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## What Chinese Workers Value: An Analysis of Job Satisfaction, Job Expectations, and Labor Turnover in China

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# What Chinese Workers Value: An Analysis of Job Satisfaction, Job Expectations, and Labor Turnover in China

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## ABSTRACT

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# What Chinese Workers Value: An Analysis of Job Satisfaction, Job Expectations, and Labor Turnover in China

This study uses data from the 2012 China Labor Force Dynamics Survey and 2010–2012 China Family Panel Studies to investigate job satisfaction and job expectations, as well as the association between job satisfaction and job turnover by gender among employees aged 16–65. We find not only that job satisfaction levels are relatively low, with only 46% of workers explicitly satisfied, but also that worker expectations differ significantly from what their jobs actually provide. In particular, many jobs are less interesting than expected, which prevents workers from realizing their perceived potential. This expectation gap is thus a strong determinant of job satisfaction. Men and women have similar levels of job satisfaction, yet based on observables, one would expect women's job satisfaction to be lower than it actually is, thereby lending support to the gender-job-satisfaction paradox encountered in Western studies. In contrast to Western research, we find no link between job satisfaction and job change, an observation we attribute to China's unique Confucian-based work ethic.

**JEL Classification:** J16, J17, J28

**Keywords:** job satisfaction, gender, labor turnover, China

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# **What Chinese Workers Value: An Analysis of Job Satisfaction, Job Expectations, and Labor Turnover in China**

*I slept and dreamt life is beauty, I woke and found life is duty.  
A man without persistence will never make a good shaman or a good physician.  
— Confucius*

## **1 Introduction**

Because jobs are a central concern in most people's lives, the question of what makes a job good has become an integral part of the broader question of how well society is doing (Clark 2015). The extent to which workers consider their jobs satisfying has thus become a major focus in many disciplines, including psychology, economics, and management (Borjas 1979; Clark 1996, 1997; Freeman 1978; Locke 1969; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000a). Generally defined as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values" (Locke 1969, p. 316), job satisfaction is a good predictor of employee decisions on whether to change jobs in the future or even leave the labor market altogether (Clark, 2015). Job satisfaction is also associated with absenteeism and counterproductive behavior (Dormann and Zapf 2001; Johns and Xie 1998).

Surprisingly, however, relatively little research exists on job satisfaction in China despite its offering an interesting case for job satisfaction analysis. In particular, Confucian-based work values such as hard work, endurance, collectivism, and personal networks (*guanxi*) mean that Chinese employees are expected devote themselves to and take full responsibility for the job, work diligently, and generally align their values and goals with those of the organization (Lu et al. 2011). As a result, long work hours are common in China and may be the foundation for the unprecedented economic growth occurring since the 1979 economic reform (Smyth et al. 2013). Yet despite one of the longest work weeks in the world, Chinese worker health does not appear to be negatively affected (Nie et al. 2015), perhaps because a deeply rooted culture of long work hours "makes Chinese workers more resilient" than Western workers to its adverse effects (p. 225). Assumedly, this unique work ethic shapes job expectations, work motivation,

and job satisfaction in ways not found in Western economies, meaning that what makes a job good in the West may not apply in China.

In addition to the distinct Chinese work ethic, gender roles in China are markedly different from those in the West. That is, although historically a patriarchal society with clear gender role demarcation (Ngo et al. 2014), China has comparatively high rates of female employment, with some evidence that Chinese women have higher job expectations than females in other countries (Loscocco and Bose 1998). Nevertheless, as in many Western countries, Chinese women often experience structural barriers and unfair treatment (e.g., negative stereotypes, glass ceilings) that impair their future career development (Ngo et al. 2014; Peng et al. 2009).

This different gender ideology and China's unique Confucian-based work ethic make it questionable that the considerable Western research on job satisfaction determinants (Borjas 1979; Clark 1996, 2001; Gazioglu and Tansel 2006; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000a) is generalizable to China, especially given that these determinants tend to differ across cultures and countries (Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000a; Spector 1997). The same is true for the research on how job satisfaction affects job turnover (e.g., Clark 2001; Freeman 1978; McEvoy and Cascio 1985; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2007). Yet to date, there is little research on job satisfaction in China, probably because detailed job satisfaction data are not only limited but only recently subject to collection through nationwide surveys. In our analysis, therefore, we draw on two relatively new nationwide sources for such data: the 2012 China Labor Force Dynamics Survey (CLDS) and the 2010–2012 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS).

Our contribution to the literature is threefold: First, we provide the most in-depth and up-to-date analysis of job satisfaction determinants in China, with a particular focus on gender differences. Given the enormous body of Western literature focused on gender differences in job satisfaction (see, e.g., Clark 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000b), combined with the paradoxical observation that women tend to be more satisfied at work than men, we believe that this issue warrants investigation in a non-Western setting characterized by a unique gender ideology. Second, whereas analyses of the job satisfaction–labor turnover relation in China are lacking, many Western studies demonstrate a strong association between the two (e.g. Clark 2001; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2007). Whether or not, and to what extent, this association also applies to a country with Confucian-based work values is unknown. We therefore use CFPS panel data to provide clear evidence of this relation. Third, by employing unique CLDS data that capture not only employee motives for working but the extent to which the job actually

satisfies these motives, we directly assess what Chinese workers value or expect from a job and to what extent these expectations are currently being met. We structure the remainder of this discussion as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on job satisfaction in China, Section 3 outlines the data and methods, Section 4 reports the results, and Section 5 discuss the main findings and concludes the paper.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Determinants of Job Satisfaction**

Despite a large body of Western literature on job satisfaction determinants (Borjas 1979; Clark 1996, 1997, 2015; Clark and Oswald 1996; Freeman 1978; Gazioglu and Tansel 2006; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000a), research on job satisfaction in China is both limited and restricted to certain geographic areas (Gao and Smyth 2010; Ngo et al. 2014; Siu 2002; Siu et al. 2005; Smyth et al. 2009; Tang et al. 2014; Wang et al. 2013; Zhai et al. 2013) or specific sectors such as education and health care (Hu and Liu 2004; Li et al. 2014; Pan et al. 2015; Xu and Shen 2007). Only three studies (Cheng et al. 2013; Luo 2016; Nielsen and Smyth 2008) focus more broadly on all urban employees in China. The earliest of these, Nielsen and Smyth (2008), identifies age, education, occupation, and personal income as the main determinants of job satisfaction among 8,200 employees across 32 cities. They also reveal that employees who consider job stability, a high income, professional development, work-life balance, and provision of social insurance as important when choosing a job are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction.

In a subsequent study, Cheng et al. (2013), using data from the 2008 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), pinpoint income and education as the two main determinants of job satisfaction among urban locals, first-generation migrants (born before 1980), and new-generation migrants (born 1980 or thereafter). An even more recent study by Luo (2016), using 2006 CGSS data, not only shows that female employees have lower levels of job satisfaction than male employees but positively links job satisfaction to education and communist party membership. It also demonstrates that job tenure, job security, earnings, promotion, and physical demand are significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction for both men and women (Luo 2016).

## 2.2 Job Satisfaction and Labor Turnover Intentions

Although some limited evidence does exist that job satisfaction influences future labor turnover intentions in China (Cai and Zhou 2009; Chen 2005; Tian-Foreman 2009; Wong et al. 2001; Zhang et al. 2016; Zhang and Feng 2011), there is little researcher consensus on the nature of its effect. On the one hand, Cai and Zhou (2009) find that job satisfaction among 189 nurses at two hospitals in central China is negatively associated with turnover intentions, a negative relation also identified by Zhang et al. (2016) for 545 nurses from a Beijing dental hospital and by Tian-Foreman (2009) for the Chinese retail sector. On the other hand, neither Chen (2005), Zhang and Feng (2011), or Wong et al. (2001) identify any significant association between job satisfaction and turnover intention among 150 IT employees in Shanghai, 1,451 Chinese physicians in Hubei province, or two different samples from Henan province and Hong Kong, respectively. Wong et al. (2001) thus interpret these findings as strong support for the argument that traditional Chinese work values like loyalty and *guanxi* have a crucial influence on Chinese employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors.

Three aspects of the above research are worth highlighting: First, nationwide analyses of the gender-specific determinants of job satisfaction in China are relatively scarce. Second, not only is the research on the link between job satisfaction and labor turnover intentions inconclusive, but these two measures are both subjective. As a result, regressing one on the other tends to yield significant results even when the correlation merely reflects individual personality or momentary mood rather than a true inclination to leave an employer. Thus, a more convincing way to analyze the job satisfaction-turnover link is to use panel data on actual behavior, a practice not yet adopted in any extant studies on how job satisfaction affects job turnover in China. Third, although some studies look at job satisfaction's general socioeconomic and demographic determinants, none provide detailed information on what Chinese workers actually value; in other words, what Chinese workers expect from the job.

These three points mirror the major contributions of our study. First, by using two representative nationwide surveys, we provide the most comprehensive analysis of job satisfaction determinants in China to date, with a particular focus on gender differences. Second, we use panel data to identify job satisfaction's effect on *actual* labor turnover. Third, by examining in detail what Chinese workers expect from an ideal job versus what they are actually getting from their current employment, we both measure the expectations gap and show its relation to job satisfaction.



### 3. Data and Methods

#### 3.1 Data and Study Sample

Our analysis is based mainly on data from the China Labor Force Dynamics Survey (CLDS), a large-scale, nationally representative, longitudinal survey administered by the Center for Social Survey at China's Sun Yat-Sen University. First administered in 2012 as a baseline survey encompassing 29 out of China's 31 provinces or autonomous regions (excluding Hainan and Tibet) (Hao and Liang 2016), the survey's stratified multistage sampling design employs multilevel (community, household, and individual) sampling frames constructed from 2010 China Census summary tables and an on-site map of dwelling units (Hao and Liang 2016). Given our study focus, we restrict our sample to employees aged 16–65, the common age range for the Chinese working-age population (cf., Garnaut and Huang 2006; Perkins 2015), for whom detailed information is available on demographics, household socioeconomics, and job satisfaction, which yields a final sample of 5,027 observations. The major advantage of the CLDS is that it is one of the few surveys in China that contains nationally representative information on job satisfaction and specific domains of job satisfaction. Even more important, it records unique information on respondents' different work motives for the current versus the ideal job, allowing assessment of the extent to which job expectations are being met.

Our second dataset is the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), administered by Peking University's Institute of Social Science Survey, which currently comprises three waves (2010, 2012, and 2014) covering 25 provinces or autonomous regions that account for 95% of the Chinese population (Xie and Lu 2015).<sup>1</sup> The CFPS is also a nationally representative dataset designed to capture both socioeconomic development and the economic and noneconomic well-being of Chinese households. In our sample, we include only respondents to the 2010 and 2012 surveys who were engaged in nonagricultural waged jobs in 2010, for a final sample of 4,452 employees aged 16–65. We exclude 2014 data from our analysis because only the 2010 survey contains detailed information on job satisfaction. A major advantage of the CFPS, besides its national representativeness and provision of panel data, is that the 2012 wave records the specific starting dates of nonagricultural waged jobs. Thus, although this wave

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<sup>1</sup> The CFPS excludes Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Hainan.

provides no specific information on job satisfaction, we can use its panel structure (together with that of the 2010 survey) to assess the relation between job satisfaction and labor turnover.

### **3.2 Job Satisfaction**

In line with Nielsen and Smyth (2008), we adopt a primarily global measure of job satisfaction based on a CLDS survey item asking respondents to rate their overall satisfaction with their current job on a 5-point scale from 1 = very unsatisfactory to 5 = very satisfactory. The CFPS dataset asks for a similar evaluation, also rated on 5-point scale from 1 = very unsatisfied to 5 = very satisfied. Such global measures of job satisfaction assume that employees are capable of balancing various job characteristics to reach an overall assessment of job satisfaction (Nielsen and Smyth 2008). However, because job satisfaction domains may differ between employees or even for the same employee at different times (Clark 2015), we also introduce 10 specific job satisfaction domains from the 2012 CLDS: income, occupational safety, working environment, work time, chances of promotion, task attractiveness, relationship with colleagues, usage of ability and skills, job respect from others, and opportunity to express opinions. Each domain is again measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = very unsatisfactory to 5 = very satisfactory.

### **3.3 Different Work Motives for the Current versus Ideal Job**

To better understand what really makes a good job, we assess the perceived importance of different work motives for the current versus the ideal job, based on two CLDS questions that ask how important the current job is versus how important an ideal job would be in meeting the following needs:

1. Making a living;
2. Achieving inner peace;
3. Meeting more people;
4. Earning respect;
5. Satisfying (one's own) interest; and
6. Realizing (one's own) potential.

These responses, ranked on a 5-point scale from 1 = very unimportant to 5 = very important, allow us to assess the extent to which job expectations are being met.

### **3.4 Job Turnover**

Because the 2012 CFPS asks each employee in a nonagricultural waged job when they began this job, we can combine these responses with 2010 and 2012 employment status to generate a job change dummy equal to 1 if the individual left the 2010 job and 0 otherwise. More specifically, we define job change as the individual being employed in both 2010 and 2012 but with a 2012 tenure that began after 2010.

### **3.5 Explanatory Variables**

To control for individual characteristics, we include variables for age, gender, education, marital status, type of household registration (hereafter, hukou), type of employer, weekly work hours, and monthly earnings. Gender is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent is male and 0 otherwise. Education is measured on a 6-point scale of 1 = illiterate, 2 = primary school, 3 = middle school, 4 = high school, 5 = vocational school, and 6 = university or higher, which we then recode as a dummy with illiterate as the reference group. Marital status is measured on a 4-point scale of 1 = unmarried, 2 = married or living together, 3 = divorced, and 4 = widowed, which we then recode as a dummy with unmarried as the reference group. Hukou is based on each respondent's self-reported household registration type at time of survey, with possible responses of 1 = agricultural or 2 = nonagricultural. We recode this item as a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent's hukou was agricultural and 0 otherwise. Employer type is measured using a dummy equal to 1 if the employee was working at a state-owned enterprise (SOE) and 0 otherwise. Weekly work hours, monthly earnings (in yuan), and household size are also based on responses to corresponding survey items.

The vast body of literature on the determinants of job satisfaction and labor turnover provides both empirical evidence and conceptual models demonstrating these outcomes' association with the above covariates (see Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2007, for an overview). Given the focus of our study, one covariate worth elaborating is gender, whose influence on job satisfaction is the subject of a large body of literature, the majority of which indicates that women tend to be happier at work than men (e.g., Clark 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000b, 2003). The multiple explanations offered for this paradox include differential job inputs, entitlements, and job values; own gender reference; and sample selection (for an overview, see Mueller and Wallace 1996; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2003).

### 3.6 Estimation Strategies

#### 3.6.1 Job Satisfaction Determinants

To detect job satisfaction determinants by gender, we estimate the following ordered probit model:

$$JS_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I_i + \beta_2 H_i + \beta_3 P_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where  $JS_i$  designates job satisfaction of individual  $i$ ,  $I_i$  is a vector of individual  $i$ 's characteristics,  $H_i$  denotes household size,  $P_i$  is a vector of provincial dummies, and  $\varepsilon_i$  is the error term. This estimation strategy is similar to that adopted by Nielsen and Smyth (2008) for China, Clark (1996) for the UK, and Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000a) for 21 countries covered by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).

#### 3.6.2 Assessing Gender Differences

To identify which specific determinants account for the gender gap in job satisfaction, we employ a mean-based Blinder-Oaxaca (BO) decomposition (Blinder 1973; Oaxaca 1973) that assumes a linear and additive nexus between job satisfaction and a given set of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. One advantage of BO decomposition over regression analyses is that it quantifies the contribution of specific factors that account for the job satisfaction gender gap. In our case, the total difference in mean job satisfaction can be decomposed as follows:

$$\bar{Y}^F - \bar{Y}^M = (\bar{X}^F - \bar{X}^M)\hat{\beta}^M + \bar{X}^M(\hat{\beta}^F - \hat{\beta}^M) \quad (2)$$

where  $\bar{X}^i$  is a vector of the averaged values of the independent variables and  $\hat{\beta}^i$  is a vector of the coefficient estimates for males (denoted by  $M$ ) and females (denoted by  $F$ ). In equation (2), the first (explained) term on the right indicates the contribution of a difference in the distribution of determinant  $X$ , while the second (unexplained) term refers to the part attributable to a difference in the determinants' effects (Jann 2008). The second term thus captures all the potential effects of differences in unobservables. In keeping with the majority of previous research using decomposition (see, e.g., Sen 2014), we focus on the explained terms and their disaggregated contribution for individual covariates, with a variable's contribution given by the average change in the function if that variable changes while all other variables remain the same.

### 3.6.3 Analyzing Turnover

Following Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2007), we investigate the association between job satisfaction and individual job turnover by adopting the following probit model:

$$LT_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 JS_i + \alpha_2 I_i + \alpha_3 H_i + \alpha_4 P_i + \delta_i \quad (3)$$

where  $LT_i$  is a dummy for individual  $i$ 's labor turnover in 2012,  $JS_i$  denotes the job satisfaction of individual  $i$  in 2010, and  $I_i$  is a vector of individual  $i$ 's characteristics in the 2010 wave, which is similar to those in equation (1) but excludes the two job characteristics weekly work hours and monthly earnings because they are already captured by job satisfaction.  $H_i$  denotes household size,  $P_i$  is a vector of provincial dummies, and  $\delta_i$  is the error term.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

As Appendix Table A1 shows, approximately 46% of the employees are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their job, an outcome similar to Nielsen and Smyth’s (2008) report that nearly 43% of Chinese employees are “quite” or “very satisfied.” Another 47%, however, are indifferent (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), while about 7% of the workforce is explicitly dissatisfied. Although drawing direct comparisons with Western studies is difficult because the job satisfaction item is differently scaled, our results do suggest that Chinese workers are generally much less satisfied at work than workers in other parts of the world. Perhaps the most valid comparison is with Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000a), whose 7-point scaling of International Social Survey Program (ISSP) data on job satisfaction reveals that 78% of workers across 21 countries are explicitly satisfied, 14% are indifferent, and 8% are explicitly dissatisfied.<sup>2</sup>

Demographically, our sample is predominately male (59.1%), and most are married (82.7%). A total of 6.8% and 20.6% are illiterate or have primary school education, respectively.

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<sup>2</sup> One can assume that with a 5-point scale (which we are using), more observations will fall in the middle category (indifference) than middle category of a 7-point scale, which would explain our large proportion of indifferent workers, i.e. whereas in a 7-point scale many observations would fall just above or below the midpoint, in the 5-point scale the values would most likely fall exactly on the midpoint. However, the fact that in the Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000a) study the off-midpoint values are primarily bunching in the upper part of the scale (i.e. among the more satisfied), and the lower part of the scale (i.e. the dissatisfied workers) has approximately the same share as in our 5-point scale, renders some evidence that the Chinese workers appear to be substantially less satisfied than in other parts of the world.

Average monthly earnings are approximately 1,979 yuan, with an average work week of 43 hours and the majority (61%) registered as agricultural workers.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics by gender: CLDS 2012

Variables	Males	Females	Mean difference
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Job satisfaction (1 = very unsatisfied to 5 = very satisfied)	3.423	3.420	-0.003
Job satisfaction: very unsatisfactory	0.011	0.010	-0.001
Job satisfaction: unsatisfactory	0.068	0.059	-0.009
Job satisfaction: fair	0.455	0.480	0.025
Job satisfaction: satisfactory	0.423	0.403	-0.020
Job satisfaction: very satisfactory	0.044	0.048	0.004
Age	40.668	37.766	-2.902***
Education: illiterate	0.055	0.088	0.033***
Education: primary school	0.215	0.192	-0.024**
Education: middle school	0.324	0.280	-0.044***
Education: high school	0.162	0.116	-0.045***
Education: vocational school	0.167	0.225	0.058***
Education: university or higher	0.077	0.099	0.022**
Marital status: unmarried	0.147	0.130	-0.037***
Marital status: married/living together	0.823	0.834	0.035***
Marital status: divorced	0.017	0.020	-0.005*
Marital status: widowed	0.012	0.016	0.007**
State-owned enterprises (SOEs)	0.129	0.094	-0.033***
Monthly earnings (in yuan)	2196.317	1666.014	-532.12***
Weekly work hours	44.510	39.668	-4.016***
Family size	3.325	3.375	0.004
hukou (1=agricultural, 0=non-agricultural)	0.561	0.638	0.007
Observation	2936	2091	

The mean values are based on the mean estimation adjusted by sampling weights. The significance of the mean difference is based on independent *t*-tests

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Although Table 1 indicates that approximately 47% male employees versus 45% female employees report being at least satisfied with their jobs, we observe no statistically significant gender differences in job satisfaction. On the other hand, the average age for male workers is significantly higher than that for females (around 41 versus 38), males work significantly longer hours (45 hours/weeks vs. 40 hours/week), and, as is common in China (Nielsen and Smyth 2008), males earn significantly higher monthly salaries (2,196 yuan vs. 1,666 yuan).

In Table 2, we focus specifically on the 10 job satisfaction domains by gender, revealing no significant differences in overall job satisfaction but a number of differences in individual

domains. For example, whereas males are more satisfied with income and ability to use skills, females are more satisfied with work environment, work safety, and relationship with colleagues. Hence, even though these descriptive statistics do not quantitatively measure the domains importance, they do suggest that women are more satisfied with the general work environment while men are happier with the more individual job aspects like income and skill usage (for the domain distribution, see appendix Figure A1).

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics by 10 job satisfaction domains: CLDS 2012

Domains	All	Males	Females	Mean difference
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Income	2.934	2.959	2.899	-0.06**
Occupational safety	3.500	3.412	3.627	0.215***
Working environment	3.353	3.286	3.449	0.163***
Work time	3.269	3.244	3.304	0.059**
Promotion	2.904	2.921	2.88	-0.041
Task attractiveness	3.131	3.119	3.148	0.029
Relationship with colleagues	3.62	3.594	3.657	0.062**
Usage of ability and skills	3.482	3.502	3.453	-0.049**
Respect from others for the job	3.576	3.575	3.579	0.004
Opportunity to express opinions	3.372	3.38	3.363	-0.016

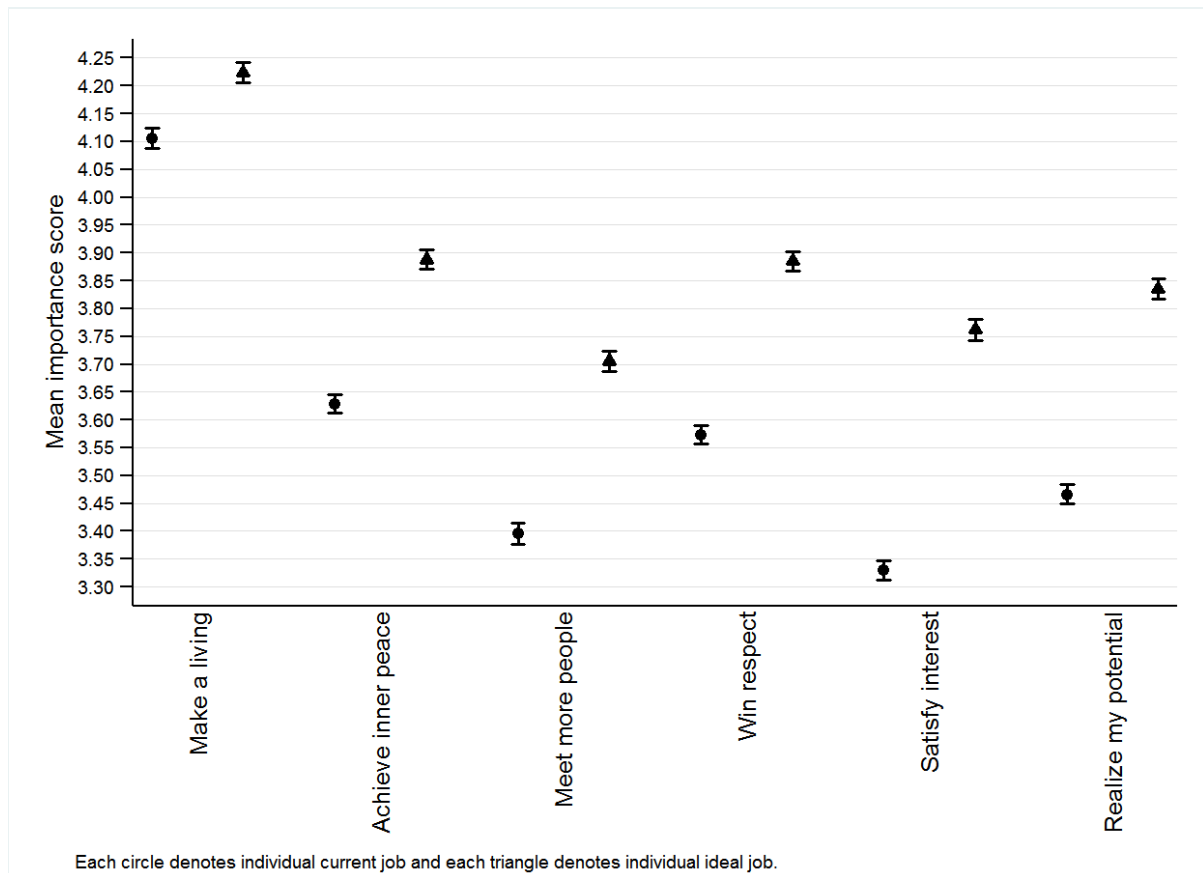
The mean values are based on the mean estimation adjusted by sampling weights. The significance of the mean difference is based on independent *t*-tests

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

## 4.2 Expectations Gap Associated with Different Work Motives

To enhance our understanding of what really matters in a job, Figure 1 depicts the mean values of perceived importance of six different work motives for the current job and the ideal job. The corresponding figures for males and females are outlined in Appendix Figures A2 and A3, which reveal that the ranking of the average values for the perceived importance of motives for the *current* job is quite similar to that for the *ideal* job: making a living (4.106), achieving inner peace (3.629), earning respect (3.573), realizing potential (3.466), meeting more people (3.395), and satisfying interest (3.33). Based on these ratings, workers seem to be selecting themselves into jobs that match their values. Nevertheless, the figures also reveal significant discrepancies between the ideal and actual values, suggesting that although making a living (for example) is most important in both contexts, workers are not currently able to optimally fulfill this motive. This value gap thus implies an expectations gap: what workers experience is not what they expect from an ideal job. These expectations gaps are very large, ranging from 0.432 for satisfying interest to 0.118 for making a living. The general picture, therefore, is that,

especially in terms of personal fulfillment (satisfying interest and realizing potential), Chinese workers expect more from their jobs.



**Fig. 1** Self-perceived importance for different purposes between the current job and the ideal job: (CLDS 2012), with the perceived importance of each purpose measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = very unimportant to 5 = very important

To shed more light on this expectations gap, we run an ordinary least square (OLS) estimation with the gap as the dependent variable (see Appendix Table A2). We note that for most motives, the expectations gap declines with age, suggesting that workers probably adapt their expectations as they grow older. In most cases, the gap widens with higher levels of education, implying that this latter may go hand-in-hand with higher expectations. In general, the gap shrinks with income, possibly indicating that more attractive jobs are also better paid.

### 4.3 Determinants of Job Satisfaction

The results for job satisfaction determinants (Table 3) show a U-shaped association between age and job satisfaction among males, a common finding in the literature that is usually attributed to job expectations changing with age (Clark 1996). That is, whereas job expectations



(e.g., income, promotion) in younger years may be (too) high, giving rise to subsequent frustration and lower job satisfaction, as individuals age, their expectations adapt and job satisfaction rises again. An increased level of job satisfaction is also associated with a higher level of education (relative to illiteracy), especially for the full and male samples. Yet this finding is at odds with most Western research, which identifies a negative association between education and job satisfaction that Clark and Oswald (1996) interpret as the curse of high aspiration. This interpretation does not appear to hold in the Chinese setting, in which lower levels of job satisfaction are also linked to being unmarried or widowed, especially for the full and female samples (columns 1 and 3). We do find a correlation between higher job satisfaction and higher monthly earnings, but as reported in several Western studies (see Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2007), as well as Cheng et al. (2013), Gao and Smyth (2010), and Luo (2016) for China,<sup>3</sup> job satisfaction tends to decrease with longer weekly work hours.

**Table 3** Ordered probit estimates for job satisfaction determinants (CLDS 2012)

	All	Males	Females
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Age	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003* (0.001)	0.0003 (0.002)
Age squared/100	0.004** (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)
Male	-0.006* (0.004)		
Education: primary school	0.022*** (0.007)	0.025** (0.010)	0.011 (0.011)
Education: middle school	0.022*** (0.008)	0.027*** (0.010)	0.009 (0.012)
Education: high school	0.030*** (0.008)	0.027** (0.011)	0.030** (0.013)
Education: vocational school	0.041*** (0.009)	0.036*** (0.012)	0.041*** (0.014)
Education: university or higher	0.036*** (0.010)	0.039*** (0.014)	0.024 (0.015)
Marital status: married	0.004 (0.006)	0.010 (0.008)	-0.006 (0.009)
Marital status: divorced	-0.010 (0.013)	-0.008 (0.016)	-0.013 (0.018)
Marital status: widowed	-0.028* (0.016)	0.002 (0.020)	-0.072*** (0.026)
SOEs	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.008 (0.007)	-0.013 (0.009)
Monthly earnings/100	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
Weekly work hours	-0.0002** (0.000)	-0.0001 (0.000)	-0.0002* (0.000)
Household size	0.004*** (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)

<sup>3</sup> As a robustness check, we run probit estimates using as our dependent variable a recoded job satisfaction dummy equal to 1 if workers report being satisfied or very satisfied and 0 otherwise. The results are quantitatively similar to those in Table 4 (see also Appendix Table A3).

Hukou: agricultural	0.002 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.006)	0.004 (0.008)
<i>N</i>	5027	2936	2091
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.024	0.031	0.027

The dependent variables are 5-point measures of job satisfaction (1 = very unsatisfied to 5 = very satisfied) and a job satisfaction dummy (1 = satisfied/very satisfied, 0 = otherwise). The controls are individual characteristics (age, age squared, education level, marital status, employer type, monthly earnings, and weekly work hours), household size, and dummies for hukou and province. Marginal effects are calculated at the sample mean, and standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the community/village level

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

To further explore how the self-perceived importance of different motives for the current job is correlated with overall job satisfaction (see Table 4), we rank the relative importance of the six motives based on their marginal effects (Panel A).<sup>4</sup> We identify satisfying interest and realizing potential as having the largest effect on job satisfaction in both the full and male samples. Women, however, consider realizing their potential and achieving inner peace more important than do men. We also note that earning respect, meeting more people, and making a living rank lower in both the male and female samples,<sup>5</sup> which is at odds with our Figure 1 ranking of making a living as the most important motive for working. One possible explanation is the extremely strong association between job satisfaction and unfulfilled expectations, an assumption supported by the fact that in Table 4, the motives with the largest expectations gaps in Figure 1 are ranked highest.

Hence, to better account for the size of this expectations gap, we substitute it for motive importance and report the regression results in Panel B. We note that for all motives, the larger the expectations gap, the lower the job satisfaction level (with differing levels of significance). Nevertheless, for any given gap size, different motives have stronger effects on job satisfaction. We also observe certain gender differences, especially that men seem to value satisfying interest the most, whereas women primarily value earning respect. It should be stressed, however, that these gender differences are not large, so we can refute the differential job values hypothesis that men and women value job aspects differently and that objective reward measures (such as pay) may mean less to women than to men. In fact, as indicated by the coefficient on making a living, in China neither male or female job satisfaction appears strongly affected by monetary considerations, which contrasts starkly with some Western studies identifying men as more income oriented than women (e.g., Clark 2001). It should also be

<sup>4</sup> The marginal effects indicate a percentage change in very satisfied employees when the corresponding explanatory variable increases by one point.

<sup>5</sup> Here again, we run probit estimates with the recoded job dummy as the dependent variable but find slightly different rankings from those in Table 5 (see Appendix Table A4). In particular, the top ranked three for females are achieving inner peace, realizing potential, and satisfying interest.

noted that on the face of it, this result seems at odds with the significant income coefficient in Table 3. This latter, however, may be capturing other job aspects besides income, such as how interesting the job is. Overall, therefore, and not surprisingly, making a living emerges as the most important motive, one satisfied by most employment offered, meaning no substantial expectations gap. Nevertheless, it is not this aspect that primarily drives job satisfaction but rather more intrinsic job attributes such as having an interesting job, a characteristic that Chinese workers really appear to value.

**Table 4** Ordered probit estimates for the perceived importance for current job on overall job satisfaction (CLDS 2012)

Panel A: Perceived importance	All	Rank	Males	Rank	Females	Rank
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Male	0.001 (0.003)					
Making a living	-0.008** (0.004)	6	-0.001 (0.005)	6	-0.018*** (0.006)	6
Achieving inner peace	0.023*** (0.005)	3	0.018*** (0.006)	3	0.031*** (0.007)	2
Meeting more people	0.009** (0.004)	4	0.007 (0.005)	4	0.012* (0.006)	4
Earning respect	0.005 (0.004)	5	0.006 (0.005)	5	0.004 (0.006)	5
Satisfying interest	0.026*** (0.005)	1	0.033*** (0.006)	1	0.015** (0.007)	3
Realizing potential	0.024*** (0.005)	2	0.020*** (0.006)	2	0.033*** (0.008)	1
<i>N</i>	4939		2892		2047	
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.050		0.054		0.056	
Panel B: Expectation gaps	All	Rank	Males	Rank	Females	Rank
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Male	-0.0002 (0.003)					
Making a living	-0.0032 (0.002)	6	-0.0048* (0.003)	4	-0.0014 (0.003)	6
Achieving inner peace	-0.0079*** (0.003)	2	-0.0061* (0.003)	2	-0.0111*** (0.004)	2
Meeting more people	-0.0043* (0.003)	5	-0.0053* (0.003)	3	-0.0025 (0.004)	5
Earning respect	-0.0068*** (0.002)	3	-0.0039 (0.003)	5	-0.01114*** (0.004)	1
Satisfying interest	-0.0097*** (0.002)	1	-0.0105*** (0.003)	1	-0.0083** (0.004)	4
Realizing potential	-0.0045 (0.003)	4	-0.0010 (0.003)	6	-0.0106** (0.005)	3
<i>N</i>	5578		3290		2288	
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.024		0.023		0.033	

The dependent variable is a 5-point measure of job satisfaction (from 1 = very unsatisfied to 5 = very satisfied). In addition to dummies for gender and province, we also include controls for the perceived importance of work motives for the current job in Panel A and expectation gaps between the ideal job and the current job in Panel B. Marginal effects are calculated at the sample mean, and standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the community/village level

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.4 Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction

Our failure to observe significant gender differences for China is especially interesting given the international evidence for the job satisfaction-gender paradox that women tend to be happier at work even when working conditions are bad enough to make even a nonsignificant gender difference paradoxical. We shed more light on this paradox using a Blinder-Oaxaca (BO) decomposition analysis, which shows that although female employees have a slightly lower level of job satisfaction than males, the difference is statistically insignificant (see Table 5). On the other hand, our explained coefficient is significantly negative (-0.045), indicating that, based on observables, women should actually have lower job satisfaction than men. Thus, the job satisfaction-gender paradox does hold for China. It is also worth noting that income has the largest (negative) decompositional coefficient of all the workplace characteristics, implying that women, given their much lower incomes, should be much less satisfied at work than they actually are. This finding is echoed in several Western studies (e.g. Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000b).

**Table 5** BO decomposition of job satisfaction determinants (CLDS 2012)

	Coefficients	Contribution (%)
	(1)	(2)
Females	3.420*** (0.017)	
Males	3.423*** (0.015)	
Total difference	-0.003 (0.023)	
Explained	-0.045*** (0.010)	
Unexplained	0.042* (0.024)	
<hr/> Explained part		
Age	-0.032*** (0.005)	71
Education	0.002 (0.004)	-4
Marital status	-0.001 (0.001)	2
SOEs	0.002 (0.001)	-4
Monthly earnings/100	-0.027*** (0.005)	60
Weekly work hours	0.006** (0.003)	-13
Household size	0.001 (0.001)	-2
Hukou: agricultural	-0.001 (0.002)	2
Province	0.003	-7

	(0.003)
<i>N</i>	5027

The dependent variable is a 5-point measure of job satisfaction (from 1 = very unsatisfied to 5 = very satisfied). The controls are individual characteristics (age, age squared, education level, marital status, employer type, monthly earnings, weekly work hours), household size, and dummies for hukou and province. Standard errors are in parentheses  
\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

#### 4.5 Job Satisfaction and Labor Turnover

Given the strong correlation in Western countries between low job satisfaction and job change (Clark 2001; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2007), the large number of Chinese workers who are not explicitly satisfied (implying unmet job expectations) would suggest not only high turnover rates but a significant correlation between turnover and job satisfaction. However, when we regress turnover using different subsamples and specifications, the job satisfaction coefficient, although negative, is never significant (see Table 6). Our explanation for this unique finding, albeit speculative, is that the Chinese Confucian-based work ethic, which stipulates endurance, loyalty, and *guanxi*, may inhibit the inclination to change jobs when dissatisfied. We also note that job-to-job mobility is significantly lower than in most Western countries, only about 7% between 2010 and 2012 compared with a 1-year EU job mobility rate in the 15–18% range between 1995 and 2005 (Recchi 2009).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 6** Probit estimates for overall job satisfaction and labor turnover (CFPS 2010–2012)

	All	All	Males	Females	All	All	Males	Females
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Job satisfaction	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.023 (0.018)	-0.015 (0.015)	-0.021 (0.023)	-0.007 (0.011)	-0.009 (0.017)	-0.008 (0.014)	-0.014 (0.018)
Male		-0.006 (0.013)			-0.001 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.012)		
Job satisfaction X male		0.007 (0.023)				0.004 (0.022)		
Age					-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.012*** (0.004)	-0.015*** (0.005)	-0.009 (0.008)
Age squared/100					0.012*** (0.004)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.015*** (0.006)	0.007 (0.010)
Education: primary school					-0.007 (0.023)	-0.007 (0.023)	0.001 (0.031)	-0.028 (0.040)
Education: middle school					-0.028 (0.021)	-0.028 (0.021)	-0.004 (0.026)	-0.076** (0.036)
Education: high school					-0.038 (0.024)	-0.038 (0.024)	-0.004 (0.030)	-0.108*** (0.040)
Education: vocational school					-0.055** (0.026)	-0.055** (0.026)	-0.021 (0.033)	-0.122*** (0.042)
Education: university or higher					-0.093*** (0.026)	-0.093*** (0.026)	-0.068* (0.033)	-0.159*** (0.042)

<sup>6</sup> With respect to the other explanatory variables, a higher educational level is associated with a lower probability of labor turnover, regardless whether the sample used is full, male, or female. This observation also holds for being married or living together except for the female sample. Interestingly, compared with non-SOEs, SOEs are uniformly and negatively associated with labor turnover in the full and male/female samples, perhaps implying that SOEs employees are less likely to be mobile than non-SOE employees. This finding is perhaps attributable to the fact that, in China, non-SOEs with strong incentives for production have little interest in providing social stability. SOEs, on the other hand, not only have to spend resources on maintaining social stability but are subject to low-profit incentives from the government (Bai et al. 2006). Nonetheless, primarily because of multitasking, SOEs are still subject to restrictions on firing employees, even though their financial performance is poorer than that of non-SOEs (Bai et al. 2006).

					(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.047)
Marital status: married/living together					-0.025	-0.025	-0.016	-0.052*
Marital status: divorced					(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.024)	(0.031)
					-0.040	-0.040	-0.010	-0.158**
Marital status: widowed					(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.062)	(0.074)
					0.018	0.018	0.026	-0.029
SOEs					(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.095)
					-0.046***	-0.046***	-0.053**	-0.023
Household size					(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.030)
					0.000	0.000	0.002	-0.002
Urban					(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)
					-0.015	-0.015	-0.021	-0.003
					(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.022)
<i>N</i>	4452	4452	2796	2151	4452	4452	2796	2151
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.086	0.086	0.090	0.102

The dependent variable is a job turnover dummy (1 = movers, 0 = stayers). The controls are individual characteristics (age, age squared, educational level, marital status, employer type), household size, and dummies for urban and province. Marginal effects are calculated at the sample mean, and standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the community/village level

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

## 5 Discussion and Conclusions

Although little is empirically known about Chinese worker well-being, China's unprecedented economic growth, rapid social transformation, unique labor market structures, gender ideology, and Confucian-based work values can all be expected to uniquely influence and shape job satisfaction. This study explores this well-being by using unique data from two nationwide representative surveys to assess job satisfaction determinants by gender, as well as work motives and the extent to which jobs are meeting workers' job expectations. In addition, by drawing on 2010–2012 CFPS panel data, we explore the nexus between job satisfaction and labor turnover to gauge the extent to which Chinese workers express their job dissatisfaction by changing jobs. Although a few studies in China do examine the association between job satisfaction and turnover *intentions*, none look at actual turnover rates. We thus provide a more convincing assessment of the job satisfaction's effect on worker inclinations to leave an employer.

Although different item coding prevents a direct comparison with Western findings, our results do appear to indicate that job satisfaction levels are generally much lower in China than in the West. Only 46% of the employees reported being explicitly satisfied with their job. Men and women have very similar levels of job satisfaction, yet, based on observables, women should have a lower level of job satisfaction relative to men. At the same time, even though low income and long work hours may contribute to lower job satisfaction levels, discontent seems primarily driven by significant divergence in what workers consider important in a job and what they actually experience, an expectations gap that is particularly pronounced among younger

employees. For most Chinese workers, the leading motive for work is making a living, a goal that most jobs fulfill, meaning a relatively small expectations gap. The fact that this gap seem to have no strong effect on job satisfaction implies that more intrinsic job characteristics matter more than monetary aspects. In fact, the largest expectation gaps are for satisfying interest and achieving inner peace, both strongly associated with lower job satisfaction. Also in stark contrast to Western research (e.g., Clark 2001; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2007), we find no association between overall job satisfaction and labor turnover, which serves as further evidence that traditional Chinese work values like endurance, organizational loyalty, and *guanxi* have a crucial effect on Chinese employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors (Wong et al. 2001; Lu et al. 2011).

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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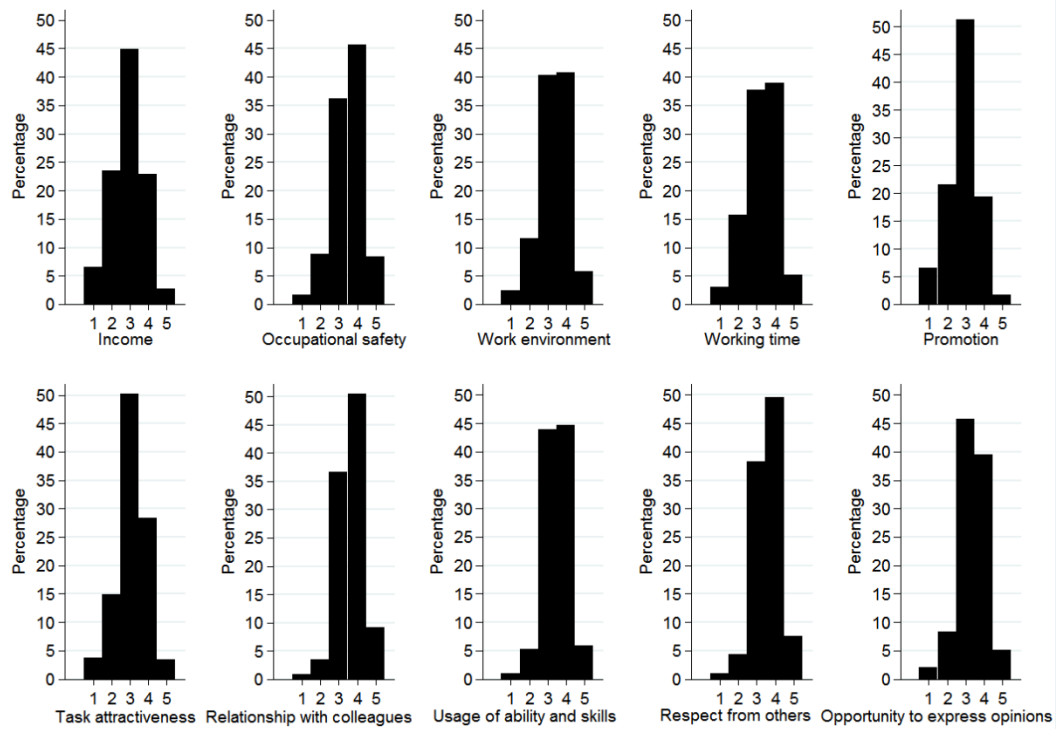
## Appendix

**Table A1** Descriptive statistics (CLDS 2012)

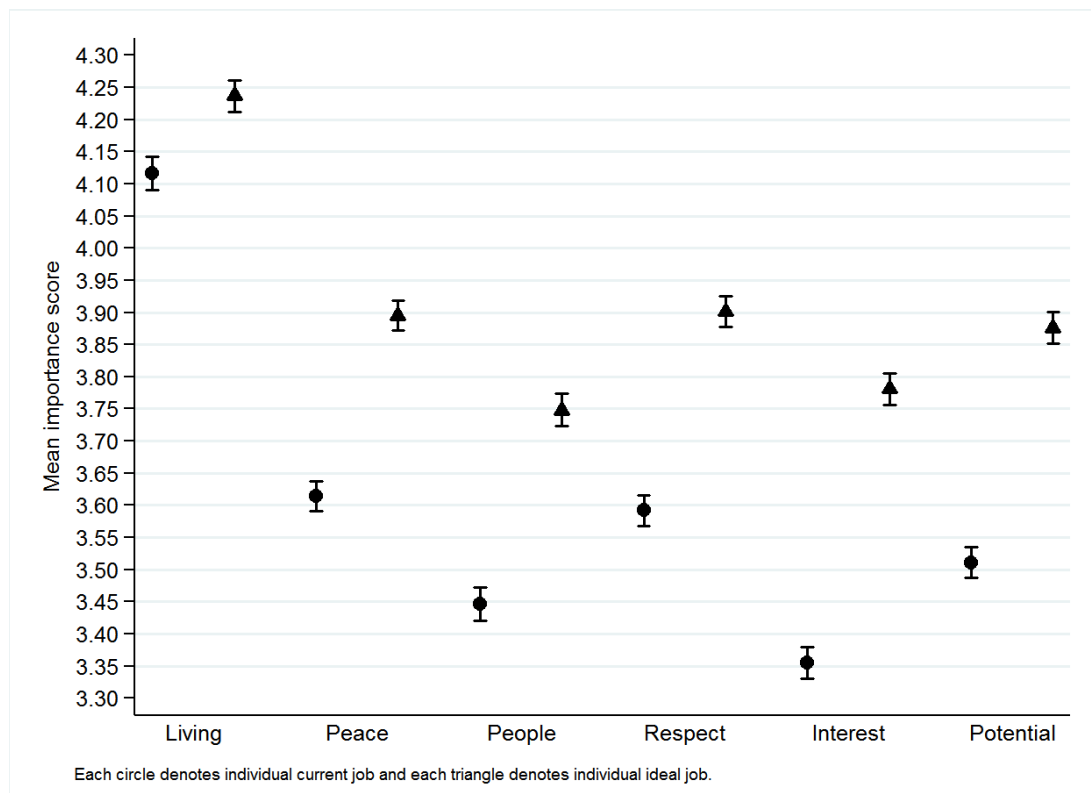
Variable	Mean	Std. Err.	95% CI	
Job satisfaction	3.422	0.011	3.400	3.443
Job satisfaction: very unsatisfactory	0.010	0.001	0.007	0.013
Job satisfaction: unsatisfactory	0.064	0.004	0.057	0.071
Job satisfaction: fair	0.465	0.008	0.450	0.480
Job satisfaction: satisfactory	0.415	0.008	0.400	0.430
Job satisfaction: very satisfactory	0.046	0.003	0.040	0.052
Age	39.481	0.174	39.139	39.822
Male	0.591	0.008	0.576	0.606
Education: illiterate	0.068	0.004	0.061	0.076
Education: primary school	0.206	0.006	0.193	0.218
Education: middle school	0.306	0.007	0.292	0.320
Education: high school	0.143	0.005	0.133	0.154
Education: vocational school	0.191	0.006	0.179	0.203
Education: university or higher	0.086	0.004	0.078	0.095
Marital status: unmarried	0.140	0.005	0.130	0.151
Marital status: married/living together	0.827	0.006	0.816	0.839
Marital status: divorced	0.018	0.002	0.014	0.023
Marital status: widowed	0.014	0.002	0.010	0.018
State-owned enterprises (SOEs)	0.114	0.005	0.105	0.124
Monthly earnings (in yuan)	1979.392	22.807	1934.681	2024.103
Weekly work hours	42.529	0.366	41.811	43.247
Family size	3.345	0.020	3.305	3.386
Hukou (1=agricultural, 0=non-agricultural)	0.606	0.007	0.592	0.621
Observation	5027			

The mean values are based on the mean estimation adjusted by sampling weights. Std. Err. = standard error; CI = confidence intervals

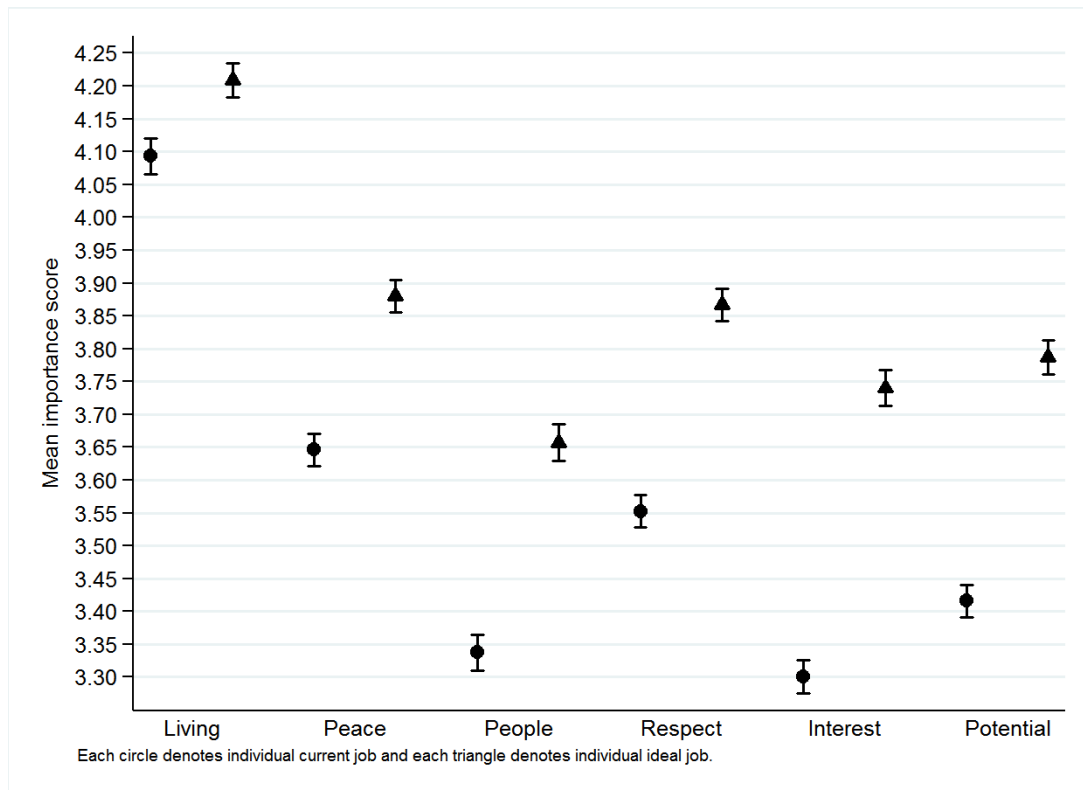
Source: China Labor Force Dynamic Survey (CLDS) 2012



**Fig. A1** Histogram of the 10 domains of job satisfaction, each measured on a 5-point scale (from 1 = very unsatisfactory to 5 = very satisfactory)



**Fig. A2** Perceived importance of the six different motives for the current versus the ideal job among males, measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = very unimportant to 5 = very important (CLDS 2012)



**Fig. A3** Perceived importance of the six different motives for the current versus the ideal job among females, measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = very unimportant to 5 = very important (CLDS 2012)

**Table A2** OLS estimates of expectation gaps in motive importance for the current and the ideal job (CLDS 2012)

	Making a living (1)	Achieving inner peace (2)	Meeting more people (3)	Earning respect (4)	Satisfying interest (5)	Realizing potential (6)
Age	-0.026*** (0.010)	-0.018** (0.009)	-0.020** (0.009)	-0.009 (0.009)	-0.025** (0.010)	-0.005 (0.010)
Age squared/100	0.020* (0.012)	0.014 (0.011)	0.018 (0.011)	0.005 (0.011)	0.021* (0.012)	-0.002 (0.012)
Male	-0.034 (0.029)	0.072*** (0.026)	0.030 (0.030)	0.048* (0.026)	0.015 (0.029)	0.024 (0.027)
Education: primary school	-0.046 (0.053)	0.040 (0.051)	-0.078 (0.062)	-0.098 (0.062)	0.048 (0.072)	-0.027 (0.058)
Education: middle school	-0.025 (0.053)	0.068 (0.051)	-0.056 (0.061)	-0.031 (0.060)	0.079 (0.072)	0.031 (0.057)
Education: high school	0.011 (0.063)	0.144*** (0.055)	0.051 (0.069)	0.049 (0.068)	0.154** (0.076)	0.113* (0.065)
Education: vocational school	-0.063 (0.066)	0.136** (0.060)	-0.026 (0.067)	0.011 (0.070)	0.156* (0.080)	0.117* (0.068)
Education: university or higher	-0.241*** (0.082)	0.091 (0.075)	0.075 (0.078)	0.105 (0.080)	0.204** (0.090)	0.213*** (0.079)
Marital status: married	-0.015 (0.056)	0.028 (0.051)	0.098* (0.051)	0.004 (0.049)	0.016 (0.057)	0.016 (0.050)
Marital status: divorced	-0.203*** (0.073)	0.117 (0.124)	-0.013 (0.105)	-0.011 (0.110)	0.038 (0.134)	0.001 (0.095)
Marital status: widowed	0.001 (0.126)	0.127 (0.109)	0.307** (0.120)	0.257** (0.113)	0.188 (0.130)	0.097 (0.112)
SOEs	-0.035 (0.040)	-0.009 (0.041)	0.018 (0.039)	0.006 (0.042)	0.049 (0.046)	0.042 (0.048)
Monthly earnings/100	-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)
Weekly work hours	-0.001** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)
Household size	-0.010 (0.010)	-0.009 (0.010)	-0.006 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.010)	0.001 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.010)
Hukou: agricultural	-0.008 (0.038)	0.028 (0.039)	-0.037 (0.034)	-0.047 (0.035)	-0.049 (0.041)	-0.066* (0.039)
N	5032	5006	5006	4992	5014	4987
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.042	0.020	0.011	0.017	0.019	0.018

The dependent variables are the expectation gaps in motive importance for the current and ideal job. The controls are individual characteristics (age, age squared, education level, marital status, employer type, monthly earnings, and weekly work hours), household size, and dummies for hukou and province. The standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the community/village level

\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

**Table A3** Probit estimates for determinants of job satisfaction (CLDS 2012)

	All	Males	Females
Age	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.013** (0.006)	0.001 (0.009)
Age squared/100	0.018*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.008)	0.005 (0.012)
Male	-0.011 (0.017)		
Education: primary school	0.064** (0.032)	0.079* (0.047)	0.026 (0.048)
Education: middle school	0.073** (0.034)	0.093** (0.046)	0.029 (0.052)
Education: high school	0.131*** (0.036)	0.122** (0.051)	0.131** (0.054)
Education: vocational school	0.172*** (0.038)	0.155*** (0.054)	0.167*** (0.056)
Education: university or higher	0.162*** (0.046)	0.168*** (0.060)	0.119* (0.064)
Marital status: married	-0.000 (0.026)	0.007 (0.037)	-0.008 (0.042)
Marital status: divorced	-0.052 (0.064)	-0.047 (0.080)	-0.066 (0.101)
Marital status: widowed	-0.118 (0.072)	-0.020 (0.104)	-0.245** (0.115)
SOEs	-0.049 (0.030)	-0.043 (0.037)	-0.056 (0.041)
Monthly earnings/100	0.003*** (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)
Weekly work hours	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001* (0.000)	-0.001** (0.000)
Household size	0.016*** (0.006)	0.022*** (0.007)	0.005 (0.009)
Hukou: agricultural	0.010 (0.025)	0.005 (0.030)	0.018 (0.036)
<i>N</i>	5027	2936	2091
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.039	0.051	0.042

The dependent variable is a job satisfaction dummy (1 = satisfied/very satisfied, 0 = otherwise). The controls are individual characteristics (age, age squared, education level, marital status, type of work unit, monthly earnings, and weekly work hours), household size, and dummies for hukou and province. Marginal effects are calculated at the sample mean, and standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the community/village level

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table A4** Probit estimates of perceived job motives for current job on overall job satisfaction (CLDS 2012)

	All	Rank	Males	Rank	Females	Rank
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Male	0.0227 (0.016)					
Making a living	-0.0256 (0.019)	6	-0.0021 (0.025)	6	-0.0528* (0.028)	6
Achieving inner peace	0.1025*** (0.021)	3	0.0772*** (0.026)	3	0.1368*** (0.026)	1
Meeting more people	0.0300* (0.018)	5	0.0070 (0.022)	5	0.0615** (0.026)	4
Earning respect	0.0494*** (0.019)	4	0.0549** (0.023)	4	0.0396 (0.026)	5
Satisfying interest	0.1107*** (0.019)	2	0.1364*** (0.026)	1	0.0792*** (0.028)	3
Realizing potential	0.1222*** (0.019)	1	0.1162*** (0.025)	2	0.1342*** (0.030)	2
<i>N</i>	4939		2892		2047	
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.085		0.091		0.098	

The dependent variable is a job satisfaction dummy (1 = satisfied or very satisfied, 0 otherwise). The controls are gender and a dummy for province. Marginal effects are calculated at the sample mean, and standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the community/village level

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$