

Non-Physical Education Major Instructors' Career Expectations Affecting their Professional Motivation

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Abstract

The study analyzed the career goals and motivations of non-physical education college teachers in Shanxi Province, China. It involved 226 full-time teachers and used a descriptive comparative-correlational method. The results showed that the teaching environment, interpersonal interactions, compensation, personal development, teaching achievement, leadership style, and job expectations were highly valued. Power, success, affiliation, and competence motivation were also highly regarded. The study found a clear correlation between respondents' impressions of the institution's performance and meeting their expectations. The highest motivation was affiliation, which indicated satisfaction in maintaining relationships and promoting a positive working environment. Competence motivation followed closely, demonstrating confidence in their abilities to perform well, innovate in teaching methods, solve problems, and achieve favorable outcomes in competitive settings. The study also found that power motivation increased with improving career expectations in several spheres. The strongest correlation was found between career goals and ambition for power and influence in their position. Teaching performance showed the strongest association, with the desire for affiliation and teamwork driving motivation. Competence motivation also showed positive connections with all aspects of career expectancy.

Keywords: Career Expectations, Professional Motivation, Non-Physical Education Teachers, China

Introduction

The present research centers on the lesser-known professional experience of Physical Education (PE) teachers who lack an academic degree in PE—those whose main subject of study or initial profession falls outside the physical education field. This research explores how their expectations for their careers influence their career motivation and how these contrast with teachers whose first career is based in physical education. The professional and management development of non-PE major teachers is an important element in the overall university development. Although student progress is always a priority, the professional development and job satisfaction of teachers are also important. Keeping teachers motivated and satisfied in their work leads to improved quality of work and long-term institutional loyalty. Work environment conditions become the determining factors. A number of instructors indicate dissatisfaction due to unsatisfactory thermal comfort, poor lighting, dirty bathrooms, and noise interference, which they attribute to affecting their teaching and shaping their career choices negatively. These environmental conditions, usually overlooked, play a significant role in determining professional motivation and institutional staff retention rates.

This current study, held in Shanxi Province of China in four universities, hopes to conceptualize and examine career expectations and motivational constructs of instructors of non-PE majors. As Webster's (2019) defines occupational expectations as staff employees' forecasts regarding future events within their jobs, these affect not only work orientation but even the instructor's assessment of career fulfillment. Motivation, as defined by Han & Yin (2016), is a psychological drive that triggers and channels behavior towards particular goals. It is such an inner force that ensures participation in teaching professions even under less-than-ideal professional circumstances.

Increasing literature emphasizes recognizing career expectations and motivation in schools. For instance, Mo and Morris (2024) illustrated how international teachers' dissatisfaction increased when their career development expectations were unmet, despite initial job satisfaction. Similarly, Mafindi (2024) found that both financial and non-financial incentives significantly influence academic staff's job commitment in Nigerian colleges of education. Elsewhere, dental therapists in Malaysia indicated that they were encouraged by altruism, work-life balance, and professional ambition (Che Musa et al., 2024), consistent with the sentiments of teachers beyond their specific disciplines.

The change in professional identity of teachers, explained by Qi (2023), also takes a central position in their changing motivation, from external pressure to internal professional awareness. Tymoshenko and Skriabina (2021) also mentioned that students—and consequently, prospective teachers—tend to enter misaligned professions due to unclear expectations and narrow guidance. Such misalignment, when extended to teaching profession, can foster disengagement and turnover, especially among non-major PE instructors.

Additionally, Lysenko (2024) noted the significance of tailored learning spaces, indicating that their design can enhance motivation and professional value congruence. Likewise, Appelgren et al. (2019) noted the significance of intrinsic motivation in maintaining professional commitment among musicians—a similarity that is reminiscent of the passion and resilience often required of teaching professionals. Lastly, research such as that of Zheleva (2022) and Gabnyte et al. (2020) identifies the impact of social attitudes, communication, and institutional support systems on career satisfaction and motivation.

With this context, this study sought to investigate the complex interplay between career expectations and professional motivation among non-PE major instructors in higher education with the ultimate purpose of informing institutional faculty development and retention strategies.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the relationship of the career expectations and motivations of college instructors in the 4 colleges and universities in Shanxi Province, China.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is self-assessment on the career expectation among the non-physical education instructor respondents with regard to:
 - 2.1 teaching environment,
 - 2.2 interpersonal relationship,
 - 2.3 compensation and benefits security,
 - 2.4 personal development and promotion opportunities,
 - 2.5 teaching achievement,
 - 2.6 leadership style, and
 - 2.7 expectations for the job itself?

2. What is self-assessment on the motivation among the non-physical education instructor respondents with regard to:

- 4.1 power motivation,
- 4.2 achievement motivation,
- 4.3 affiliation motivation, and
- 4.4 competence motivation?

3. Is there a significant correlation between the self-assessed career expectations and motivation among the non-physical education instructor respondents?

Research Methodology

This study aimed to assess instructors' career expectations and motivations among non-PE major college instructors in four colleges and universities in Shanxi Province, China. The research design used a descriptive comparative-correlational approach, which simplifies large amounts of data and employs objective, rigorous, and systematic strategies. The study included 226 full-time instructors who were regular school employees, full-time employees, and willing to cooperate in the survey.

The research instruments included questionnaires designed on a four-point scale, validated by Cronbach Alpha, and kept confidential and anonymous. The researchers distributed questionnaires online with the help of friends and staff of the targeted colleges and universities. Data were collected and processed for statistical treatment using Statistical Package version 21.

The researcher used statistical software for social sciences or SPSS software to analyze the data. Frequency Count and Percentage were used to analyze the profile of the instructor respondents in terms of age, sex, education attainment, marital status. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to answer Statement of the Problem (SOP) 1 and 2, and the ratings scale for assessment of career expectations and motivations were used.

Pearson r Product moment Correlation was used to determine a significant relationship between physical education self-assessed instructors' career expectations and motivation.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Summary of the Self-Assessment of the Non-Physical Education Major Instructor Respondents on their Career Expectations

	Mean	SD	QD	INT	Rank
1. Teaching Environment	3.53	.61	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	6.5
2. Interpersonal Relationship	3.53	.58	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	6.5
3. Compensation and Benefits Security	3.56	.59	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	4.5
4. Personal Development and Promotion Opportunities	3.56	.55	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	4.5
5. Teaching Achievement	3.59	.55	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	1
6. Leadership Style	3.58	.56	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	2

7. Expectations for the Job Itself	3.57	.57	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	3
Overall	3.56	.52	Very High Expectations	Highly Met	

Legend: 3.51-4.00 Very High Expectations/ Highly Met; 2.51-3.50 High Expectations/ Met; 1.51-2.50 Low Expectations/ Fairly Met 1.00-1.50 Very Low Expectations / Unmet

Both "Teaching Environment" and "Interpersonal Relationship" received a composite mean of 3.53, with standard deviations of 0.61 and 0.58, respectively. These dimensions rank lowest (7th) among the assessed aspects, suggesting that while expectations for a conducive teaching environment and positive relationships are highly valued, respondents perceive slightly less alignment here compared to other dimensions. The high expectations in these areas highlight the importance of a supportive physical and social environment in the workplace.

The dimensions of "Compensation and Benefits Security" and "Personal Development and Promotion Opportunities" share a composite mean of 3.56 and are ranked 4th. These dimensions emphasize the respondents' desire for financial security and professional growth. High expectations in these areas illustrate the significance of fair compensation, timely benefits, opportunities for advancement, and institutional support for career progression.

"Teaching Achievement" ranks 1st with a mean of 3.59, followed closely by "Leadership Style," which ranks 2nd with a mean of 3.58. These results show that respondents place a high priority on achieving meaningful impacts through their teaching and on having visionary, democratic, and effective leaders. High expectations in these areas indicate that respondents value recognition, student success, and collaborative leadership.

"Expectations for the Job Itself" ranks 3rd, with a mean of 3.57 and a standard deviation of 0.57. Respondents highly value job-related factors such as clear instructions, work-life balance, and meaningful assignments. The alignment of expectations in this dimension reflects the importance of fulfilling work in contributing to overall satisfaction.

The overall composite mean is 3.56, with a standard deviation of 0.52, categorizing their expectations as "Very High Expectations" and interpreted as "Highly Met." This indicates a strong alignment between the respondents' expectations and their perceptions of how well these expectations are fulfilled by the institution.

Table 2 Summary of the Self-Assessment on the Motivation among the Non-Physical Education Instructor Respondents

	Mean	SD	QD	INT	Rank
1. Power Motivation	3.28	.61	Agree	Motivated	4
2. Achievement Motivation	3.43	.57	Agree	Motivated	3
3. Affiliation Motivation	3.50	.54	Agree	Motivated	1
4. Competence Motivation	3.48	.56	Agree	Motivated	2
Overall	3.42	.51	Agree	Motivated	

Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree/ Highly Motivated; 2.51-3.50 Agree/ Motivated; 1.51-2.50 Disagree/ Less Motivated 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree/ Not Motivated

The self-assessment on motivation among non-physical education instructor respondents reveals an overall composite mean of 3.42 (SD = 0.51), with respondents consistently agreeing with the motivational factors across power, achievement, affiliation, and competence dimensions.

Affiliation motivation ranked the highest, with a composite mean of 3.50 (SD = 0.54). Respondents expressed a strong sense of satisfaction in maintaining harmonious relationships and fostering a supportive work culture. High scores for statements such as expressing gratitude, feeling at ease in groups, and prioritizing the happiness of colleagues reflect the instructors' preference for collaborative and socially rewarding professional interactions. This focus on interpersonal relationships likely contributes to a positive organizational atmosphere.

Competence motivation followed closely, with a mean score of 3.48 (SD = 0.56). Respondents demonstrated confidence in their abilities to perform their jobs well, innovate in teaching methods, solve problems, and achieve favorable outcomes in competitive settings. This motivation highlights their commitment to maintaining professional excellence and adapting to challenges effectively. It underscores their desire to make meaningful contributions to student learning and institutional success.

Achievement motivation ranked third, with a mean score of 3.43 (SD = 0.57). Respondents indicated that overcoming challenges, engaging in novel tasks, and starting tasks promptly were significant motivational factors. This reflects their willingness to strive for success and continuously improve their performance. However, the slightly lower scores compared to affiliation and competence motivation may suggest areas for growth, such as embracing new challenges with greater persistence and reducing hesitation in uncertain situations.

Power motivation received the lowest ranking, with a composite mean of 3.28 (SD = 0.61). Respondents agreed that being listened to, offering opinions, and striving for promotions are motivating factors. However, the relatively lower scores in this dimension, particularly regarding preferring leadership roles over confidant roles, indicate a preference for indirect influence rather than direct authority. This suggests a potential emphasis on collaborative leadership and equitable workplace dynamics over hierarchical structures.

Overall, the self-assessment indicates that non-physical education instructors are motivated across all dimensions, with a pronounced emphasis on affiliation and competence motivations. Their focus on maintaining strong interpersonal relationships and excelling in professional responsibilities fosters a balanced and supportive work environment. While achievement and power motivations are present, they are less pronounced, suggesting opportunities for further development in personal ambition and leadership roles.

Table 3 Relationship of the Self-Assessment of the Non-Physical Education Major Instructor Respondents on their Career Expectations and the Motivation among the Non-Physical Education Instructor Respondents

Variable	Profile	Computed r	Significance	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Power Motivation	Teaching Environment	.539	.000	Reject	Significant
	Interpersonal Relationship	.480	.000	Reject	Significant

	Compensation and Benefits Security	.516	.000	Reject	Significant
	Personal Development and Promotion Opportunities	.504	.000	Reject	Significant
	Teaching Achievement	.544	.000	Reject	Significant
	Leadership Style	.550	.000	Reject	Significant
	Expectations for the Job Itself	.565	.000	Reject	Significant
	Total	.577	.000	Reject	Significant
Achievement Motivation	Teaching Environment	.644	.000	Reject	Significant
	Interpersonal Relationship	.567	.000	Reject	Significant
	Compensation and Benefits Security	.605	.000	Reject	Significant
	Personal Development and Promotion Opportunities	.614	.000	Reject	Significant
	Teaching Achievement	.660	.000	Reject	Significant
	Leadership Style	.640	.000	Reject	Significant
	Expectations for the Job Itself	.637	.000	Reject	Significant
	Total	.682	.000	Reject	Significant
Affiliation Motivation	Teaching Environment	.610	.000	Reject	Significant
	Interpersonal Relationship	.645	.000	Reject	Significant
	Compensation and Benefits Security	.686	.000	Reject	Significant
	Personal Development and Promotion Opportunities	.674	.000	Reject	Significant
	Teaching Achievement	.746	.000	Reject	Significant
	Leadership Style	.716	.000	Reject	Significant
	Expectations for the Job Itself	.725	.000	Reject	Significant

	Total	.749	.000	Reject	Significant
Competence Motivation	Teaching Environment	.671	.000	Reject	Significant
	Interpersonal Relationship	.571	.000	Reject	Significant
	Compensation and Benefits Security	.610	.000	Reject	Significant
	Personal Development and Promotion Opportunities	.611	.000	Reject	Significant
	Teaching Achievement	.642	.000	Reject	Significant
	Leadership Style	.655	.000	Reject	Significant
	Expectations for the Job Itself	.640	.000	Reject	Significant
	Total	.687	.000	Reject	Significant
Overall Motivation	Overall Career Expectations	.747	.000	Reject	Significant

For power motivation, the correlations with various career expectation dimensions, such as teaching environment ($r = 0.539$), interpersonal relationship ($r = 0.480$), compensation and benefits security ($r = 0.516$), and others, all showed moderate to strong positive relationships. This suggests that as respondents' career expectations improve in these areas, their power motivation also increases. The highest correlation was with expectations for the job itself ($r = 0.565$), highlighting a strong relationship between their career aspirations and their drive for power and influence in their role.

In the case of achievement motivation, the relationships were even more robust, with the highest correlation observed with teaching achievement ($r = 0.660$). This indicates that respondents who expect better teaching outcomes or have higher career expectations in this area are also more driven by the need to achieve. All other career expectation dimensions, including interpersonal relationships, compensation, and leadership style, also showed significant positive relationships with achievement motivation, demonstrating that a higher level of career satisfaction and expectation is linked to a stronger sense of achievement.

For affiliation motivation, the correlations were similarly strong. The relationship with teaching achievement was the highest ($r = 0.746$), suggesting that respondents who expect more positive teaching results are more motivated by the need for affiliation and collaboration. This was followed closely by relationships with other career expectations like leadership style ($r = 0.716$) and expectations for the job itself ($r = 0.725$), all indicating a tendency for instructors to value interpersonal connections and a sense of belonging in their professional roles.

Finally, competence motivation also displayed significant positive correlations with all career expectation dimensions, with the strongest relationship found with teaching achievement ($r = 0.642$). This reflects that

respondents who have higher expectations for their teaching outcomes are more motivated by the desire to develop their competence and skills in the profession. Other aspects such as leadership style ($r = 0.655$) and expectations for the job itself ($r = 0.640$) showed similarly strong relationships, reinforcing the idea that career expectations in these areas align closely with motivation to excel in one's role.

Overall, the total motivation scores showed a significant positive relationship with overall career expectations ($r = 0.747$), further emphasizing the interconnection between how instructors perceive their career prospects and their motivation across various dimensions. These results indicate that enhancing career expectations, particularly in teaching achievement and leadership style, could significantly boost the motivation levels of non-physical education instructors in terms of power, achievement, affiliation, and competence.

Conclusion

This study validates among non-physical education major instructors a favorable and significant correlation between career objectives and professional motivation. These teachers exhibit different motivating patterns targeted on affiliation, competence, and achievement despite very high expectations in terms of teaching success, leadership behavior, and chances for professional development. The research also illustrates that although instruction environment and relationships are greatly regarded, they rank comparatively lower as fulfillment, an indication of areas within institutions to be addressed. Interestingly, their preference for maintaining harmonious working relationships and improving themselves over times is more vital than authority or leadership positions, which indicates the importance of mutual and competency-centered instruction environments preferred by them. These motivational traits are central in their involvement and long-term commitment to their institutions.

In addition, the analysis of correlation supports the conclusion that high career aspirations are always associated with higher motivation in all the domains of power, achievement, affiliation, and competence. Above all, teaching achievement is the overarching factor controlling all forms of motivation, especially affiliation and competence, highlighting the intrinsic pleasure teachers find in successful students and individual teaching accomplishments. Therefore, for institutions that seek to improve retention, teaching quality, and faculty well-being, investing in the career advancement of non-major PE instructors is crucial. Offering formal growth paths, fair leadership models, and supportive climates will not only align institutional policies with instructors' expectations but also develop a highly motivated and resilient teaching force that makes significant contributions to educational success.

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