Factors Influencing Job-Seeking Intentions for Lecturer Positions at Chinese Universities

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Abstract: *The primary objective of this study is to delve into the impact of the development of higher education in China on the recruitment strategies of lecturers in Chinese public universities. The aim is to provide a novel theoretical foundation for understanding and predicting job seeker behavior by applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Equity Theory within the context of higher education. The findings reveal that these theories uncover a tendency among individuals to seek job opportunities that satisfy higher-level needs rather than remain in high-pressure environments.*

The main findings of this study highlight the crucial role of job characteristics in shaping university reputation and influencing job seekers' willingness to accept positions. Data analysis confirmed that job characteristics, such as creativity and job satisfaction, directly enhance the academic reputation of universities and indirectly affect lecturers' retention intentions. This study offers strategic guidance for higher education institutions on how to enhance university reputation and attract top talent by optimizing job characteristics, and provides new insights into individuals' needs and motivations in career choices.

Keywords: Lecturer Recruitment, Job Characteristics, University Reputation, Job-seeker's Willingness to Accept Positions, Fairness, Social Satisfaction

Introduction

In this study, we explore in depth how job characteristics, fairness, and societal satisfaction directly and indirectly affect the reputation of universities. Job seekers' intention to apply plays a crucial mediating role in this process. Although earlier studies have discussed the association between university reputation and various factors (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007; Sung et al., 2009), there is still a relative lack of systematic analysis in the literature on how job characteristics, perceptions of fairness, and societal satisfaction together impact university reputation.

We first discuss how job characteristics, such as creativity and work pressure, directly enhance the satisfaction of academic staff and thereby improve the reputation of the university. Related research indicates that job satisfaction is a key factor affecting organizational reputation (Knights & Kennedy, 2005). Additionally, the impact of perceived fairness primarily manifests in the fairness of management systems and resource allocation, consistent with the findings of Colquitt et al. (2001), who noted significant effects of organizational justice on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Societal satisfaction is reflected in social and organizational identification, where, according to Mael and Ashforth (1992), employees with strong organizational identification are more likely to form positive emotional ties to the organization, further enhancing its reputation.

These factors not only directly strengthen the sense of belonging among faculty, thereby enhancing university reputation, but also indirectly affect the university's reputation by enhancing job seekers' intentions to apply. Further analysis shows that the multiple dimensions of job characteristics, perceptions of fairness, and societal satisfaction indirectly shape university reputation by influencing job seekers' intentions to apply. Regarding the impact of job seekers' intentions on university reputation, Highhouse et al. (2009) pointed out that potential employees' organizational preferences directly affect their perceptions and the reputation of the organization.

In summary, the rich practical experience and professional skills that job seekers bring are crucial for enhancing the teaching and research levels of universities, a point widely recognized in educational research (Taylor et al., 2012). These studies deepen our understanding of how job characteristics, perceptions of fairness, and societal satisfaction work together to affect university reputation and highlight the mediating role of job seekers' intentions in this process.

By effectively integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation (Herzberg, 1959), and Adams' Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), this study aims to reveal the key factors affecting lecturer recruitment and propose targeted strategies to enhance educational quality and meet the needs of lecturers from diverse backgrounds. The contribution of this study lies in providing empirically based practical guidance on talent recruitment and reputation management for public universities in China and other regions, while enriching the relevant theoretical frameworks, which has significant theoretical and practical implications for the field of higher education management.

This paper also defines key concepts, provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the research, and delves into the multiple dimensions affecting the recruitment of lecturers at Chinese public universities, including core factors such as job characteristics, fairness, and social satisfaction. The scope of the study covers content, variables, demographics, and time, aiming to comprehensively analyze the current situation and challenges of lecturer recruitment strategies in Chinese public higher education institutions.

Literature Reviews
1. Theoretical Studies

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a classic motivational theory in psychology, categorizing human needs into five levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). In the context of university lecturer recruitment, this theory provides a framework for understanding and meeting the needs of potential lecturers. Dong (2021) suggested that universities should guide lecturers towards self-actualization not only through research achievements but also through teaching accomplishments. Miao (2019) emphasized meeting the different levels of needs of university administrators, such as increasing salaries for physiological needs, establishing scientific title evaluation systems for safety needs, creating a positive work atmosphere for social needs, and providing promotion opportunities for self-actualization needs.

He (1990) elaborated on Adams' Equity Theory, which studies the impact of fairness in wage distribution on employee motivation. Research by Chinese scholars has

found that fairness in wage distribution plays a decisive role in corporate management, while fairness based on the satisfaction of other needs from Maslow's theory plays a supporting role. Sun Wei and Huang (2004) pointed out that optimizing personal value is a key factor in improving the sense of fairness. This means that in the university context, lecturers' personal value recognition and career development opportunities are crucial for perceiving fairness.

Lin (2003) discussed Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, proposed by the American psychologist Herzberg in 1959. This theory divides factors in corporate management into satisfiers and dissatisfiers, which are the main factors affecting employee performance. Liu (2022) indicated that in the introduction of high-end scientific and technological talents, both motivators and hygiene factors are equally important. This suggests that the recruitment process should not only focus on hygiene factors such as salary and working conditions but also consider how to attract and retain talent through motivators like career development opportunities and job recognition.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow,1943), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation (Herzberg, 1959), and Adams' Equity Theory (Adams,1965) offer critical frameworks for comprehending and examining the motivations, satisfaction, and perceptions of fairness in the process of recruiting lecturers. Zhang (2010) showed that universities should design compensation and incentive schemes according to different levels of needs to improve lecturers' job satisfaction and performance. Shi (2017) noted that companies should establish fair compensation systems and management practices to enhance employee satisfaction and efficiency. This is equally applicable in the university context, where fair compensation and promotion opportunities can improve lecturers' loyalty and motivation.

2. Hypothesis Development

Job characteristics, as key independent variables affecting lecturers' willingness to accept positions and university reputation, include multiple dimensions such as creativity, work pressure, job satisfaction, organizational support, and work environment. Amabile (1983) Componential Theory delved into the nature of creativity, defining it as a combination of intrinsic motivation, domain-specific expertise, creative thinking skills, and a supportive environment. Guo and Jiang (2017) noted that work pressure is an integral part of lecturers' careers, directly affecting their daily job satisfaction and career development. Zhang and Wang (2018) further emphasized that job satisfaction is a significant factor influencing lecturers' willingness to accept positions. Miao (2019) argued that a sense of organizational support is equally important for enhancing lecturers' job satisfaction and reducing their intention to leave. Additionally, Cheng and Zhang (2020) found that the quality of the work environment directly affects lecturers' job performance and loyalty to their universities.

Research by Ge (2021), Mu (2006), Li (2020), and Chen and Xiong (2021) showed that in public universities in Yunnan Province, fairness is a significant independent variable affecting lecturer recruitment, including two key dimensions: management systems and distribution fairness. These dimensions together shape the perception of fairness in the university environment and significantly impact job seekers' willingness to accept positions (a mediating variable) and the university's reputation (a dependent variable).

Xue et al. (2013) and Altbach (2019) pointed out that social satisfaction, including social identity and organizational identity, is an important part of university lecturers' careers, directly affecting their daily job satisfaction and, indirectly, their future career development expectations and choices.

Zhu (2013), Wang (2021), Han (2021), and Li et al. (2022) emphasized the significant impact of experienced job seekers on university reputation. They usually bring rich practical experience and professional knowledge, which are crucial for enhancing the teaching and research levels of universities. Yan et al. (2021), Zhang and Zhang (2022), and Li et al. (2022) discussed job seekers without work experience, especially recent graduates, who bring the latest academic theories and research methods, injecting fresh blood into universities, promoting academic innovation, and updating knowledge.

Telci and Kantur (2014), Boer, Enders, and Leisyte (2017) proposed that the formation of university reputation is a multidimensional and complex process, involving aspects such as educational quality, social interaction, global rankings, and brand image. These factors not only affect the university's status in academia and industry but also influence the choices of students and faculty. Therefore, the job characteristics, fairness, social satisfaction, and job seekers' willingness to accept positions significantly impact the university's reputation, with job seekers' willingness to accept positions acting as a mediating variable linking these independent variables to the dependent variable of university reputation.
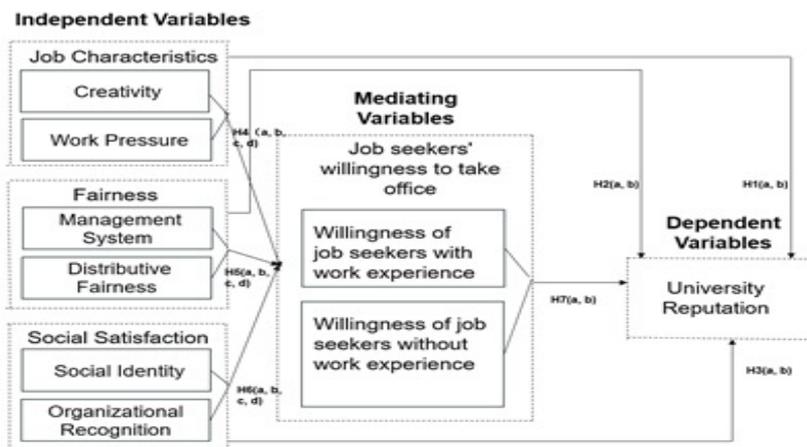

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Job characteristics have a significant impact on university reputation.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Fairness has a significant impact on university reputation.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Social satisfaction has a significant impact on university reputation.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Job characteristics have a significant impact on job seekers' willingness to accept positions.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Fairness has a significant impact on job seekers' willingness to accept positions.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Social satisfaction has a significant impact on job seekers' willingness to accept positions.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Job seekers' willingness to accept positions has a significant impact on university reputation.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research method, targeting both experienced and inexperienced job seekers. Data collection involved collaboration with universities, companies, and related institutions, with measures taken to control for invalid questionnaires. The questionnaire utilized a 7-point Likert scale, combined with Cronbach's alpha for reliability analysis and content validity testing.

Initially, the study will validate the scale's reliability and validity, followed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the pilot sample to determine the questionnaire items.

The questionnaire design is based on previous research, consisting of two parts: demographic information and measurement items for the five variables in the hypothesis model (different scales are used for experienced and inexperienced job seekers when measuring job acceptance intentions). All items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The study adapts 8 scales from Zhou and J.M. et al. to measure job seekers' intentions and their impact on university reputation.

The overall sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, setting the formal sample size to at least 385 individuals for each target group. The study will validate the data's reliability and validity using Cronbach's alpha and CFA, and hypotheses will be tested using path analysis.

Before conducting the main survey, this study assessed the validity of the questionnaire through a pre-test, which consisted of two stages:

1. Expert Review: To evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, the Item-Objective Consistency (IOC) index was utilized, assessed by five professors of business administration from China. The IOC test result was 0.8182, which is above the standard of 0.7. This standard was chosen based on estimates from previous research, indicating that all items in the questionnaire are acceptable.

2. Pilot Testing: We invited 200 graduate job seekers, including 100 with work experience and 100 without, to complete the questionnaire.

The collected samples were then subjected to reliability testing and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to assess the reliability and applicability of the questionnaire. During the pilot test phase, reliability and validity analyses were conducted separately for participants with and without work experience. The reliability analysis revealed that the Cronbach's α coefficients ranged from 0.87 to 0.936, all exceeding the standard of 0.7, indicating good internal consistency of the questionnaire. This result aligns with Nunnally's (1978) recommendation that a Cronbach's α greater than 0.7 generally indicates good internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). In the validity analysis part, the EFA results showed that for participants with work experience, the factor loadings for the "University Reputation" dimension ranged from 0.763 to 0.86, and for the "Work Stress" dimension from 0.657 to 0.769, indicating that the questionnaire items have a high explanatory power for their respective dimensions. Additionally, the rotated component matrix further confirmed the close connection between each item and its corresponding latent factor. For participants without work experience, we employed the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess the suitability of our data for factor analysis. According to Kaiser (1974), a KMO value exceeding 0.8 is considered a good indicator for the appropriateness of factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, based on Bartlett's (1954) study on chi-square approximations, is used to check the inter-correlations among variables.

Furthermore, following the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999), we used fit indices such as GFI, CFI, and RMSEA to evaluate the model fit. The acceptance thresholds of these indices reflect the industry standards and recommended practices for model fitting the EFA results also displayed a similar pattern, for instance, the factor loadings for the "University Reputation" dimension ranged from 0.876 to 0.897, and for the "Social Recognition" dimension from 0.879 to 0.909, these high factor loadings further verify the good explanatory power of the questionnaire items for their respective dimensions.

The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity results supported the EFA, with KMO values of 0.866 (for the group with work experience) and 0.900 (for the group without work experience), both exceeding the good fit standard of 0.8. The p-value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was close to zero, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Furthermore, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) further validated the structure of the questionnaire. The overall model fit indices, including Chi-Square, Relative Chi-Square, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) all met the acceptance standards. For example, the GFI was 0.93, CFI was 0.95, and RMSEA was 0.05, these statistical values specifically tested the consistency of the hypothesized model with the empirical data model. These analysis results confirm the reliability and validity of the study's questionnaire, and the pre-test results show that the questionnaire is suitable for factor analysis.

This study has been reviewed by the Ethics Committee, Code:STIU-HREC041/2024

Research Findings and Discussion

This study targets job seekers interested in positions at Chinese universities. We distributed 1205 survey questionnaires to a population with graduate degrees (including current students) within China, and successfully retrieved all 1205, with 1200 being valid responses. These included surveys from 602 experienced job seekers and 603 inexperienced job seekers. After removing 5 invalid questionnaires, the effective responses were divided into two categories, each consisting of 600 responses: 600 from experienced job seekers and 600 from inexperienced job seekers. We collected demographic information from respondents, such as gender, age, educational background, professional title, and monthly income, to ensure the representativeness and diversity of the sample.

This study will employ Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), path analysis, and tests for mediation effects. The purpose is to validate the effectiveness of the measurement model and verify whether the hypothesized relationships hold.

1. Data Analysis

CFA, the first step in SEM analysis, showed all factor loadings ranged from 0.719 to 0.998, exceeding the 0.6 threshold (Hair et al., 2010), and all constructs' AVE values were above 0.5, confirming convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2021), indicating sufficient internal consistency and reliability.

Discriminant validity for all constructs was assessed according to Fornell and Lacker (1981), with the square root of each latent construct's AVE higher than its correlations with other constructs, confirming acceptable discriminant validity.

Structural Model Test

After confirming the reliability and validity of the constructs in the measurement model, the structural model was constructed and analyzed. Path coefficients assessed the relationships between constructs in the structured model (Hair et al., 2019). Path analysis was conducted on 1200 samples to test the hypotheses, with the results as follows.

1.1 Data Analysis for Experienced Job Seekers Sample

Table 1: Presents demographic information for the experienced job seekers' data.

Statistical project name	Category	Statistical results	
		Subtotal	Proportion (%)
Do you have work experience?	Have work experience	600	100
Gender	Male	298	49.54
	Female	302	50.46
Education level Master	Master	379	63.12
	PHD	221	36.88
Age (years old)	23-32	175	29.24
	33-42	203	33.89
	43-52	139	23.09
	53-65	83	13.79
Professional title	Junior	151	25.08
	Intermediate	203	33.89
	Deputy Senior	138	23.09
	Advanced	83	13.79
	None	25	4.15
Average monthly income (RMB)	less than 3000	25	4.17
	3000-6000	83	13.83
	6001-9000	138	23.00
	9001-12000	203	33.83
	More than 12001	151	25.17

Table 2: Convergent Validity Statistics for Experienced Job Seekers

| Variable	Facet	Variable credibility		
		Crobach's α	C.R.	AVE
Job Characteristics	Creativity	0.986	0.986	0.924
	Work Pressure	0.999	0.999	0.991
Fairness	University Management System	0.971	0.971	0.871
	Allocation Fairness	0.964	0.964	0.842
Social Satisfaction	Social Recognition	0.968	0.968	0.834
	Organizational Identification	0.976	0.976	0.893
Candidates with Job Seekers	Candidates Job Seekers	0.993	0.993	0.944
University Reputation	University Reputation	0.931	0.931	0.599
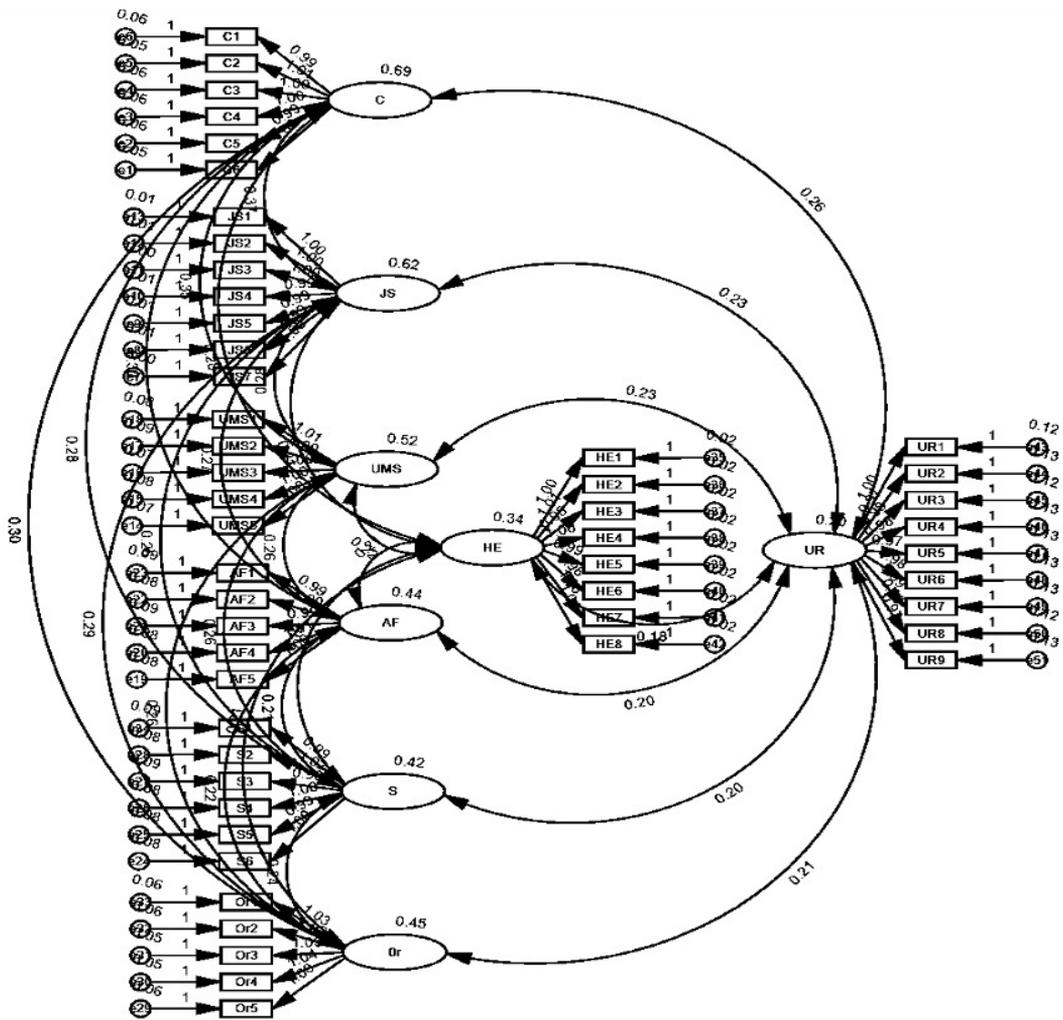
Figure 2: Structural Equation Model for Experienced Job Seekers Data

Note: C = Creativity; JS = Job Stress; UMS = University Management System; AF = Allocation Fairness; S = Social Recognition; Or = Organizational Recognition; HE = Hiring Intentions of Experienced Job Seekers; UR = University Reputation.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Analysis for Experienced Job Seekers Data
Discrimination Validity

	UR	HE	0r	S	AF	UMS	JS	C
UR	0.774							
HE	0.685***	0.972						
0r	0.715***	0.526***	0.945					
S	0.699***	0.51***	0.549***	0.913				
AF	0.686***	0.528***	0.503***	0.484***	0.918			
UMS	0.723***	0.533***	0.548***	0.564***	0.547***	0.933		
JS	0.648***	0.467***	0.554***	0.504***	0.507***	0.499***	0.995	
C	0.721***	0.571***	0.54***	0.53***	0.535***	0.593***	0.559***	0.961

Note: $p<0.001$, the value on the diagonal represents the root mean square of AVE, and the correlation coefficients between variables are below the diagonal.

The sample data of job seekers with work experience has yielded a KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value of 0.977, which is very close to 1. This indicates a high level of inter-variable correlation within the data, making it ideal for factor analysis. The KMO measure assesses whether the partial correlations among variables are sufficiently small for factor analysis; a high KMO value suggests that most of the variance could be explained by a few factors, thereby justifying the appropriateness of factor analysis.

On the other hand, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity has produced highly significant statistical results (Approximate Chi-square Value of 56640.893, Degrees of Freedom of 1275, Significance Level $p<0.001$). This means that the variables in the dataset are not independent but are significantly correlated. The purpose of this test is to check whether the correlation matrix of the dataset is an identity matrix, that is, whether all variables are completely independent. The significant results of the test reject the hypothesis of independence among variables, further supporting the use of factor analysis to explore the underlying relationships between them.

Table 4: Results of Structural Validity Analysis for Data from Experienced Job Seekers

Indicators	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA	RMR	SRMR	IFI	TLI
Value	2.063	0.873	0.859	0.978	0.042	0.007	0.142	0.978	0.976
Criterion	≤3	≥0.95	≥0.90	≥0.95	≤0.05	≤0.07	≤0.05		
Reference	Kline(1998)	Kline(2005)	Tabachnick& Fidell(2007)	West et al. (2012)	Macallum et al.(1996)	Steiger(2007)	Diamantopoulos&Siguaw(2000)		

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing Results for Data from Experienced Job Seekers

Path			Unstandardized Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
JobHE	←	Cr	0.162	0.23	0.031	5.264	***	Accepted
JobHE	←	JobS	0.026	0.035	0.03	0.853	0.393	Reject
JobHE	←	UniMS	0.099	0.123	0.036	2.759	0.006	Accepted
JobHE	←	AllF	0.158	0.18	0.036	4.345	***	Accepted
JobHE	←	Social	0.117	0.13	0.038	3.073	0.002	Accepted
JobHE	←	0r	0.134	0.154	0.037	3.586	***	Accepted
UniR	←	0r	0.131	0.198	0.02	6.473	***	Accepted
UniR	←	Social	0.126	0.184	0.021	6.104	***	Accepted
UniR	←	AllF	0.116	0.175	0.02	5.895	***	Accepted
UniR	←	UniMS	0.112	0.182	0.019	5.801	***	Accepted
UniR	←	JobS	0.055	0.098	0.016	3.431	***	Accepted
UniR	←	Cr	0.092	0.172	0.017	5.495	***	Accepted
UniR	←	JobHE	0.117	0.154	0.022	5.271	***	Accepted

Note: Cr = Creativity; JobS = Job Stress; UniMS = University Management System; AllF = Allocation Fairness; Social = Social Recognition; Or = Organizational Recognition; jobHE = Job Hiring Intentions of Experienced Job Seekers; UniR = University Reputation.

Table 6: Mediation Effect Analysis for Data from Experienced Job Seekers

Mediation Path	Parameter	Estimate	SE	Bias-corrected 95% CI			Percentile Bootstrap 95% CI		
				Lower	Upper	P	Lower	Upper	P
C→HE	C	0.12	0.034	0.096	0.146	0.012	0.099	0.14	0.01
JS→HE	JS	0.125	0.032	0.1	0.158	0.006	0.1	0.145	0.01
UMS→HE	UMS	0.133	0.03	0.107	0.164	0.009	0.111	0.155	0.01
AF→HE	AF	0.152	0.028	0.121	0.185	0.01	0.124	0.179	0.01
S→HE	S	0.15	0.027	0.123	0.186	0.005	0.124	0.172	0.01
HE→R	R	0.317	0.028	0.262	0.387	0.01	0.114	0.164	0.01

Note: C = Creativity; JS = Job Stress; UMS = University Management System; AF = Allocation Fairness; S = Social Recognition; Or = Organizational Recognition; HE = Job Hiring Intentions of Experienced Job Seekers; UR = University Reputation.

1.2 Data Analysis for Inexperienced Job Seekers Sample

Table7: Demographic Information Statistics for Inexperienced Job Seekers Data

Statistical project name	Category	Statistical results	
		Subtotal	Proportion (%)
Do you have work experience?	No work experience	600	100
Gender	Male	295	49.09
	Female	305	50.91
Education level Master	Master	473	78.77
	PHD	127	21.23
Age (years old)	23-32	600	100
	33-42	0	0
	43-52	0	0
	53-65	0	0
Professional title	Junior	0	0
	Intermediate	0	0
	Deputy Senior	0	0
	Advanced	0	0
	None	600	100
Average monthly income (RMB)	less than 3000	600	100
	3000-6000	0	0
	6001-9000	0	0
	9001-12000	0	0
	More than 12001	0	0

Table 8: Convergent Validity Statistics for Data from Inexperienced Job Seekers

| Variable	Facet	Variable credibility		
		Crobach's α	C.R.	AVE
Job characteristics	Creativity	0.966	0.966	0.824
	Work Pressure	0.984	0.984	0.901
Fairness	University Management System	0.944	0.944	0.771
	Allocation Fairness	0.937	0.937	0.75
Social satisfaction	Social Recognition	0.949	0.949	0.755
	Organizational Identification	0.953	0.953	0.804
Candidates without job seekers	Candidates without job seekers	0.971	0.971	0.847
University Reputation	University Reputation	0.916	0.916	0.548
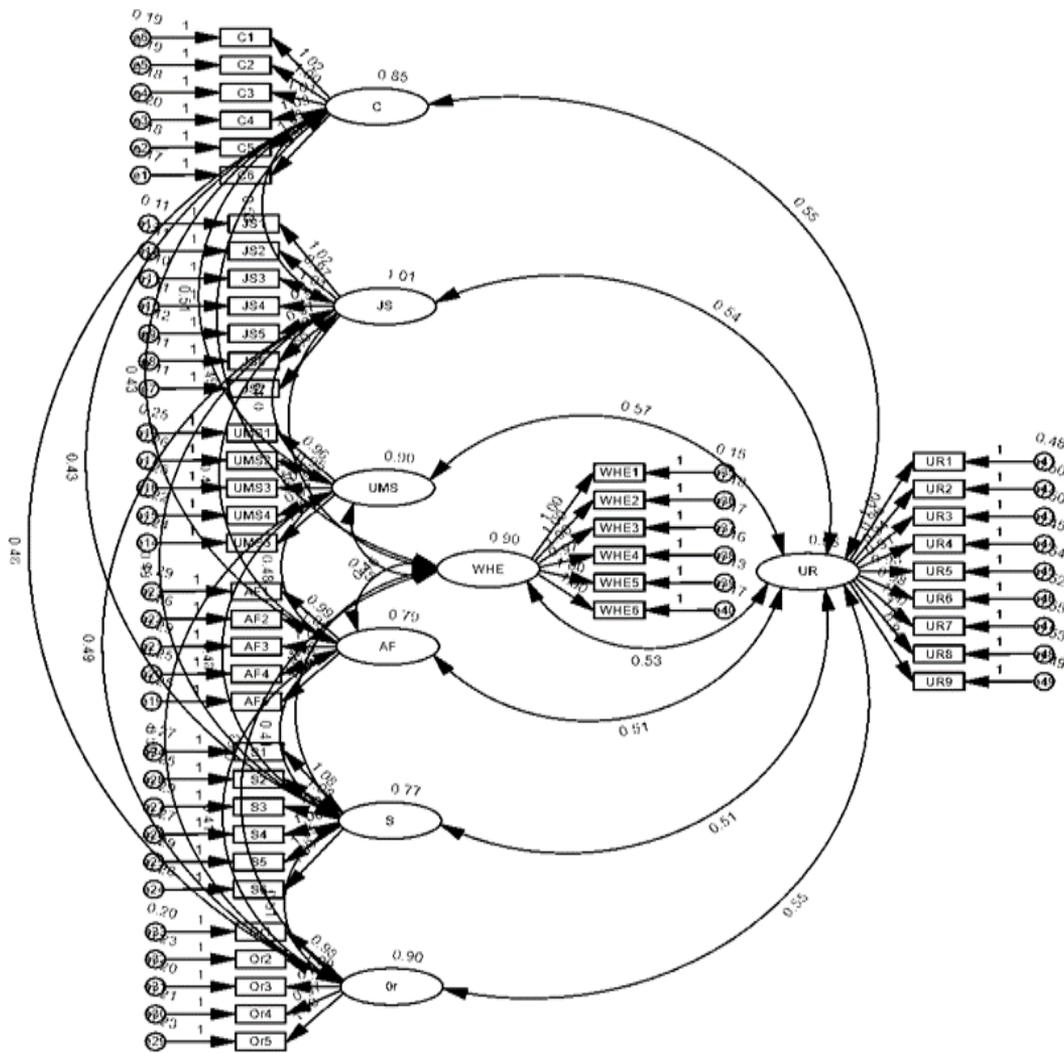
Figure 3: Structural Equation Model for Data from Inexperienced Job Seekers

Table 9: Discriminant Validity Analysis for Data from Inexperienced Job Seekers
Discrimination Validity

	UR	WHE	0r	S	AF	UMS	JS	C
UR	0.74							
WHE	0.687***	0.92						
0r	0.716***	0.594***	0.897					
S	0.722***	0.507***	0.607***	0.869				
AF	0.707***	0.549***	0.489***	0.521***	0.866			
UMS	0.743***	0.506***	0.56***	0.58***	0.565***	0.878		
JS	0.659***	0.481***	0.519***	0.556***	0.521***	0.511***	0.949	
C	0.737***	0.555***	0.554***	0.531***	0.523***	0.587***	0.573***	0.824

Note: p<0.001,the value on the diagonal represents the root mean square of AVE, and the
correlation coefficients between variables are below the diagonal.

The results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity once again confirm that the dataset of job seekers without work experience is highly suitable for factor analysis. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.979, which is very close to 1, indicating a high degree of correlation among the variables in the data. This provides ideal conditions for conducting factor analysis. The KMO measure is used to assess whether the partial correlations among variables are sufficiently small to conduct effective factor analysis; such a high KMO value suggests that most of the variance in the data could be explained by a few common factors, demonstrating the appropriateness of factor analysis.

Simultaneously, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity has also provided highly significant statistical results (Approximate Chi-square Value of 33542.297, Degrees of Freedom of 1176, Significance Level $p<0.001$), indicating that the variables in the dataset are not independent but are interrelated. The purpose of this test is to verify whether the correlation matrix of the data is merely an identity matrix, that is, whether the variables are completely independent. The significant test results effectively reject the hypothesis of independence among variables, further confirming the rationale for using factor analysis to explore the underlying relationships among the variables.

Table 10: Structural Validity Analysis for Data from Inexperienced Job Seekers

Indicators	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA	RMR	SRMR	IFI	TLI
Value	1.337	0.911	0.911	0.989	0.024	0.025	0.023	0.989	0.988
Criterion	≤3	≥0.95	≥0.90	≥0.95	≤0.05	≤0.07	≤0.05		
Reference	Kline (1998)	Kline (2005)	Tabachnick& Fidell(2007)	West et al. (2012)	Macallum eta(1996)	Steiger (2007)	Diamantopoulos&Siguaw (2000)		

Table 11: Hypothesis Testing Results for Data from Inexperienced Job Seekers

Path			Unstandardized Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
WHE	←	C	0.196	0.19	0.046	4.239	***	Accepted
WHE	←	JS	0.045	0.047	0.04	1.111	0.267	Reject
WHE	←	UMS	0.043	0.043	0.047	0.933	0.351	Reject
WHE	←	AF	0.241	0.226	0.046	5.195	***	Accepted
WHE	←	S	0.063	0.059	0.05	1.269	0.205	Reject
WHE	←	0r	0.294	0.294	0.045	6.492	***	Accepted
UR	←	C	0.183	0.208	0.028	6.436	***	Accepted
UR	←	JS	0.071	0.088	0.024	2.983	0.003	Accepted
UR	←	UMS	0.179	0.208	0.028	6.298	***	Accepted
UR	←	WHE	0.116	0.136	0.026	4.428	***	Accepted
UR	←	AF	0.173	0.19	0.029	6.02	***	Accepted
UR	←	S	0.166	0.18	0.03	5.484	***	Accepted
UR	←	0r	0.134	0.156	0.028	4.754	***	Accepted

Note: C = Creativity; JS = Job Stress; UMS = University Management Systems; AF = Allocative Fairness; S = Social Recognition; Or = Organizational Recognition; WHE = Job Seeking Intentions of Inexperienced Applicants; UR = University Reputation.

Table 12: Mediation Effect Analysis for Data from Inexperienced Job Seekers

Mediation Path	Parameter	Estimate	SE	Bias-corrected95%CI			Percentile Bootstrap95%CI		
				Lower	Upper	P	Lower	Upper	P
C→WHE	C	0.179	0.039	0.139	0.215	0.018	0.147	0.212	0.01
JS→WHE	JS	0.174	0.041	0.138	0.212	0.013	0.141	0.206	0.01
UMS→WHE	UMS	0.174	0.038	0.133	0.204	0.019	0.146	0.203	0.01
AF→WHE	AF	0.195	0.038	0.15	0.23	0.02	0.161	0.227	0.01
S→WHE	S	0.177	0.039	0.143	0.218	0.009	0.147	0.208	0.01
WHE→Zor	Zor	0.193	0.039	0.151	0.225	0.015	0.163	0.224	0.01

Note: C = Creativity; JS = Job Stress; UMS = University Management Systems; AF = Allocative Fairness; S = Social Recognition; ZOr = Organizational Recognition; WHE = Job Seeking Intentions of Inexperienced Applicants; UR = University Reputation.

2. Discussion

Building on existing research, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the findings and their implications for both academia and practice, while also exploring future research directions. The study found that factors such as "Job Characteristics," "Fairness," and "Social Satisfaction" significantly influence job seekers' intentions, particularly aspects of creativity (A Job Characteristic) and fairness, such as compensation and promotion opportunities, play a central role in job seekers' career decisions.

Moreover, university reputation plays a pivotal role in job seekers' decision-making processes, especially in the competitive environment of higher education. Regardless of whether job seekers have work experience, the reputation of a university is a key factor they consider when evaluating potential positions. Experienced job seekers place more emphasis on a university's research environment and academic reputation, while inexperienced job seekers, especially recent graduates, are more concerned with the overall reputation of the university and its prospects for employment.

Based on these findings, universities need to invest more in academic reputation, research capabilities, and alumni network expansion to attract top talent. Additionally, strengthening career development support and employment guidance to meet the needs of recent graduates and showcasing graduates' competitiveness in the workplace through industry partnerships can enhance a university's attractiveness. University reputation is key to attracting talent and improving educational quality. By understanding the needs of different job seeker groups, universities can adopt targeted strategies to enhance their position on the global education stage.

Conclusions and Recommendations
1. Conclusion

This study rigorously analyzed and validated several hypotheses within the context of business management, particularly in the setting of higher education institutions, while also acknowledging some limitations of certain hypotheses. The results highlight the complex interplay of job characteristics, fairness, social satisfaction, and university reputation in shaping job seekers' intentions, providing strategic insights for universities and employers.

This study first verified Hypothesis H1 that job characteristics significantly influence university reputation, aligning with Amabile's (1983) Componential Theory and other early studies which highlighted the crucial role of creativity, work pressure, satisfaction, organizational support, and work environment in enhancing university status. Amabile's theory explicitly states that creativity is central to driving academic research and pedagogical innovation, directly linked to the academic reputation and attractiveness of a university. Our research aims to explore how these job characteristics specifically affect university reputation, particularly within the complex environment of higher education.

Regarding the impact of job characteristics on job seekers' intentions, although this study partially supports Hypothesis H4, it finds insufficient support for H4b and H4d. This finding echoes the research by Guo and Jiang (2017) and Zhang and Wang (2018), which showed that excessive work pressure might lead to occupational burnout, reducing retention intentions, while high job satisfaction correlates positively with strong intentions to join. This part of the study reveals how job characteristics in higher education indirectly influence job seekers' intentions through affecting teachers' job satisfaction and burnout.

Furthermore, the partial significant impact of fairness on university reputation (Hypothesis H2) and job seekers' intentions (Hypothesis H5, except H5c) was supported by prior research. Studies by Ge (2021) and Mou (2006) emphasized the importance of administrative systems and distributive fairness in university settings. These studies indicate that fair performance distribution and salary evaluations are crucial in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction and intentions to join. In this study, we further analyze how fairness plays a role in the organizational structure and culture of universities, and how this factor shapes the overall reputation of universities through influencing teachers' perceptions and behaviors.

The study also found that societal satisfaction significantly affects university reputation (Hypothesis H3) and job seekers' intentions (Hypothesis H6, except H6c), consistent with the research by Xue, et al. (2019)., which emphasized the importance of social and organizational identity in the career trajectories of university teachers. This part of the study aims to deeply understand how social identity acts as a bridge in teachers' career decisions and university choices, particularly how it is perceived and valued within higher education institutions.

Lastly, the hypothesis H7 that job seekers' intentions significantly influence university reputation was well-supported by the literature. This relationship is reflected in the career choices and expectations of university students, where university reputation is seen as a marker of educational quality and career opportunities, thereby influencing their intentions to join. Through this study, we aim to further explore and confirm the complexity and multidimensionality of this relationship, as well as its variations across different educational and cultural contexts.

In summary, this study confirmed the significant impact of job characteristics, fairness, and social satisfaction on university reputation and job seekers' intentions, highlighting their importance in talent management in higher education and providing strategic guidance for educational institutions to enhance reputation and attract top talent by optimizing job characteristics, ensuring fairness, and improving social satisfaction.

2. Contributions

This study offers practical and theoretical contributions to lecturer recruitment in Chinese Public Universities. Practically, the study proposes recruitment strategies based on key factors such as job characteristics, fairness, and social satisfaction to improve faculty quality and university reputation, enhance human resource management, and increase faculty job satisfaction and loyalty. The study also provides strategies for addressing regional imbalances, aiming to promote balanced development in Chinese Higher Education. Theoretically, the study extends the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Equity Theory in the field of higher education and offers new perspectives by analyzing how job characteristics, fairness, and social satisfaction influence lecturers' job intentions and university reputation. The study also explores job intentions among job seekers with and without work experience, providing new insights for understanding and predicting job seeker behavior. By integrating multiple theoretical frameworks, the study offers new insights for developing effective talent recruitment models and provides empirical evidence for understanding and improving lecturer recruitment strategies in higher education institutions, enriching the application and understanding of related theories.

3. Limitations

The main limitations of this study relate to its scope of application. Focused on Chinese public universities, the specificity of the geographical location may limit the generalizability of the study's findings. China's unique geographical and multicultural background may make it difficult to directly extend the findings to other regions or countries. Additionally, the sample selection, primarily targeting job seekers at Chinese Public Universities, may not have fully covered all potential lecturer groups, presenting a limitation in the population scope. The study was also conducted within a specific time frame, potentially influenced by events or trends at the time, limiting the timeliness and relevance of the conclusions. Future research should expand the geographical, demographic, and temporal scope to enhance the generalizability and extrapolation of the study's results.

4. Future Research Directions

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, future research could delve deeper into the following areas: Firstly, expanding the research scope to a broader geographical area and different types of higher education institutions to validate the universality of the study's results and explore differences in various environments. Secondly, adopting a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative research methods to deeply understand the motivations and attitudes behind job seekers' intentions. Additionally, exploring the impact of technological advancements and changes in educational policies on higher education talent management strategies and university reputation, as well as the effects of modern work trends such as digital transformation and remote work on job characteristics and job seekers' intentions. Finally, further investigating the mechanisms and long-term effects of job seekers' intentions on university reputation and how universities can enhance their reputation and attractiveness by improving job intentions. These directions will help to more comprehensively understand and improve talent management and reputation building in higher education institutions.

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