Asia Pacific Science Press

Critical Humanistic Social Theory
ISSN(O):3005-9291
ISSN(P):3005-9283
Vol. 3 No.1 (2026)

Research on the Impact of Job Characteristics on Residents' Future Confidence — The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of deepening economic and social transformation, residents' confidence in the future has become an important indicator for evaluating the quality of social development and individual subjective well-being. Based on CFPS 2022 data, this study adopts a work characteristics perspective and employs a Generalized Structural Equation Model (GSEM) to systematically examine the mechanisms through which Work Income, Working Hours, Commuting Time, and Employer Type affect Residents' Confidence in the Future, with particular attention to the mediating role of Job Satisfaction. The results show that: (1) Work Income exerts a significant positive indirect effect on Residents' Confidence in the Future through Job Satisfaction, while its direct effect is not significant; (2) Working Hours have a positive direct effect on Residents' Confidence in the Future, but generate a negative indirect effect by reducing Job Satisfaction; (3) the effect of Commuting Time on Residents' Confidence in the Future is negative but not statistically significant and does not operate through Job Satisfaction; and (4) compared with civil servants, employees in private enterprises and foreign-funded enterprises exhibit significantly lower Residents' Confidence in the Future, with part of this effect being indirectly transmitted through Job Satisfaction. This study suggests that Residents' Confidence in the Future is shaped by multiple factors, including employment quality, labor intensity, commuting costs, and institutional differences across Employer Types. Accordingly, enhancing employment quality, improving labor conditions, optimizing commuting environments, and narrowing institutional disparities among different Employer Types are essential for jointly promoting economic development and social well-being.

Keywords: Work Characteristics; Job Satisfaction; Residents' Confidence in the Future

Published: Mar 2, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.62177/chst.v3i1.1151

1.Research Background

After the collapse of Japan's asset price bubble in the 1990s, young people gradually became embedded in what has been described as a "low-desire society," characterized by slowing population growth, population aging, and a decline in ambition and aspiration among younger generations. Kenichi Ohmae argues that a "low-desire society" is manifested in young people's lack of confidence in work and career development, a declining willingness to engage in material consumption, and increasing indifference toward social interaction, marriage, and childbearing[1]. In the post-pandemic period, similar tendencies have also emerged in China, with the "lying flat" phenomenon in 2021 becoming a typical expression of young people's passive response to mounting social pressures[2].According to World Bank data, China's total fertility rate declined from 1.7 in 2017 to 1.2 in 2022, reflecting a weakening of young people's confidence in the future. The phenomena of "lying

flat" and "low desire" represent adaptive choices individuals make when confronted with uncertainty and pressure, rooted in a profound perception of living conditions and economic difficulties, and indicating an adjustment of future confidence when existing circumstances cannot be readily changed. Changes in residents' future confidence have profound implications for social reality, particularly in the economic sphere. World Bank data further show that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced residents' confidence, leading to a decline in the share of final consumption expenditure in GDP from 56% in 2019 to 53.6%.

At present, there remains a significant gap between Chinese workers and those in developed economies in terms of working hours and income levels. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, Chinese workers work an average of 9.2 hours per day, making China one of the countries with the longest working hours among OECD members. In addition, data from December 2021 show that the average weekly working time of employees in enterprises nationwide was 47.8 hours[3]. The above working hours clearly exceed the legal standards stipulated in the Labor Law of the People's Republic of China (revised in 2018), which sets a maximum of 8 working hours per day and an average of no more than 44 hours per week. At present, excessive working hours are widespread in certain industries, particularly manufacturing and the internet sector. The "996" work schedule and a culture of overtime are relatively prevalent, and many workers do not receive adequate compensation for overtime work, making unpaid overtime a prominent issue.

At present, there is a clear disparity in unemployment risk between inside-the-system and outside-the-system jobs in China. Positions within the system are generally more stable due to government fiscal support and are less affected by economic fluctuations. In contrast, jobs outside the system—particularly in the private sector and among temporary contract workers—face substantially higher unemployment risks during economic downturns.

The 2023 China Major Cities Commuting Monitoring Report shows that in 2022, the average one-way commuting time for workers in megacities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Qingdao commonly exceeded 40 minutes. Among 45 major cities nationwide, more than 14 million workers (approximately 15%) experienced one-way commutes of over 60 minutes. This indicates that long commuting times have become a widespread phenomenon in large and medium-sized Chinese cities, continuously eroding workers' time allocation and quality of life.

These realities are closely associated with residents' future confidence. Work characteristics—including work income, working hours, commuting time, and employer type—influence residents' future confidence and, in turn, shape their consumption and fertility behaviors. Against this backdrop, examining the impact of work characteristics on residents' future confidence is essential for unlocking consumption and fertility potential and promoting economic growth, thereby offering both significant theoretical value and practical relevance.

2.Literature Review

Wang Wei defines job characteristics as "the inherent and intrinsic attributes of a task or job that employees engage in[4]."Xin Ziqiang argues that job characteristics encompass not only job-type attributes such as the nature of work, employer type, and workload, but also the incentive and security conditions provided by organizations, including wages and remuneration, subsidies and benefits, education and training, incentive mechanisms, and the working environment[5].Qi Yajing classifies job characteristics into two categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to work-related factors associated with physical, social, or organizational aspects that require sustained physical and psychological effort from individuals and are linked to certain physiological and psychological costs, such as work intensity, job content, and employment relationships. In contrast, job resources denote positive factors within the job that help individuals achieve work goals, reduce work-related strain, and promote personal growth, learning, and development, including the working environment, income level, education and training opportunities, and interpersonal interactions in the work process[6].

Synthesizing existing definitions of job characteristics, this study identifies repeatedly emphasized elements as their core components, including work income, working hours, work environment, employer type, and education and training. Given that the CFPS data do not contain information on education and training, this paper characterizes job characteristics from four dimensions only: work income, working hours, work environment, and employer type.

2.1 Research on the Direct Relationship Between Job Characteristics and Residents' Future Confidence Level

Wang Jian argues that universal basic income not only increases beneficiaries' income levels but also generates positive effects at the psychological and social levels. Stable and predictable income enhances individuals' sense of security and social trust, and by reducing uncertainty and improving self-evaluation, further strengthens their confidence in personal development and future socioeconomic prospects[7].Xiao Xiangyin finds that under unclear promotion prospects, returning youth already face uncertainty about local career development, and declining income further intensifies this uncertainty, weakening their confidence in future development and reducing their willingness to remain in their hometowns long term[8]. Tian Feng finds that unemployment assessment has a significant positive effect on delivery riders' future confidence: for each one-unit reduction in perceived unemployment risk, the likelihood of higher future confidence increases by 38%[9].In this study, differences in employer type lead to variations in job stability and unemployment risk across groups; therefore, employer type may influence residents' future confidence through both direct and indirect pathways.

Existing studies show that work income and employer type, as key job characteristics, have significant effects on residents' future confidence. However, there is limited empirical evidence on whether working hours and commuting time exert direct effects. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a mediating variable and construct a mediation model to examine the indirect effects of these job characteristics on residents' future confidence.

2.2 Indirect Effects of Job Characteristics on Residents' Future Confidence: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Yao Xinying conducted a job satisfaction survey of 4,906 pediatricians using multistage stratified random sampling and applied one-way ANOVA and multivariate logistic regression. The results show that when monthly income exceeds 10,000 yuan, job satisfaction increases significantly with higher income levels[10].Zhao Yang conducted a survey of 823 ride-hailing drivers and analyzed their work-related data, finding that evaluations of job satisfaction differed between low and high working hours groups. Drivers with shorter working hours reported higher proportions of "dissatisfied" and "neutral," while those with longer working hours showed higher proportions of "very dissatisfied" and "relatively satisfied[11]."Using data from the 2015 national 1% population sample survey, Sun Weizeng empirically examines the impact of commuting time on firm productivity. The results show that longer commuting time crowds out employees' work and leisure time, reduces job satisfaction, and ultimately undermines overall firm productivity[12].Jiang Wenjie conducted a questionnaire survey of 678 civil servants in Macao and found that civil servants with established positions reported higher job satisfaction than those without establishment[13].Using data from the 2018 Shanghai Public Opinion Survey, He Fang finds that higher educational attainment enables most young people to enter the formal labor market with lower unemployment risk, leading to higher job satisfaction and stronger residents' future confidence[14].

3.Hypotheses Development

3.1 Direct Effect Hypotheses

Existing research has shown that an increase in work income and differences in job stability due to employer type significantly affect residents' future confidence. When job stability declines, residents' future confidence also diminishes. However, empirical evidence regarding whether working hours and commuting time have a direct impact on residents' future confidence remains limited. Based on the current context and previous research conclusions, this study infers the potential relationships and proposes corresponding hypotheses to examine the direct effects between work characteristics and residents' future confidence.

H1-A: Work income directly affects residents' future confidence, and there is likely a significant positive correlation between work income and residents' future confidence.

H1-B: Work hours directly affect residents' future confidence, and there is likely a significant negative correlation between work hours and residents' future confidence.

H1-C: Commuting time directly affects residents' future confidence, and there is likely a significant negative correlation

between commuting time and residents' future confidence.

H1-D: Employer nature directly affects residents' future confidence, with greater stability in employer nature correlating with higher future confidence among residents.

3.2 Indirect Relationship Hypotheses

Based on existing research, an increase in work income enhances individual job satisfaction, while longer work hours and commute times negatively affect job satisfaction. Additionally, higher job stability is associated with higher job satisfaction levels. Furthermore, greater job satisfaction contributes to increased future confidence among residents. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses regarding the indirect relationships between key work characteristics and residents' future confidence:

H2-A: Work income impacts residents' future confidence through the mediating effect of job satisfaction, and there may be a significant positive correlation between work income and residents' future confidence.

H2-B: Work hours impact residents' future confidence through the mediating effect of job satisfaction, and there may be a significant negative correlation between work hours and residents' future confidence.

H2-C: Commuting time impacts residents' future confidence through the mediating effect of job satisfaction, and there is a significant negative correlation between commuting time and residents' future confidence.

H2-D: Employer type impacts residents' future confidence through the mediating effect of job satisfaction, and the more stable the job type, the higher the residents' future confidence.

4.Data Sources and Variable Definitions

4.1 Data Sources

This study uses data from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) 2022, which is organized and conducted by the China Survey and Data Center of Renmin University of China (NSRC). The CFPS is a highly authoritative national longitudinal survey that comprehensively covers micro-level information such as demographic structure, economic activities, and social attitudes. The CFPS 2022 dataset contains the variables necessary for this study, with the personal database being primarily used for the analysis in this paper.

4.2 Variable Definition

This study focuses on the labor force aged 16 to 65. After filtering and cleaning the sample, removing invalid and missing values marked in the codebook, a total of 6,891 valid samples were obtained, providing a reliable data foundation for subsequent analysis using the multiple mediation model.

4.2.1 Independent Variables

(1) Work Income

In this study, work income is measured using the "Total Work Income (CNY/year)" item from the individual questionnaire of the 2022 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), which includes wages, bonuses, cash benefits, and in-kind subsidies. During data processing, work income was log-transformed for the following reasons: First, the income distribution of Chinese residents is "right-skewed" (with a few high-income groups pulling the mean up), and log transformation can convert this skewed distribution into an approximately normal distribution, thus eliminating heteroscedasticity and mitigating its interference with regression results.

(2) Work Hours

In this study, work hours are measured using the "Weekly Work Hours (hours)" item from the individual questionnaire of the 2022 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), which includes overtime hours. During data processing, missing and invalid values were removed, and work hours were subject to winsorization, with truncation points set at the 1st and 99th percentiles to reduce the impact of extreme values on the analysis results.

(3) Commuting time

The "One-way Commute Time (minutes)" item in the 2022 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) individual questionnaire best reflects the length of commuting time. This item is used to measure residents' commuting time in this study.

(4) Employer Type

The "Employer Type" item in the 2022 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) individual questionnaire categorizes employer types into government departments, party and government agencies, public institutions, state-owned enterprises, private enterprises, individual businesses, foreign/overseas enterprises, other types of enterprises, individuals/families, private non-enterprise organizations, associations, guilds, foundations, village committees, and undetermined. This study considers these categories too detailed for research purposes, and therefore, reclassified and renamed them to better align with the focus of the study. "Government departments/party and government agencies/people's organizations" were renamed as "Public Servants." "Public institutions" and "state-owned enterprises" were merged into "State-owned enterprises/Public institutions." "Private enterprises/individual businesses" were renamed as "Private enterprises," and "Foreign/overseas enterprises" were renamed as "Foreign enterprises." Other categories such as "other types of enterprises," "individuals/families," "private non-enterprise organizations," "associations," "guilds," "foundations," "village committees," and "undetermined" were collectively merged into "Other enterprises."

4.2.2 Mediating Variables

(1) Job Satisfaction

In the 2022 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) personal questionnaire, there is an item measuring "job satisfaction." The original question categorizes job satisfaction into five levels: very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, neutral, somewhat satisfied, and very satisfied. In the CFPS 2022 codebook, the five categories of job satisfaction are assigned corresponding values: very dissatisfied = 1, somewhat dissatisfied = 2, neutral = 3, somewhat satisfied = 4, very satisfied = 5. These assigned values are beneficial for subsequent data analysis, as they enable a more standardized and quantitative approach to analyzing job satisfaction.

4.2.3 Dependent Variable

(1) Residents' Future Confidence

This study uses the "Confidence in One's Future" item from the 2022 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) personal questionnaire to measure residents' future confidence. The original item assesses the level of confidence on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "no confidence" and 5 indicates "very confident."

4.2.4 Control Variables

To exclude the interference of non-core variables on the entire research path, this study selects six demographic and individual characteristic variables as control variables. The specific settings are as follows:

(1) Age and Gender

Article 15 of China's Labor Law stipulates that the minimum legal working age is 16 years old, while the statutory retirement age is 60 for men and 50 for women, thus setting the upper limit for labor age[15].Li Kang argues that individuals aged 60 still possess strong labor capabilities, and the proportion of workers beyond the retirement age is quite high[16].Therefore, this study selects individuals aged 16-60 as the sample for analysis.

Gender can be considered a basic demographic characteristic and used as a control variable (though this study does not examine the impact of gender on the dependent variable). The coding rule is as follows: 0 = female, 1 = male, using the commonly accepted "0-1 coding" in academic research.

(2) Work Type: Agricultural or Non-Agricultural

Jiang Kezhong and Chen Youhua, in their study on the impact of land requisition on farmers' life satisfaction and future confidence, found that rural household heads engaged in non-agricultural work tend to have lower levels of confidence in the future[17].Therefore, the nature of the job can also influence residents' confidence in the future. Thus, this study includes job type (agricultural or non-agricultural) as a control variable. In the CFPS 2022 dataset, the measurement item for job type is "Is this job agricultural or non-agricultural?" The coding rule is as follows: Agricultural = 1, Non-agricultural = 5.

(3) Health Status

Zhu Hongge and Zhang Shaopeng, in their study on the reform of key state-owned forest areas in Heilongjiang Province, found that the better the health status of forestry workers, the lower their concerns about uncertainties in job allocation, which

in turn led to higher levels of confidence in the future[18].Existing research indicates that residents' health status can affect their level of future confidence. Therefore, this study includes health status as a control variable to reduce model bias. In the CFPS 2022, health status is measured by the question "How do you assess your health?" with values ranging from 1 to 5, representing "Very healthy" to "Unhealthy."

(4) Marital status

Liu Wenhua's survey of 655 teachers in Jinan, Shandong, found that marital status significantly affects teachers' social confidence experiences[19].Zhang Mingming believes that a stable marital status contributes to residents' confidence in the future[20].Therefore, this study includes marital status as a control variable. In CFPS 2022, the item for marital status is "Current Marital Status," with the original coding rules as follows: Unmarried = 1, With Partner = 2, Divorced = 3, Widowed = 4.

(5) Highest level of education

Lei Kaichun believes that urban youth with higher education, higher professional status, and higher income levels are more confident about their future prospects in terms of career development, income, and quality of life[21].Based on this, the highest level of education of the research sample is included as a control variable in this study. The "Years of education completed by the respondent" variable in CFPS 2022 is used as the indicator for measuring the highest level of education of the research sample.

4.3 Statistical methods analysis

This study is based on the direct path analysis of "Job Characteristics (Work Income, Work Hours, Commuting Time, Employer Type) → Residents' Future Confidence Level" and the mediating path analysis framework of "Job Characteristics (Work Income, Work Hours, Commuting Time, Employer Type) → Job Satisfaction → Residents' Future Confidence Level." Path analysis from the Generalized Structural Equation Model (GSEM) is selected as the core statistical method.

This study uses Stata 17 for data processing and statistical analysis, applying the Generalized Structural Equation Model (GSEM) for path analysis. As an extension of traditional structural equation modeling, GSEM can handle different types of dependent variables and capture multiple mediation pathways, making it suitable for analyzing both direct and indirect effects between variables, thus effectively meeting the research needs of this study.

5.Main Research Findings

5.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

5.1.1 Control Variables

(1) Gender and Age

In terms of sample characteristics, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with males making up 45.55% (3,139 individuals) and females making up 54.45% (3,752 individuals), offering good representativeness. The mean birth year is 1984.01, with a standard deviation of 10.69, indicating some dispersion in the sample's age structure. The sample is primarily concentrated between the years 1975 and 1997, aligning with CFPS's focus on middle-aged and young labor force.

(2) Employment type: Agricultural or non-agricultural

The statistical results for respondents' employment type show that non-agricultural workers account for 95.91% of the sample (6,609 people), while agricultural workers make up only 4.09% (282 people). The sample clearly reflects a non-agricultural trend, consistent with the overall employment structure trend.

(3) Health Status

The statistical results for respondents' health status show that the sample predominantly falls into the "moderate" and "good" health categories. Specifically, 33.96% of the sample report being in "good" health (categories 1-2), 54.80% are in "average" health (category 3), and 11.24% report being in "poor" health (categories 4-5). This indicates that only a small portion of the sample has poor health.

(4) Marital Status

The statistics on the marital status of the respondents show that the majority of the sample is in a partnership (married or cohabiting), accounting for 74.85%. Singles make up 20.30%, while divorced and widowed individuals constitute a smaller

proportion. Overall, the sample primarily consists of middle-aged and young adults who are married or cohabiting.

(5) Highest Education Level

The descriptive statistics of respondents' years of education show a broad distribution of educational levels in the sample, with an average of 11.74 years of education, a standard deviation of 3.99 years, and a median of 12 years. Overall, most respondents' education levels are concentrated between elementary school and undergraduate levels, reflecting a moderately high overall education level, although there is still some variability.

5.1.2 Independent Variables

(1) Work Income

Descriptive statistical analysis of respondents' work income (log-transformed) shows that the sample includes 6,891 respondents. The mean work income is 10.45, with a standard deviation of 1.53, a minimum value of 0, and a maximum value of 13.82. The results indicate that the sample's income is generally at a medium level, but the distribution shows significant variation, reflecting an uneven income distribution. This provides an empirical basis for subsequent analysis of how work income affects future confidence through work satisfaction.

(2) Work Hours

Descriptive statistical analysis of respondents' work hours reveals that the sample consists of 6,891 respondents, with an average work duration of 51.38 hours per week and a standard deviation of 16.32 hours. The minimum work duration is 8 hours per week, and the maximum is 100 hours per week. Overall, the sample's work hours are on the higher end, but there is considerable individual variation, likely due to differences in job types and positions. Longer work hours may affect job satisfaction, thereby influencing residents' future confidence, which makes it an important factor for path analysis in this study.

(3) Commuting Time

The descriptive statistics of respondents' commuting time show that the sample includes 6,891 respondents, with an average commuting time of 22.41 minutes, a standard deviation of 20.61 minutes, a minimum value of 1 minute, and a maximum value of 240 minutes. Overall, there is significant variation in commuting times. Most respondents have relatively short commuting times, but a small number of individuals have notably long commuting times, reflecting differences in work locations, transportation methods, and residential distances. This provides a basis for the subsequent analysis of the mechanism of commuting time's impact.

(4) Employer Type

The descriptive statistics of respondents' employer types show that among the 6,891 samples, the highest proportion is from private enterprises (60.48%), followed by state-owned enterprises and public institutions (23.35%). The proportions of civil servants (5.91%), foreign enterprises (2.84%), and other types of enterprises (7.42%) are relatively low. Overall, the sample is primarily concentrated in private enterprises and state-owned enterprises/public institutions, with noticeable differences in the distribution of different employer types.

5.1.3 Mediating Variables

Work satisfaction is measured on a 1-5 scale, with a sample mean of 3.73, a standard deviation of 0.86, and a range of 1 to 5. Overall, respondents' work satisfaction is at a moderately high level, with most scores falling within the "Average to Satisfied" range. However, there are still individual differences, which may be related to factors such as work income and work hours. The distribution characteristics of work satisfaction provide reasonable support for its role as a mediating variable in the GSEM model.

5.1.4 Dependent variable

The residents' future confidence is measured on a 1-5 scale, with a sample mean of 4.06, a standard deviation of 0.88, and a range of 1-5. Overall, most residents have relatively high confidence in the future, but there is still some individual variation, which may be related to the impact of work characteristics on future confidence through the mediator variable of job satisfaction. This provides empirical support for analyzing the causal path.

Table 5-1

Variable Type	Variable Name	Variable Description	Proportion (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Independent Variables	Work Income	Continuous Variable	-	10.45	1.53
	Work Hours	Continuous Variable	-	51.38	16.32
	Commuting Time	Continuous Variable	-	22.41	20.61
	Employer Type	Civil Servant=1	5.91	0.059	0.24
		State-owned=2	23.35	0.2335	0.42
		Private Enterprise=3	60.48	0.6048	0.49
		Foreign Enterprise=4	2.84	0.0284	0.17
		Other Enterprise=5	7.42	0.0742	0.26
Mediator Variables	Job Satisfaction	Very Dissatisfied=1 Dissatisfied=2 Neutral=3 Satisfied=4 Very Satisfied=5	-	3.73	0.86
Dependent Variables	Future Confidence Level	No Confidence=1 Low Confidence=2 Neutral=3 High Confidence=4 Very Confident=5	-	4.06	0.88
Control Variables	Gender	Female=0	45.56	0.4556	0.5
		Male=1	54.44	0.5444	0.5
	Age	Year of Birth		1984.007	10.69
	Work Type	1=Agricultural	4.09	0.0409	0.198
		5=Non-Agricultural	95.91	0.9591	0.198
	Health Status	Very Healthy=1	15.34	0.1534	0.36
		Healthy=2	18.62	0.1862	0.39
		Fairly Healthy=3	54.79	0.5479	0.4977
		Average=4	4.96	0.0496	0.2172
		Unhealthy=5	6.28	0.0628	0.2427
	Marital Status	Unmarried=1	20.30	0.2030	0.4023
		Partnered=2	74.85	0.7437	0.4366
		Divorced=3	3.76	0.0376	0.1902
		Widowed=4	1.09	0.0109	0.1037
	Years of Education	0-23 Years		11.74	3.99

5.2 GSEM Results Analysis

(1)Analysis of the impact of core work characteristics on job satisfaction.

Table 5-2 shows the impact of independent variables on job satisfaction. Work income has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction (β=0.0365, $p<0.001$), indicating that higher income leads to higher job satisfaction.This is consistent with the findings of Wang Yongjie[22]and Dong Xiangshu[23], who concluded that “higher income can enhance an individual’s psychological security and job satisfaction, thereby increasing overall job satisfaction.”

Working hours have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction (β=-0.0076, $p<0.001$), indicating that longer working hours reduce residents’ job satisfaction. This reflects the fact that prolonged labor may increase work stress and disrupt

the balance between work and life, thereby diminishing individual job satisfaction. This conclusion aligns with the views of Liang Wenyan[24] and Wang Yonggang[25], who state that "employees' perception of job satisfaction decreases with long working hours, and their sense of balance between work input and reward is negatively affected, leading to lower job satisfaction."

The effect of commuting time on job satisfaction is not significant (β=-0.00057, p=0.247). In this sample, commuting time has a small direct effect on job satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that the perceived impact of commuting time is influenced by individual adaptation and commuting modes, which prevents it from showing statistical significance.

The impact of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public institutions on job satisfaction is not significant (β=-0.0717, p=0.119), suggesting that the job stability and compensation in these organizations are not significantly different from those of civil servants, so the satisfaction differences among employees in these institutions are not pronounced. Private enterprises (β=-0.1113, p=0.012) and other enterprises (β=-0.1480, p=0.009) have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction compared to civil servants, indicating that the job stability and compensation in these companies are considerably lower than those in the public sector, leading to relatively lower job satisfaction among employees. The impact of foreign-invested enterprises on job satisfaction is not significant (β=-0.0327, p=0.651), possibly due to the differences in compensation and management models within foreign companies, which did not show a clear effect in the sample.Du Qiuyong believes that in China, state-owned and public sector organizations still have certain delays in their salary systems and incentive mechanisms, making it difficult for employees' incomes to fully reflect their abilities and value. In contrast, foreign-invested enterprises often offer more attractive salary levels and better welfare benefits, with overall compensation that is noticeably higher than in the public sector, creating a stark contrast[26].

Table 5-2

Variable Category	Variable Name	Model 1 (Job Satisfaction) Coefficients (P-values)
Independent Variables	Work Income	0.0365***(0.0069)
	Work Time	-0.0076***(0.0007)
	Commuting Time	-0.0006(0.0005)
	Employer Type	-0.0717(0.0459)
	State-owned Enterprises	-0.1113*(0.0443)
	Private Enterprises	-0.0327(0.0724)
	Foreign-invested Enterprises	-0.1480**(0.0563)
	Other Enterprises	-0.0813***(0.0209)
	Gender (Gender_clean = Male)	-0.0028*(0.0012)
	Age	-0.0530(0.0514)
	Job Type (Non-agricultural)	-0.1724***(0.0345)
Control Variables	Health Status	-0.3126***(0.0292)
	Very Healthy	-0.6135***(0.0520)
	Comparatively Healthy	-0.7146***(0.0477)
	Average	0.0111(0.0304)
	Unhealthy	-0.0892(0.0588)
	Marital Status	0.0258(0.1030)
	With Partner	-0.0050(0.0032)
	Divorced	0.2108***(0.0119)
	Widowed	
	Education Level (Years of Education)	
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(2) Analysis of the impact of job satisfaction on residents' future confidence.

Table 5-3 shows the impact of job satisfaction on residents' future confidence. Job satisfaction has a significant positive impact on future confidence (β=0.2108, p<0.001), indicating that higher job satisfaction leads to stronger future confidence. This supports the important role of job satisfaction in shaping individual future expectations, suggesting that psychological and occupational experiences have a positive effect on future confidence. This conclusion aligns with the findings of Wang Hanqing [27] and Lina[28], whose research shows that the higher the job satisfaction, the stronger employees' confidence in their future development.

(3) Analysis of the Impact of Core Job Characteristics on Residents' Future Confidence

The research results show that work income does not have a significant direct impact on residents' future confidence (β=−0.0023, p=0.731), indicating that income levels do not directly influence individuals' confidence in the future. This result suggests that simply having a higher income is not sufficient to significantly improve residents' subjective expectations about the future; its effect is more likely mediated by other factors.

Work hours have a significant positive impact on future confidence (β=0.00131, p=0.044), suggesting that longer work hours may slightly enhance residents' confidence in the future through the accumulation of experience or career stability. This indicates that as work hours increase, residents may earn higher incomes, which in turn boosts their confidence about the future.

The results show that commuting time has a marginally significant negative effect on residents' future confidence (β=−0.000917, p=0.057), suggesting that as commuting time increases, residents' confidence in the future may decline. However, this impact has not reached the traditional statistical significance level. This result implies that longer commuting time may reduce individuals' positive expectations for their future life by increasing time costs and physical and mental burdens, but the effect is relatively weak and not strong enough to form a significant impact.

The results indicate that the impact of state-owned enterprises and public institutions on residents' future confidence is not significant (β=−0.07997, p=0.078), and the influence of other types of enterprises is also not significant (β=−0.0873, p=0.116). In contrast, private enterprises (β=−0.1067, p=0.015) and foreign-funded enterprises (β=−0.1826, p=0.011) show a significant negative impact on residents' future confidence, indicating that residents employed in these organizations tend to have relatively weak confidence in future development. This result may be related to differences in career stability, income security, and development expectations between different types of employers. Compared to state-owned enterprises and public institutions, private enterprises and foreign-funded enterprises are more vulnerable to market fluctuations and changes in the economic environment, leading to higher employment uncertainty, which in turn reduces individuals' sense of security and stability regarding their future.

Variable Category	Variable Name	Model 2: Future Confidence
Mediator Variable	Job Satisfaction	0.2108***(0.0119)
	Work Income	-0.0023 (0.0068)
	Work Hours	0.0013* (0.0006)
	Commuting Time	-0.0009 (0.0005)
Independent Variables	Employer Type - State-owned & Public Institutions	-0.0800 (0.0453)
	Private Enterprises	-0.1067* (0.0437)
	Foreign Enterprises	-0.1826** (0.0714)
	Other Enterprises	-0.0873 (0.0555)
	Gender - Male = 1	0.0753***(0.0206)
Control Variables	Age	-0.0011 (0.0012)
	Work Nature - Non-Agricultural = 5	-0.0239 (0.0507)

Variable Category	Variable Name	Model 2: Future Confidence
Control Variables	Health Status - Very Healthy	-0.2133*** (0.0341)
	Relatively Healthy	-0.4471*** (0.0291)
	Average Health	-0.5369***(0.0518)
	Unhealthy	-0.7444***(0.0478)
	Marital Status - With Partner	0.2841***(0.0300)
	Divorced	0.0427 (0.0580)
	Widowed	0.0795 (0.1016)
	Years of Education	-0.0078* (0.0031)
_cons	_cons	0.1567*** (0.0132)

5.3 Validation of Hypothesis Testing Results

5.3.1 Verification of Direct Relationship Hypotheses

Based on the results of Model 1 and Model 2, work income does not have a significant direct effect on residents' future confidence (β=−0.0023, p=0.731), indicating that work income primarily influences future confidence indirectly through job satisfaction. Its direct effect is weak, not supporting the existing hypothesis. H1-A: Work income directly affects residents' future confidence, and there may be a significant positive correlation between work income and future confidence.

The results show that work hours have a significant but weak positive effect on future confidence (β=0.00131, p=0.044), suggesting that longer work hours may boost future confidence through experience accumulation or income expectations. This contradicts the original hypothesis, and therefore, H1-B is not supported. H1-B: Work hours directly affect residents' future confidence, and there may be a significant negative correlation between work hours and future confidence.

The results show that commuting time has a marginal negative effect on future confidence (β=-0.000917, p=0.057), which aligns with the original hypothesis but does not reach traditional significance levels, so the hypothesis is not fully supported. H1-C: Commuting time directly affects residents' future confidence, and there may be a significant negative correlation between commuting time and future confidence.

The impact of employer type on residents' future confidence is as follows: State-owned enterprises and public institutions (β=-0.07997, p=0.078) and other types of enterprises (β=-0.0873, p=0.116) show no significant effects. Private enterprises (β=-0.1067, p=0.015) and foreign-invested enterprises (β=-0.1826, p=0.011) significantly reduce future confidence. Overall, employees in more stable jobs tend to have stronger future confidence, which partially supports H1-D: Employer type directly impacts future confidence, with greater stability correlating with higher confidence, though not all types show significance.

5.3.2 Verification of Indirect Relationship Hypotheses

Work income → Job satisfaction → Residents' future confidence: Work income has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction (β=0.0365, p<0.001), indicating that higher income levels lead to higher job satisfaction among residents. Furthermore, job satisfaction has a significant positive impact on residents' future confidence (β=0.2108, p<0.001). This supports the conclusions of Liu Meicen's research, which found that "higher income leads to higher job satisfaction" [29], and Wang Hanqing's research, which found that "higher job satisfaction leads to greater confidence in the future"[27]. Therefore, the results support the previously proposed hypothesis H2-A: Work income influences residents' future confidence through the mediating role of job satisfaction, and there is likely a significant positive correlation between work income and residents' future confidence.

Work hours → Job satisfaction → Residents' future confidence: Work hours have a significant negative impact on job satisfaction (β=-0.0076, p<0.001), indicating that longer working hours reduce residents' job satisfaction, which is consistent with Zhao Yang's research[11]. Additionally, job satisfaction has a significant positive impact on residents' future confidence (β=0.2108, p<0.001), indicating that the higher the job satisfaction, the stronger the residents' confidence in the future. Therefore, this supports the previously proposed hypothesis H2-B: Work hours influence residents' future confidence through

the mediating role of job satisfaction, and there is likely a significant negative correlation between work hours and residents' future confidence.

Commuting time → Job satisfaction → Residents' future confidence: Commuting time has an insignificant effect on job satisfaction (β=-0.00057, p=0.247), suggesting that in this sample, commuting time has a minimal direct impact on job satisfaction. Therefore, the previously proposed hypothesis H2-C, stating that commuting time affects residents' future confidence through job satisfaction and may have a significant negative correlation with it, is not supported.

Employer type → Job satisfaction → Residents' future confidence: The results of this study show that employer type influences job satisfaction. Employees in state-owned enterprises and public institutions do not report significantly lower job satisfaction compared to civil servants, indicating that their job stability and benefits are similar to those of civil servants, resulting in minimal satisfaction differences. Private enterprises (β=-0.1113, p=0.012) and other types of enterprises (β=-0.1480, p=0.009) significantly reduce job satisfaction, reflecting a substantial gap in job stability and benefits compared to civil servants. However, foreign enterprises (β=-0.0327, p=0.651) have no significant effect. Wang Jinshui's research supports the conclusion that differences between institutional and non-institutional employment significantly affect job satisfaction[30]. However, job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on residents' future confidence (β=0.2108, p<0.001), meaning higher satisfaction leads to stronger future confidence. In summary, employer type indirectly affects future confidence through job satisfaction, with employees in more stable jobs having greater confidence, partially supporting H2-D: Employer type influences residents' future confidence through job satisfaction, and the more stable the job, the higher the future confidence.

6.Research Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

6.1 Research Conclusions

First, work income has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction (β=0.0365, p<0.001), but its direct effect on residents' future confidence is not significant (β=−0.0023, p=0.731). Job satisfaction, however, significantly positively affects future confidence (β=0.2108, p<0.001). This suggests that work income mainly influences future confidence indirectly by improving job satisfaction, without a significant direct impact.

Second, work hours have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction (β=−0.0076, p<0.001), indicating longer working hours reduce job satisfaction. However, work hours have a slight but significant positive direct effect on future confidence (β=0.0013, p<0.05). This suggests that work hours negatively affect future confidence through job satisfaction, indicating multiple pathways of influence.

Third, commuting time does not significantly affect job satisfaction (β=−0.0006, p=0.247) or future confidence (β=−0.0009, p=0.057), with the latter showing a marginal negative impact. This indicates commuting time does not significantly affect future confidence when controlling for other variables.

Moreover, employer type influences job satisfaction and future confidence through different pathways. Compared to public sector employees, private sector (β=−0.1113, p<0.05) and other enterprises (β=−0.1480, p<0.01) have significantly lower job satisfaction, while state-owned enterprises and foreign-invested companies show no significant difference. Regarding future confidence, private sector (β=−0.1067, p<0.05) and foreign-invested companies (β=−0.1826, p<0.05) employees exhibit significantly lower future confidence. In conclusion, employer type affects future confidence both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction, with notable heterogeneity across employer types.

Overall, work characteristics such as income, working hours, commuting time, and employer type impact future confidence through both direct and indirect pathways via job satisfaction.

6.2 olicy Recommendations

The research findings indicate that work income mainly affects residents' future confidence through job satisfaction as an intermediary mechanism, with its direct effect being relatively limited. Therefore, in policy practice, it is not advisable to solely rely on increasing income levels. Greater attention should be paid to the stability, fairness, and predictability of income growth. By improving the wage distribution system and enhancing individuals' overall evaluation of income and work, residents' future confidence can be indirectly increased through improved job satisfaction.

The empirical results show that working hours have both direct and indirect effects on residents' future confidence, with the

indirect effect transmitted through job satisfaction. Excessive working hours diminish job satisfaction and negatively impact future confidence. Therefore, while ensuring stable employment and career development, policies should regulate working hours, guiding employers to enhance labor efficiency and optimize work arrangements to mitigate the negative effects of long working hours on job satisfaction and residents' future confidence.

Although commuting time does not have a statistically significant direct effect on residents' future confidence, its effect direction is negative, suggesting that longer commuting times may exert some inhibitory impact on residents' future expectations. At the policy level, continuous attention should be paid to the commuting burden. By optimizing urban spatial structure, improving public transportation supply, and enhancing commuting conditions, commuting time's potential constraint on residents' life and work arrangements can be reduced, thus preventing the cumulative effect of commuting costs from negatively impacting residents' future confidence.

The study found significant differences in the impact of different types of employers on job satisfaction and residents' future confidence. Some employer types affect residents' future confidence both indirectly through job satisfaction and directly. This suggests that employment stability, institutional security, and career expectations play an important role in the formation of future confidence. Therefore, it is necessary to improve labor protection systems in the non-public sector, strengthen labor rights protection, and expand social security coverage in order to enhance the future confidence of workers in various employer groups through both direct and indirect pathways.

Funding

No

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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