluation of work performance, leadership potential, and peer reviews. Provide customized leadership training courses for the selected leaders, covering topics such as decision-making, team management, and conflict resolution.

Promote experience sharing. Develop a detailed experience-sharing plan, including sharing topics, time, and forms, to ensure that each sharing session achieves the expected results. Establish a "Best Sharing Award" to encourage workers with compound motivation to actively share their experiences and insights.

Participate in decision-making. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of young social workers with compound motivations in decision-making committees or working groups to ensure their effective participation in the decision-making process. Regularly evaluate their contributions to decision-making, provide positive feedback and constructive suggestions to help them continuously improve their decision-making abilities.

5.2.2 Stimulate the Intrinsic Enthusiasm of Internally - Driven Young Social Workers

Empower individuals with autonomy. Clearly define the scope of powers and responsibilities of internally - driven workers during project planning and execution to ensure that they can fully unleash their creativity and enthusiasm. Establish an "Innovation Project Fund" to provide them with financial and resource support to implement innovative work plans and suggestions.

Assign challenging tasks. Regularly release information on challenging and innovative work tasks or project requirements, and encourage internally - driven young social workers to proactively take on and complete the tasks. Establish an "Innovation Reward Program" to recognize their innovative proposals or achievements with material rewards and honorary certificates.

Establish communication platforms. Develop detailed plans for internal seminars and innovation workshops, including information such as themes, times, locations, and participants, to ensure the smooth progress of the activities and achieve the expected results. Build long - term cooperative relationships with social work institutions in other industries or regions, conduct regular mutual visits for exchanges, and share experience and achievements to broaden the horizons and thinking of internally - driven young social workers. Meanwhile, industry experts or scholars can be invited to give lectures or provide guidance to enhance their professional qualities and practical abilities.

5.2.3 Strengthen the External Incentives for Externally - Attracted Youth Social Workers

Maintain competitive compensation. Establish a compensation research team to regularly understand the industry's compensation levels and benefit trends, ensuring that the institution's compensation and benefits are competitive. Set up an "Outstanding Employee Award" to provide additional material rewards and honorary certificates to outstanding externally - attracted workers.

Clarify the promotion channels. Develop a detailed promotion path map, clearly define the promotion requirements and time nodes for each position, and assist externally - attracted workers in planning their career development paths. Establish a "career development counseling" service to provide them with personalized career planning advice and career consultations.

Organize professional training. Collaborate with well - known training institutions in the industry to provide high - quality training courses and learning resources for externally attracted workers. Establish a "learning fund" to support them in participating in professional training, obtaining relevant certificates, or pursuing further education such as postgraduate degree - upgrading courses.

5.2.4 Guide the Motivation Exploration of Young Social Workers with a Lack of Motivation

Provide career counseling. Collaborate with professional career counseling institutions to offer one-on-one in-depth counseling services for workers with motivation deficiency. Establish a "Career Planning Workshop" to assist them in understanding their career interests, strengths, and development directions through group activities.

Enrich work experiences. Develop detailed job rotation plans and cross - departmental cooperation project plans, and clarify the goals and expected outcomes for each stage. Provide them with experienced mentors or coaches who can offer guidance and feedback during the work process to help them better adapt to new positions and projects.

Strengthen colleague mutual assistance. Establish platforms such as WeChat groups or QQ groups for "colleague mutual assistance groups" to facilitate colleagues to communicate and share experiences, insights, and help - seeking information at any time. Regularly organize team - building activities and outdoor development training to enhance team cohesion and sense of belonging, and help young social workers with motivation deficiency integrate into the team culture.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers, it also has some limitations. First, the limited sample size of the study may affect the generalizability of the results. Second, the study mainly focuses on the influence of employment motivation on professional identity, but fails to fully explore other possible influencing factors, such as work stress, organizational culture, leadership style, etc. Future research can consider the following directions. By increasing the sample size, the representativeness and generalizability of the research results can be improved. In addition, other factors that may affect professional identity, such as work stress, organizational culture, leadership style, etc., can be studied. Cross - cultural comparative studies can also be conducted to explore the relationship between the employment motivation and professional identity of young social workers in different cultural backgrounds.

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