CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Sociological Studies

Bachelor＇s thesis

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A study on the discrepancy between employment expectations and actual employment of Chinese graduates

Bachelor's thesis

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Declaration of Authorship

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.

2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.

3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 3.5.2023   Chang Liu

Abstract：

With the change of China's employment mechanism from government-assigned jobs to two-way selection and self-selection, both master's graduates and employers are free to choose according to their own intentions and needs. At present, the employment situation of university students in Chinese society is severe, and there is a discrepancy between employment expectations and actual employment. In addition to the employment pressure of the university students themselves, this has also brought pressure on society in many ways. To achieve the research aim,this thesis is to investigate the factors that influence the employment expectations of master's graduates and to analyse the reasons for the deviations in their job matching. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the factors that influence the employment expectations of masters graduates and to analyse the reasons that contribute to the mismatch of masters graduates. This thesis uses a qualitative research approach to conduct the study, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and coded using grounded theory. The results of the analysis show that the factors affecting the employment expectations of master's graduates include personal factors, social factors, family factors and company factors.Regarding to the factors, this thesis also provide the suggestions from the perspectives of the graduates themselves, universities and government.

Keywords:

Abstrakt

Se změnou mechanismu zaměstnávání v Číně, kdy se pracovní místa přidělují vládou, přešlo na obousměrný výběr a samovýběr, si mohou absolventi magisterského studia i zaměstnavatelé vybírat podle svých záměrů a potřeb. V současné době je situace v oblasti zaměstnávání vysokoškolských studentů v čínské společnosti vážná a existuje rozpor mezi očekáváním zaměstnání a skutečným zaměstnáním. Kromě tlaku na zaměstnanost samotných vysokoškolských studentů to přináší také tlak na společnost v mnoha ohledech. Pro dosažení cíle výzkumu je cílem této práce prozkoumat faktory, které ovlivňují očekávání absolventů magisterského studia v oblasti zaměstnání, a analyzovat příčiny odchylek v jejich pracovním zařazení. Cílem této práce je prozkoumat faktory, které ovlivňují pracovní očekávání absolventů magisterského studia, a analyzovat důvody, které přispívají k nesouladu absolventů magisterského studia s jejich pracovním uplatněním. Tato práce využívá k provedení výzkumu kvalitativní přístup a data byla shromážděna prostřednictvím polostrukturovaných rozhovorů a kódována pomocí zakotvené teorie. Výsledky analýzy ukazují, že mezi faktory ovlivňující očekávání absolventů magisterského studia v oblasti zaměstnání patří osobní faktory, sociální faktory, rodinné faktory a firemní faktory. co se týče faktorů, tato práce také poskytuje návrhy z pohledu samotných absolventů, vysokých škol a státní správy.

Klíčová slova:

Očekávání zaměstnání, skutečné zaměstnání, ovlivňující faktory, míra shod

Contents

Introduction

With the implementation of the higher education expansion policy, the higher education model has shifted from elite to mass, and the scale of graduates with bachelor's degrees and above in China has increased year by year, highlighting the employment problem of graduates (Xinhua Net, 2018). China's economic growth has also slowed down in recent years due to the impact of COVID-19, reducing the total supply of jobs and making it difficult to meet the employment needs of the large group of graduates (Tao, Li & Qu, 2020).

In recent years, talent introduction policies have become more sophisticated, and graduates from key universities in China have become a priority for top tier cities, which has undoubtedly added new pressure on domestic students. Data from the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) for university students show that 9.09 million people will graduate from universities nationwide in 2021 and 10.76 million in 2022, an increase of 1.67 million year-on-year (MOE of RRC, 2021 & 2022). In 2021 MOE of PRC analysis mentioned that the impact of the increased complexity of internal and external environmental factors on employment is different and should not be ignored, and considering the impact of the downward economic pressure, it is expected that the situation facing the employment of college graduates in the first half of 2022 is more severe and the employment pressure is higher (MOE of PRC, 2021).

With the deepening of the market economy in 1985, the employment mechanism has changed from "government allocation" to "two-way choice and independent job selection" (Di, 2004), enabling graduates and employers to choose freely according to their own needs and requirements. However, the dual contradiction between the difficulty of employment for graduates and the difficulty of recruitment for employers in the job market has led to the structural problems of graduate employment becoming increasingly prominent (Lin, Ni & Hou, 2017, 5).

The structural problems of employment are to a large extent caused by a mismatch between employment expectations and actual employment. On the one hand, when choosing a job university students have difficulty in finding a career that matches their expectations and therefore some choose not to take up employment. On the other hand, though, jobs do not match expectations. The mentality of choosing a job before employment makes university students accept employment, but the quality of employment is not always high, resulting in "flash quits" becoming the norm (Hua, 2016). In the past five years, the turnover rate of university graduates at the beginning of their career has been stable, and the data in the 2022 China University Employment Report shows that more than one fifth of the undergraduates in the class of 2021 have left their jobs six months after graduation. In terms of reasons for leaving, the pursuit of higher salaries and benefits as well as more room for development are the main factors for first-time graduates to choose to leave their jobs (Mycos, 2022).

Due to the wide group of graduates, the target group of this thesis is the master's students of Renmin University of China Business School, as they all have certain employment and career selection experience, which can provide strong research data for this study. This thesis provides a new perspective on the study of graduates' employment quality and enriches the study of the matching between graduates' employment expectations and actual employment.

This thesis adopts a qualitative research approach and the research aims to understand the factors affecting employment expectations and to analyse the reasons for the mismatch between employment expectations and actual employment. The career choice theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory are used as the theoretical framework as well.The whole study will have the following main components: Chapter 1 introduces the social background and literature review. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 on research methodology, which focuses on the methods of data collection. Chapter 4 on data analysis and discussion, and Chapter 5 on potential measures to improve and enhance graduate job matching. Chapter 6

provides a conclusion.

Chapter 1

Background

## 1.1 Challenges faced by graduates in the Chinese labour market

In a recent report on global employment trends to 2023, the International Labour Organization predicts that global employment growth will be just 1.0% in 2023, less than half the level of 2022 (ILO, 2023). The report also predicts that the number of unemployed people worldwide will increase slightly by around 3 million to 208 million in 2023 (equivalent to a global unemployment rate of 5.8%). The small increase in the number of unemployed marks a reversal of the downward trend in the global unemployment rate between 2020 and 2022 (ibid).

In addition to unemployment, the quality of jobs remains a key issue, according to the report. The current slowdown in global economic growth means that many workers will have to accept lower quality, poorly paid jobs that lack job security. In addition, the rising cost of living may push more people into poverty as prices rise faster than nominal labour income (ibid).

Commenting on the 2022 China National Economic and Social Development Statistics Bulletin, Sheng Laiyun deputy director of China's National Bureau of Statistics, noted that "The situation at home and abroad is complex and severe, with enterprises experiencing difficulties in production and operation under the impact of the epidemic, a decline in their ability to absorb employment and an increase in employment difficulties for migrant workers, while the number of university graduates exceeded 10 million, a record high, with total employment pressure. At the same time, the number of college graduates exceeded 10 million, a record high, and

the pressure on total employment and structural contradictions came to the fore, while the shortage of international commodity supply brought about rising imported inflationary pressure and increased challenges to stabilise employment and prices in China" (China news network, 2023).

(Figure 1) Data source: National Statistics Office (data in the figure are urban data only, rural data are missing)
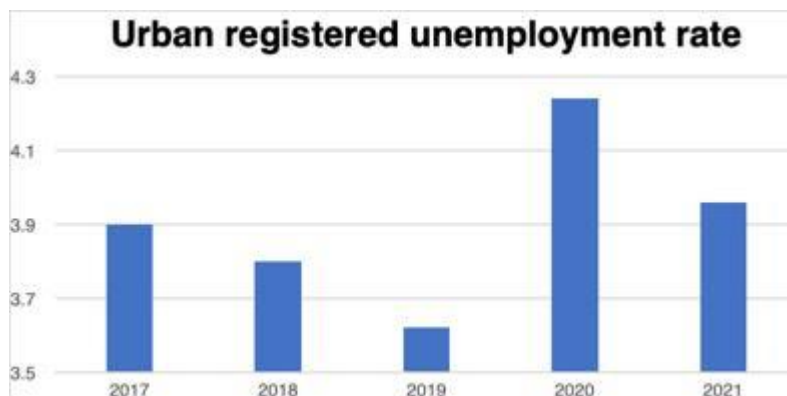
According to relevant data (Figure 1), the registered unemployment rate in urban China is around 3.98% in 2021 after increasing by 4.18% since 2020 due to the impact of the epidemic. This year, according to the latest data, the unemployment rate grew to 5.6% in January-February (NBS, 2023). This shows that the labour market will then become more competitive.

The difficulty of employment in 2023 is mainly reflected in two aspects. Firstly, the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology has led to a significant increase in the difficulty of employment in labor-intensive industries. Second, under the influence of the country's vigorous efforts to compress fiscal spending, the central government agencies have explicitly compressed 5% of the positions in government agencies (SC, 2023), and localities have also announced their own establishment streamlining programs after The National People's Congress, leading to a decline in employment stability in institutional units.

There are various reasons why the employment situation is so difficult in 2023 such as: Firstly, the real estate crisis in local provinces has seriously affected the local

economy in that the real estate crisis has become the biggest threat to China's economic recovery as real estate companies have had numerous funding problems and the land auction market has fallen into contraction (Sina, 2023). Secondly, the deterioration in international relations has weighed on the foreign trade sector, with Western allies all beginning to move to disassociate themselves from China under pressure from the US, which has had a serious impact on China's foreign trade sector (ibid). from January to February 2023, China's trade with the US, Europe and Japan all showed a downward trend, with total exports to the US plummeting by 21.8%, far exceeding the 5% fall in total imports from China and the US (GAC, 2023).

In Chinese President Xi Jinping's 2023 government work report, he stated that he would strengthen the employment priority policy, improve the employment promotion mechanism, promote high-quality and full employment, give more prominence to promoting youth employment, especially for college graduates, and effectively protect basic livelihoods (Chinese government website, 2023).

Since 2017, more than 20 cities in China have introduced new policies on "talent introduction", starting a new era of competition for talents (Yang, 2019). The talent introduction policy refers to the local work unit hiring a person who is working in a foreign province or city and has been employed for at least a certain number of years due to work needs, and those who have higher academic qualifications than the minimum requirements of the talent introduction policy come to the local employment far away (China government net, 2018). The implementation of this policy leads to intense competition in the labor market (Yang, 2019). The occurrence of internal competition then leads to graduates' inability to develop a correct perception of their employment expectations when they are prepared to feel pressured.

As job openings continue to decrease and recruitment becomes more difficult, graduates' employment expectations are in strong contrast to their actual employment, thus gradually becoming a major concern for society (Zhang, 2016). High

employment expectations of graduates are the main reason why they have difficulties in finding employment (Gan, 2010, P5 & Tang & Kong, 2008 & Ye, 2005). This thesis will investigate what are the reasons that influence the factors arising from graduates' employment.

By examining the relationship and causal relationship between employment expectations and actual employment of university graduates, this paper will explore the causes and propose corresponding solutions. The issue of graduate employment is of immediate interest to postgraduate graduates. In the past two years, due to the epidemic, the employment prospects of master's graduates are not optimistic, and how to grow into a suitable job is the biggest problem faced by graduates at present.

In the study of graduate employment, the government and MOE tend to focus only on an objective phenomenon, which is the belief that a high employment rate of graduates will subsequently solve the employment problem (Pu, 2005). However, as the imbalance between supply and demand in the labour market becomes more pronounced and living standards rise, the focus of attention on graduate employment has gradually shifted to the quality of employment (ibid). The most direct indicator of graduate employment quality is whether the actual employment of graduates meets their personal plans and realises the value of graduates' lives, which depends on whether graduates can form a reasonable and suitable career choice for their abilities in the process of choosing a job (Zhang, 2019). Graduates' employment expectations are a reflection of their career values and often come from the direction of graduates' own majors, abilities, interests and needs, and are combined with the actual career situation to make a comprehensive judgment. If university students' career expectations match their actual employment, they will maximise their strengths and motivation, realise their self-worth, and thus provide maximum benefits for the relevant enterprises (Zhang, 2016). On the contrary, it will cause graduates' investment failure, leading to wrong career choice and waste of university education resources (Fan, 2020). This leads to "higher turnover rates and low satisfaction with

the job they are working in", which ultimately affects the growth of the company in question (ibid).

In the existing literature, it is suggested that high employment expectations are one of the causes of employment difficulties for graduates, and corresponding recommendations and countermeasures are provided (Zhang, 2016). However, the current Chinese education system is undergoing continuous reform, so this study aims to contribute to the current literature on the topic by exploring the factors that lead them to form high employment expectations.

Employment is a national livelihood issue and one of the important factors concerning the social and economic development of a country. As graduates trained under the fruit of investment in educational capital and the driving force of national innovation and development, their employment is a focus of concern for all sectors of society.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Career expectation

Career expectations are often viewed as an essential component of career planning and decision-making. Individuals tend to use their career expectations as a guide to finding the perfect career plan that satisfies their material and spiritual needs(Duffy and Dik, 2009, P 29-43). However, this perspective may not be entirely accurate, as there are various factors that contribute to an individual's success in their career, including hard work, dedication, education, networking, and luck. Although having a solid career plan can help individuals achieve their goals, personal effort and external circumstances also play a crucial role in shaping one's career trajectory(Lou and Shen,2007).

Graduates' career expectations have a significant impact not only on their choice of career and employment but also on their overall expectations in life, such as financial expectations, personal fulfillment, and job satisfaction. Having positive and reasonable career expectations enables individuals to find the right job, position, and develop a strong career path. On the other hand, negative and unreasonable career expectations can negatively impact individuals' motivation and lead to confusion about their future, affecting the development of related industries in society and the economic growth of a country(Zhang, 2016).

Individuals' career expectations differ because of their unique career needs, worldviews, and values, so it is crucial that their career expectations are compatible with their social environment and personal attributes(Gottfredson,1981, P545). These attributes include skills, personality traits, values, interests, and experiences(ibid). For instance, an individual who is highly analytical may have different career expectations

than someone who is highly creative, and an individual who values work-life balance may have different career expectations than someone who prioritizes career advancement.

Tiedemann and O'Hara (1963) developed a unique theory of career development, where an individual's career is the sum of the choices they make throughout their life. Individuals grow up organising their abilities and having specific expectations of themselves, after which they undergo a process of career commitment(Tiedeman and O'Hara,1963). They have to engage in a wealth of exploratory and communicative activities to determine an understanding of their abilities, interests, and to construct a certain career world. Once individuals reach a certain level of organisational competence, they are able to propose a state for themselves and work can be coordinated with each other (Zhang,2016).

Organizational competence is an individual's ability to operate and succeed effectively in a particular organizational environment, which is a combination of skills, knowledge, and behaviours such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, and collaboration(ibid). Understanding organizational competence can assist individuals in achieving their career goals and advancing in their chosen field by providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate and succeed in a particular organizational environment(ibid).

1.2.2 Definition of employment expectation

In China, the career expectations of university students have gradually changed from "the 'need for self-fulfilment' of the 1980s to the 'predominance of economic interests' of the present day" (Xu and Li, 2017, p. 160). This shift in career expectations has been observed in various countries and regions, including China, the United States, and Europe. In China, this shift can be traced back to the economic

reforms of the 1980s, which led to a shift in the perception of employment from being a means of social status to being a means of achieving financial success (Zhao et al., 2021).

Karasek et al. (1998) believe that the definition of employment expectation varies greatly under the influence of national conditions in different countries. In the United States, after the 2008 economic crisis, students' career expectations have shifted to focus on financial security and job stability rather than pursuing careers that satisfy or meet their interests (Curtis et al., 2018). In Europe, students' career expectations have shifted towards a focus on gaining practical skills and experiences, as well as pursuing a career that aligns with their values and interests (Kellerman and Rhode, 2014).

1.2.3 Factors influencing employment expectations

Several factors can influence an individual's employment expectations. These factors can be broadly categorized into individual-level factors and environmental-level factors.

Factors affecting employment expectations can vary across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. In general, factors such as individual characteristics, family background, educational experience, labor market conditions, and macroeconomic policies can play a role in shaping employment expectations. For example, research in the United States has shown that factors such as perceived job security, organizational culture, and work-life balance can impact employment expectations (Eby et al., 2003; Nauta et al., 2010).

Individual-level factors refer to personal attributes, such as personality traits, values, interests, and experiences. For instance, individuals with high levels of extraversion may have higher employment expectations for social interaction and leadership roles,

while individuals with high levels of openness to experience may have higher employment expectations for creative and innovative work(Lou & Shen,2007). Similarly, individuals with a strong sense of purpose and values may have higher employment expectations for work that aligns with their beliefs and values.

Environmental-level factors refer to external factors, such as social and cultural norms, economic conditions, and job market trends. For instance, students who grew up in a family with high socio-economic status may have higher employment expectations for salary and job security, while students who grew up in a family with a tradition of public service may have higher employment expectations for social impact and community involvement. Similarly, job market trends and economic conditions can influence employment expectations, such as a high demand for certain skills or industries, which may lead to higher employment expectations for job security and career advancement opportunities(ibid).

Overall, employment expectations are a complex and dynamic construct that can be influenced by various individual and environmental factors(Roodt,Rieger and Sempane,2002, P23-30). Understanding these factors can help individuals make informed career decisions and develop realistic and achievable career goals.

The academic community's focus on the topic of graduate employment in China emerged in the latter half of 2001, coinciding with China's imminent accession to the World Trade Organization (Zhou & Zhang, 2017). As a result, many scholars and experts began to investigate the impact of the WTO on China's higher education system and its graduates' employment prospects, leading to renewed interest in the issue.

In the context of China, studies have found that factors such as socioeconomic status, educational background, and job market competition can influence employment

expectations. For example, a study by Gao and Liu (2016) found that family background and educational experience had a significant impact on employment expectations among Chinese university graduates. Another study by Xu and Wang (2019) found that job market competition, specifically the number of job seekers per vacancy, was a significant predictor of employment expectations among Chinese college students.

The current research on the factors influencing graduates' career expectations in China is not well-organized and lacks a systematic approach to analysis and statistics. This could mean that the studies in this area may not have a consistent research design, and the findings may not be generalizable or comparable to each other(Hu & Zhang,2021). The reasons for this fragmentation could be due to various factors such as a lack of funding, limited access to data, and a lack of collaboration among researchers(ibid). However, there have been various studies conducted on the factors that influence graduates' career expectations in China. There are some examples:

Personal factors: These include an individual's personality traits, values, and interests. A study by Li, Liang, and Wang (2017) found that personality traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were positively related to graduates' career expectations.

Family capital: This refers to the resources, networks, and support that individuals can access through their families. A study by Song and Shen (2019) through quantitative analysis research found that family background, parental education level, and family income were significant predictors of graduates' career expectations.

Social environment: This includes the cultural, social, and economic conditions that

individuals face in their communities. A study by Zhang, Wu, and Hu (2021) found that social support and social identity are positively associated with factors that shape graduates' employment expectations, as graduates' employment expectations are influenced by their social environment.

Universities: Higher education institutions can have a significant impact on graduates' career expectations through their curriculum, resources, and alumni networks. A study by Liu and Wu (2017) using a quantitative empirical study found that university reputation, curriculum design, and career services were significant predictors of graduates' career expectations.

Definition economic: This refers to the economic resources that individuals can access through their employment. A study by Wang and Zhang (2019) found that salary level, employment stability, and promotion opportunities were significant predictors of graduates' career expectations. Because graduates have strong expectations of this.

Institutional environment: This includes the policies, regulations, and labor market conditions that affect graduates' career opportunities. A study by Chen and Liu (2019) found that government policies, industry development, and labor market conditions were significant of graduates' career expectations.

Overall, these studies suggest that there are multiple factors that influence graduates' career expectations in China, and that these factors are interconnected and complex. Individuals' expectations regarding employment are primarily influenced by their own subjective consciousness or mindset, as well as by the objective conditions in which they find themselves. It is important for policymakers, universities, and

employers to take these factors into account when designing policies and programs aimed at improving graduates' employment outcomes. By understanding the various factors that shape employment expectations, stakeholders can work together to create a more supportive and conducive environment for graduates to achieve their career goals.

1.2.4 Research on matching employment expectations with actual employment

The increase in the number of graduates and resulting competition for jobs has led to a significant challenge for the Chinese government and society as a whole (Jung & Kim, 2017). Zhang (2011) found that the employment difficulties for Chinese graduates stem mainly from the structure of employment and the difficulty for graduates to find jobs that suit them and meet their career expectations, while recruiters cannot find suitable talents, leading to structural unemployment. The structure of employment refers to the distribution, composition and linkages of the social workforce in various sectors, industries, regions and areas of the national economy（Xia，2000). Liu (2010) found that almost 30% of university students' majors did not match their jobs in China.

There is a scarcity of literature on whether career expectations and actual employment match in China, research findings are scattered due to rapid educational reform in China(Jung & Kim,2017). In Zhang's (2019) study, the gap between employment expectations and actual employment for 87 of the 100 study participants was influenced by social, personal and combined factors, including the overall economic situation, job market conditions, individual abilities and skills, personal values and preferences, family background, and other relevant factors that may affect employment outcomes for individuals' career choices. Various countermeasures and suggestions have been proposed to address the gap between employment expectations and actual employment, including improving the quality and relevance of higher

education, promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, strengthening career guidance and counseling services, promoting collaboration between universities and industry, and encouraging regional development and investment to create more job opportunities in areas with high unemployment rates (Jung & Kim, 2017).

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

This thesis will primarily use career choice theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory. Career choice theory has three parts, trait-factor theory, career development theory and sociological career guidance theory, and Herzberg's two-factor theory is divided into two parts: hygiene factors and motivational factors.

Career choice theory is concerned with theories that explain how individuals choose careers, and it is based on people's perceptions and knowledge of their abilities, interests, values and personality traits, and matching these factors to the characteristics and requirements of the career, which are described in more detail in the next section. Trait-factor theory focuses on matching individual traits with social job requirements, sociological career guidance theory focuses on the interaction of individual and social structures to make a complement to trait-factor theory, while career development theory focuses on the changes in the person's growth journey on career development.Therefore, this thesis uses the career choice theory to analyze the personal factors and social factors that affect the employment expectation.

Herzberg's two-factor theory focuses on the company level, where job satisfaction is determined by a combination of 'motivational factors' and 'hygiene factors' in the work environment, with motivational factors including achievement, recognition, growth, responsibility and opportunities for advancement, and hygiene factors including wages, working conditions and company policies, The hygiene factors include wages, working conditions, company policies, etc. The career choice theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory are more classic. Therefore, this thesis uses career choice theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory to construct a theoretical framework to respond to the purpose of the study.

2.1 Career choice theory

Career choice refers to job seekers' career expectations and career intentions, based on their interests, abilities, professions and characteristic advantages (Mao, 2018). Under certain social conditions, the process of choosing an occupation from the existing occupations in society that matches one's career expectations, and career choice theory explores the theories and bases of job seekers' career choices. Some of the more influential theories of career choice are the following:

2.1.1 Trait-Factor Theory

In 1909, Professor Frank Parsons of Boston University made the first reference to the "trait" factor theory in his book "Choosing a Career", which is one of the most classic theories of career choice and career guidance. The "trait"-factor theory is a theory of career choice with a personal orientation, which starts from the premise of individual and occupational differences and takes into account both the unique personality traits and ability patterns of the individual, as well as the conditions for successful career choice and the basic conditions of the occupation(Bestz, Fitzgerald & Hill, 1989, P. 26-27).

The theory specifies three main elements and conditions for career choice: First, job seekers should be clear about their attitudes, abilities, interests strengths, limitations and other attributes. Second, job seekers should have a clear grasp of the conditions for successful career choice, the knowledge, abilities and skills required, the strengths occupied in different positions, responsibilities, and compensation, opportunities and development. Third, a balanced grasp of both These two conditions are optimally matched to increase the likelihood of career success (Bestz, Fitzgerald & Hill, 1989, p. 27).

The theory is based on a clear understanding of personal characteristics and the needs

of occupational positions in society, and the matching of the above conditions to choose an occupation that matches occupational needs with personal characteristics. This lays the foundation for the formation of career expectations and the actual employment is to understand personal characteristics based on the comprehensive judgement made after understanding the job requirements, and then the job search process to get a career that matches the expectations.

2.1.2 Career development theory

Career development theory is the study of human career behaviour and the stages of career development from a dynamic perspective. The theory focuses on the process of development of human career psychology and its impact on career choice. Ginzburg, a pioneer of career development theory, emphasised that career choice and career development is a long-term and continuous process, not a single decision, but a series of interrelated decisions made over time (Ginzburg, 1952).The psychology of a person's career choice begins in childhood and changes gradually with age, educational enrichment, personal experience and the social environment.

The psychology of human career choice begins in childhood and gradually changes with age, educational enrichment, personal experience, and social environment.

The transition period is often one of the most challenging stages in career development. This is because job seekers have to face many choices and changes, as well as issues such as anxiety and the uncertainty of how things will work out. At the same time this transitional phase also provides the opportunity for job seekers to get a better understanding of their interests, skills and values(Greehaus,et al.,2010).

Thus, under the guidance of career development theory, in order to achieve a match between graduates' employment expectations and actual employment and the need to improve the rationality of graduates' career choices, it is necessary to provide

continuous career guidance tailored to the stage characteristics of graduates and to focus on students in each year of their studies in higher education (ibid).

2.1.3 Sociological career guidance theory

Sociologists believe that individuals make career choices in a specific environment, and thus individual career choices are necessarily influenced and conditioned by various social factors, and belong to the theory of socially oriented career choice (Zhang, 2019).

In 1985 Gothard put forward the influencing factors of career choice from a sociological perspective and divided the influencing factors into two levels. The first level is the absolute factors that influence an individual's career choice, including socio-economic class factors, gender factors, race factors, physical factors, and intelligence level factors (Gothard, 1985). The second level is secondary and subordinate and includes educational factors, career knowledge and career guidance factors, and employment possibility factors (ibid). The theory advocates against career choice with reference to individual-level factors alone, but rather advocates career choice between individual and social factors, so that career choice is both individualistic and at the same time operationally feasible.

In summary, Gothard's theory of career choice focuses on how people adapt to their occupational environment and succeed, arguing that career choice is influenced by the interaction between the individual and the environment, including abilities, interests, personality, values and so on.

2.2 Herzberg's two-factor theory

Herzberg published the two-factor theory in 1959, which focuses on two factors of job motivation (Herzberg, 1987). The theory states that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by two sets of factors, namely 'motivational factors' and 'health factors' (Stello, 2011).

Herzberg's two-factor theory is a motivational theory that explains the factors that lead to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According to this theory, there are two groups of factors: hygiene factors and motivational factors. Hygiene factors are related to the work environment, including wages, job security, working conditions, company policies and interpersonal relationships. And the motivating factors relate to the work itself, including recognition, achievement, responsibility and personal growth.
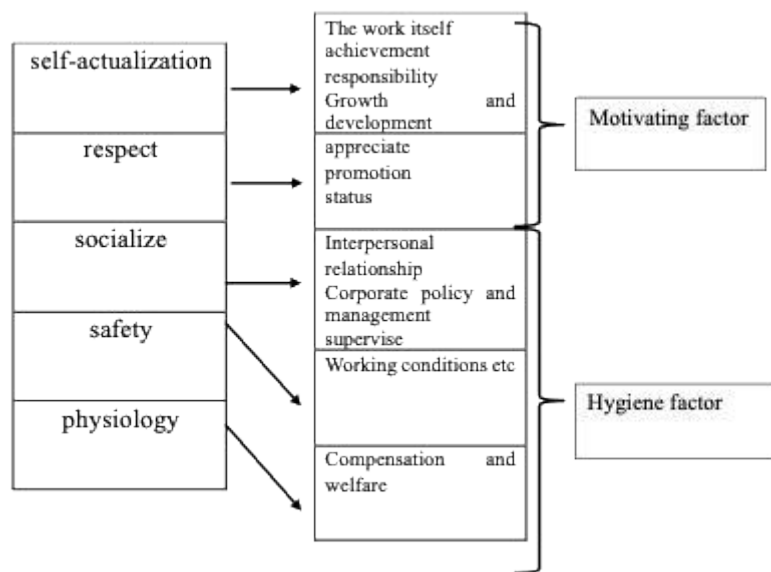
(Source: Figures based on Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, 2003, P. 83).

Herzberg's two-factor theory arose as a result of a research programme into attitudes to work, funded by the Boer Foundation. The theory arose in the 1950s when various states of dissatisfaction with work, such as strikes and grievances, continued to occur in society, leading to a greater understanding of work (Herzeberg, Mausner, Peterson & Capwell, 1957).

At the level of the recruiting company, the theory can help employers to understand how to better attract and retain good employees. Companies can meet the motivational factors by offering challenging jobs with room for development, providing employees with appropriate recognition and rewards, and offering suitable

working conditions. The motivational factors of employees can be met by offering challenging and developmental jobs, providing employees with appropriate recognition and rewards, and offering appropriate working conditions and remuneration packages (Sobaih and Hasanein,2020,P.319-343). Recruitment companies can attract and retain good employees by offering flexible working hours, excellent working conditions and a pleasant working atmosphere. In addition, companies can meet the material needs of their employees by setting fair pay policies and providing appropriate benefits, which can increase job satisfaction and motivation (ibid).

Therefore, in order to attract and retain talented employees, employers must not only meet basic employment expectations, but also provide opportunities for employees to experience. By doing so, employers can create a work environment that promotes employee job satisfaction, engagement and motivation(Yin,2010, P.110).

When applying this theory to the gap between employment expectations and actual employment, companies can consider the presence of the following five factors to promote job satisfaction(Yin,2010,P.110). First is compensation and benefits, the company provides competitive salaries and benefits, including health insurance, pension, etc., to meet the basic needs of workers(ibid). Second is the work environment: provide employees with a safe, healthy and pleasant working environment, including appropriate office equipment, comfortable working temperature, etc.(ibid) Third is the distribution of work tasks: the company provides challenging and fulfilling work tasks to meet employees' needs for achievement, and also pays attention to the proper arrangement and distribution of tasks(ibid). Fourth, job opportunities and development, the company needs to provide training and development opportunities to support employees' professional growth and development(ibid). Fifth is social relations within the company: the company needs to promote positive social relations and a good teamwork atmosphere(ibid).

This study will use both the career choice theory and the Herzberg two-factor theory to analyse the data collected in this study from a different perspective and to examine the reasons for the discrepancy between graduates' career expectations and actual employment in the current society.

The reason for combining career choice theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory in the data analysis is that it allows for a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the gap between employment expectations and actual employment. While career choice theory focuses on how individual interests and abilities influence career choice, Herzberg's two-factor theory focuses on motivational and hygiene factors of job satisfaction, and both theories can help this thesis understand the reasons why study participants are satisfied or dissatisfied with their actual employment. Combining these two theories can therefore provide a more comprehensive explanation of how individuals feel about their actual employment and suggest solutions accordingly.

These two theories were chosen to conduct an analysis of differences in employment expectations and actual employment for three reasons: First career choice theory and Herzberg two-factor theory are two commonly used theoretical frameworks that can provide the basis and support for in-depth analysis. Second career choice theory involves factors from the individual and social environment and can help explain the impact of participants' career choices on expectations and actual employment. Third Herzberg two-factor theory focuses on workers' job satisfaction and can help understand the differences between participants' job expectations and actual employment.

In summary, the choice of career development theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory for analysis can provide a theoretical and empirical basis for better understanding and coping with the differences between employment expectations and actual employment.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research methodology

Qualitative research is a research method based on the natural environment that focuses on understanding the experiences, opinions and attitudes of individuals and using in-depth analysis of this data to uncover patterns, themes and concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In contrast, quantitative research focuses on collecting large amounts of data and then using statistical analysis to reveal relationships between variables (Chen, 1996). This qualitative approach adopts a holistic perspective that preserves the complexity of participants' behaviour by addressing the 'why' and 'how' questions (Lakshman et al., 2000, P.369-377).

Qualitative research has six advantages(Nunan, 1992): First, qualitative research has a certain environmental dimension. Second, the research is conducted in a non-disturbing environment. Third, qualitative research can be sustained over a long period of time, possibly from a few days to several years. Fourth, qualitative research is collaborative in nature and can be conducted by more than one person. Fifth, qualitative research is interpretive and provides an understanding analysis of the data collected. Sixth, qualitative research is organic in nature. The design of qualitative research is open-ended and the direction of the research is dictated by the specific research setting.Qualitative research is open-ended and the direction of the research is determined by the specific research context (Jacob, 1988).

3.1.1 Grounded theory

This thesis uses a grounded theory approach to statistical analysis of data to investigate the analysis of the differences between graduates' employment expectations and actual employment. Grounded theory research is a particular methodological approach to building theory from information, proposed by two scholars from Columbia University, Glaser and Strauss, in 1967, and is a qualitative research approach that aims to build theory from empirical material (Mohajan, 2022). By grounded theory, we mean using inductive methods to analyse and organise the phenomena that have simmered under observation, distilling the concepts that reflect social phenomena through empirical generalizations, and then developing categories and the connections between them, which are eventually elevated to theories (Lyu et al., 2013).

This thesis has chosen to adopt grounded theory because of its importance to qualitative research, providing an effective way to explain and understand people's experiences and behaviours, thereby contributing to the depth and accuracy of research (Mohajan, 2022). At the same time, grounded theory allows for the discovery of patterns and themes within stereotypical data by classifying, coding and analysing them, thus forming an organic theoretical framework (Fei, 2008). Grounded theory has its origins in the social sciences and its main epistemological interest lies in predicting and explaining behaviour in social interactions (Vollstedt and Rezat, 2019, p. 81-100). Because of its flexibility, grounded theory is generalised in fields such as pedagogy and management.

The use of grounded theory requires a reliable source of data and a clear research question, so there are four prerequisites to be met when applying grounded theory: First, the object of study is complex and diverse. Second, an understanding of the context of the subject. Third, it requires the use of appropriate development and techniques to collect data. Fourth, the collected data are interpreted and analysed using appropriate theory (Vollstedt and Rezat, 2019, p. 81-100).

In the study of the relationship between employment expectations and actual employment, there are advantages to using grounded theory as a qualitative research method. This is because grounded theory emphasizes an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives in order to understand their perceptions and explanatory approaches to complex phenomena (Chen, 1999). The reasons for using grounded theory are threefold. Grounded theory is exploratory in nature and can be used when the field of study is relatively new or under-researched, or when the research question is not yet clear (ibid). By digging deeper into the perspectives and experiences of participants, the researcher can learn about the concepts, issues and practices within the field of study (ibid). Secondly, research can be conducted through theory development and validation; grounded theory research can help facilitate theory development and validation in current academic fields, as well as revise and refine existing theories (Jacob, 1988). Through the analysis of large amounts of data, researchers can identify important themes and variables and relate them to previous theories (ibid). Thirdly practice-based research can be conducted, and grounded theory is also very effective in exploring certain practical issues (Chen, 1999). For example, a researcher could use grounded theory to analyse a particular area of expertise within the healthcare field to reveal the core issues in the field and provide recommendations for improvement.

As grounded theory is a data-based research method, its implementation process consists of the following steps (Vollstedt and Rezat, 2019, p. 81-100): First, the researcher collects data. This can be done through interviews, observations, etc., and the data can be in the form of text, video, audio recordings, etc. Second, the collected data is open coded. The researcher reads the collected data line by line and marks and classifies the important words or sentences in it to form an open coding. Third, the open codes were categorised to form spindle codes. Fourth, selective coding is carried out. The main axis codes are combined into higher level codes which can be used to describe phenomena or formulate hypotheses. Fifth, a theory is constructed based on the analysis of the data. The researcher begins to construct theories and attempts to

explain the patterns and concepts found (ibid).

In conclusion, the use of grounded theory, a qualitative research method to examine the relationship between employment expectations and actual employment, can help the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Understanding their perceptions and ways of interpreting employment expectations and realities leads to more insightful conclusions.

3.2 Research participants

The population for this study was selected from 10 graduating Master's students from the School of Business of Renmin University of China, all of whom had some employment and job search experience and were able to provide sufficient data for this study. The research topic in this study is employment expectations and actual employment, which requires participants to have some employment experience or experience in choosing a career. This experience is necessary to provide the study with reliable information for the data to be studied.

Renmin University of China (RUC), located in Beijing, the capital of China, is one of the most prestigious universities in China, ranked 13th among the major universities in China, a national key university and listed as a national double first-class university in 2017. Double first-class universities refer to the construction of world class universities and first-class disciplines.

The employment rate of 2019 graduates from Renmin University of China is 98.18%, and the tentative non-employment rate (intended for domestic study, intended to go abroad, etc.) is 1.50% (RUC, 2021). Beijing is one of China's mega cities with a highly competitive labour market and is the preferred study population for this study.

It is understood that the institution will focus on candidates with employment

experience when making proposed admissions, which is a good range of population selection for the study of this thesis. At the same time, the institution has a good history of development in campus recruitment and social recruitment. Campus recruitment is a specific form of external recruitment where recruiting companies recruit fresh graduates of all types and levels directly from the university. Social recruitment is is the open recruitment for the whole society. It is one of the key factors driving the smooth employment levels of graduates from that university.

3.3 Research questions and purpose

This thesis takes 10 graduate students randomly selected from the Business School of Renmin University of China as the research object. After collecting a certain amount of data information, this paper explores only graduates' views on the relationship between employment expectation and actual employment, and then analyzes the answers to the following three research questions (Table 3.1), and provide corresponding countermeasures.

1. Do the career expectations of master's degree students at the time of their former employment match exactly with their actual employment?

2. Do master's degree students have an understanding of career expectations, job-seeking abilities and the current situation in society?

3. Why are there differences between the career expectations of master's students and their actual employment?

Research aims	Purpose	Reasons of setting purpose
understand the factors that shape employments espectations and analyze the reasons for the mismatch between employment expectations and actual employment	Examine whether the expectations and actual employment match	Focus on the difference between mismatched and matched populations
	To discuss career expectations	To observe the factors influencing career expactations
	Explore the relationship between expectations and actual employment	To observe the reasons of the discrepencies

Table 3.1 Framework of research objectives

3.4 Data collection

A combination of primary and secondary research was used in this study, with the primary research relating to interviews and the secondary research relating to the collection of literature and relevant data. Both collection methods were used to analyse the career expectations of graduating master's students at Renmin University of China Business School and the process by which they are formed, and the reasons for the discrepancy between expectations and reality.

Interview method:

The participants' responses were collected by interacting with them through an online meeting format. In the thesis, I randomly selected 10 master's students from Renmin University of China Business School from various majors as interviewees. The specific content of the interviews ranged from their personal information, their

previous career choice and employment experiences, employment positions, self-perceptions, whether their previous employment met their employment expectations, and the setting of their future employment expectations (Interview Guide, Appendix). Interview questions were interviewed from simple, contextual eventually to complex in-depth questions; all interviews were recorded through online sessions.

This study used semi-structured interviews, which often lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The interview guide is added in the annex.

These included three interdisciplinary studies and students who had been employed in careers that did not match their university studies. Interdisciplinary students face completely different employment options and expectations, which may redefine their employment expectations after they graduate.

Review of literature:

This study collected and organised literature and data on the field of employment. At the same time, government reports on employment and unemployment data, as well as regulations on employment benefits, were collected from the official website of the Chinese central government to provide the theoretical literature and policy basis for this research.

3.5 Data processing and analysis

The recordings of the online meetings were converted to text and entered into the computer, and the collected content was coded and statistically analysed using Taguette and Excel when data analysis was carried out. The keywords that appeared with high frequency to the participants were tagged so that the keywords could be

newly coded and finally categorised into factors for analysis.

In this study, the participants' responses were coded and categorised for analysis, coding them mainly as: the influence of subjective factors, the influence of objective factors, whether or not a change in expectations had occurred, and whether or not the previous employment had met the employment expectations at the time.

3.6 Ethical considerations

As employment issues relate to the privacy of individuals, I have recorded the interview with the consent of the participant before the online interview is conducted and anonymised their personal information at the end of the interview. Participants are advised that the interview is limited to academic research and is not to be used in a commercial context.

Participants are informed that they did not have to answer any questions they do not like and that they are free to refuse to answer any questions they did not wish to answer. If they had felt uncomfortable with the questions in the interview, they were given the option to withdraw from the interview at any time.

3.7 Limitations of the study

As the participants in this study were limited to 10 participants from the School of Business at Renmin University of China (RUC), it is not possible to cover the entire range of graduates in China. Moreover, the employment policies and employment benefits of local governments differ, and regional differences cannot be ruled out.
I must also stress that at the time of conducting the interviews I was constrained by the Chinese government's entry policy and the liberalisation of China's epidemic policy at the time, which led to mass infections in the country, and I was unable to return to China to conduct face-to-face interviews, so I had to rely on the internet for

some of the newly introduced employment policies and other content outside of the interviews.

Another limitation was that some of the participants may still not want to answer the questions, so the responses were short. I have tried to avoid interviewing questions that would make them uncomfortable, as some of the questions may be more sensitive to the participants themselves that I may not have been aware of.

Chapter 4

Data analysis

Before the data analysis began, basic information about the participants was first recorded to better understand the situation of each participant (Table 4.1). Regarding the match between employment expectations and actual employment, it was found that out of the 10 participants collected, only three had actual employment that matched their employment expectations at the time, while the actual employment of the other seven did not match their employment expectations (Table 4.2). According to the data, it was found that the reasons why the actual employment of the seven people did not match their employment expectations were due to different reasons such as the mismatch between their majors and jobs, and work pressure. However, the data are only surface phenomena, and the deeper reasons need to be understood more deeply through in-depth interviews (Zhang, 2016). Therefore, this study conducted a random interview survey with 10 graduating master's students from the School of Business of Renmin University of China to obtain specific reasons and conditions regarding the performance between career expectations and actual employment of graduates in the current society.

Number	Age	Major	Number of previous work experience	Is the work continuing now ?	Does it meet former employment expectations ?
1	28	Technical economics and management	2	no	no
2	26	Marketing	1	no	yes
3	27	Business Economics (Statistics)	1	no	yes
4	29	Marketing management	2	no	no
5	25	Management Science (Business Administration)	1	no	no
6	24	Accounting	1	no	no
7	24	Industrial economy	1	no	yes
8	25	Finance	1	no	no
9	24	Industrial economics	1	no	no
10	25	Accounting	2	no	no

Table 4.1 Basic participant statistics

4.1 Grounded theory Coding

4.1.1 Open-Ended Coding

First, the interview information was statistically coded (Table4.2) and coded into categories. For example, the coding of "majors that match with undergraduate studies" and "majors that do not match with undergraduate studies" was classified under "actual employment matches with undergraduate studies", etc.

Respondent Information Statistics

Sample Information	Project	Number of people	Number of mentions	Percentage of (%)
Gender	Male	4	4	40%
	Female	6	6	60%
How well the actual employment matches the undergraduate major	Corresponding to undergraduate studies	5	17	50%
	Not relvant to undergraduates studies	5	8	50%
Whether the actual employment meets employment expectations	Meets expectations	3	3	30%
	Doesn't meet expectations	7	8	70%
Nature ofpervious employment	State-owned enterprise	3	13	30%
	Private enterprise	7	9	70%
Factors affecting employment expectations	Family factors	8	8	80%
	Overall ability	6	21	60%
	Personal planning	2	5	20%
	Social factors	4	7	40%
	City choice	4	18	40%
Determinations of future employment expectations	Stability	10	43	100%
	City choice	6	18	60%
	Salary and welfare	10	37	100%
	Development prospects	3	3	30%
	Professional match	9	17	90%
	Low work pressure	8	4	80%
	Work environment	5	8	50%
	Interpersonal relationship	2	3	20%
Change in expetations	Lower expectations	5	5	50%
	Expectations increase	2	1	20%
	expectations remain the same	2	1	20%
	Expectations fluctuate	1	1	10%
Ways of responding	Consider transition	5	8	50%
	Don't consider transition period	5	2	50%

Table 4.2 Respondent Information Statistics

The first step was labelling. The phenomenon in the original interview data was given a 'label', which initially defined the phenomenon, and was progressively labelled by the phenomenon in the data. For example, "aa1" for professional match, "aa2" for professional mismatch, etc. (Table 4.3)

The second step is categorisation. To avoid multiple keywords indicating the same meaning, similar tags need to be grouped together. For example: conceptualise 'aa1' and 'aa2' as a1, etc. (Table 4.3).

The third step is to carry out the categorisation. Further abstraction and refinement of the initial concepts will be carried out so that the categories are grouped together. For example: 'a1', 'a2' and 'a3' are categoryised as A1, etc. (Table 4.3).

The open coding process is shown in the attached table: Open coding process.

Interview material(An example of an interview)	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
I was previously working as a finance assistant, which basically matched my major in my undergraduate degree, which was in business administration, which covered the basics of finance as well as financial management. The company I interviewed for was a local private company with more than 20 people, it was mainly a channel player for FMCG products and was responsible for the sales of the products. The job situation was both in line and out of line with what I was looking for. For example, the nature of the work is the same as I expected, the salary and benefits are regular, I don't have to work overtime in this position, I have holidays off, I also pay for my pension and medical insurance, etc. I was expecting to work in a modern office building in a very high class environment and be a white collar worker, where everyone is well dressed and elegant, but in reality we work in a very old office building and deal with all kinds of grimy salesmen and drivers, which is not high class at all. As a postgraduate student graduating in the next year or two, I was unfortunate because the epidemic had led to the closure of many companies in the past three years, and many companies were shrinking in size, resulting in a reduction in demand for staff, which led to the graduates accumulated during the epidemic in the past three years having to compete with us, which was still very stressful. But in the competition still depends on the ability of individuals, individuals still need to be well prepared, improve themselves, as long as they are excellent, will not be afraid of competition.	aa1 major match aa2 Not a professional match aa3 State-owned enterprises aa4 Private enterprise aa5 Meets expectations aa6 Does not meet expectations aa7 City choice aa8 Compensation and benefits aa9 Competency base aa10 Work pressure aa11 General competence aa12 Importance of work experience aa13 Stability aa14 High competition in the labour market aa15 Family factors aa16 Economic downturn aa17 Work environment aa18 Psychological factors aa19 Lower expectations aa20 No change in expectations aa21 Expectations increase aa22 Take transition period into account aa23 No consideration of transition period aa24 Epidemic aa25 Personal planning aa26 Educational advancement	a1 Social factors (aa10,aa13,aa14,aa15,aa16,aa17,aa18,aa24) a2 Other factors (aa3,aa4,aa7,aa8,aa10,aa17) a3 Personal factors (aa1,aa2,aa3,aa4,aa5,aa6,aa8,aa9,aa10,aa11,aa12,aa13,aa14,aa15,aa16,aa17,aa18,aa22,aa23,aa25,aa26) a4 Whether expectations are met (aa19,aa20,aa21) a5 Response (aa22,aa23)	A1 Future expectations (a1,a2,a3) A2 Personal planning (a4,a5)

Table 4.3 Coding process

4.1.2 Principal Axis coding and categorization

Axial coding is based on the coding paradigm model of parsing open-ended codes that will be categorised, organised and linked in concepts and categories to create a deeper understanding, the axial coding process is shown in the Figure 4.1.
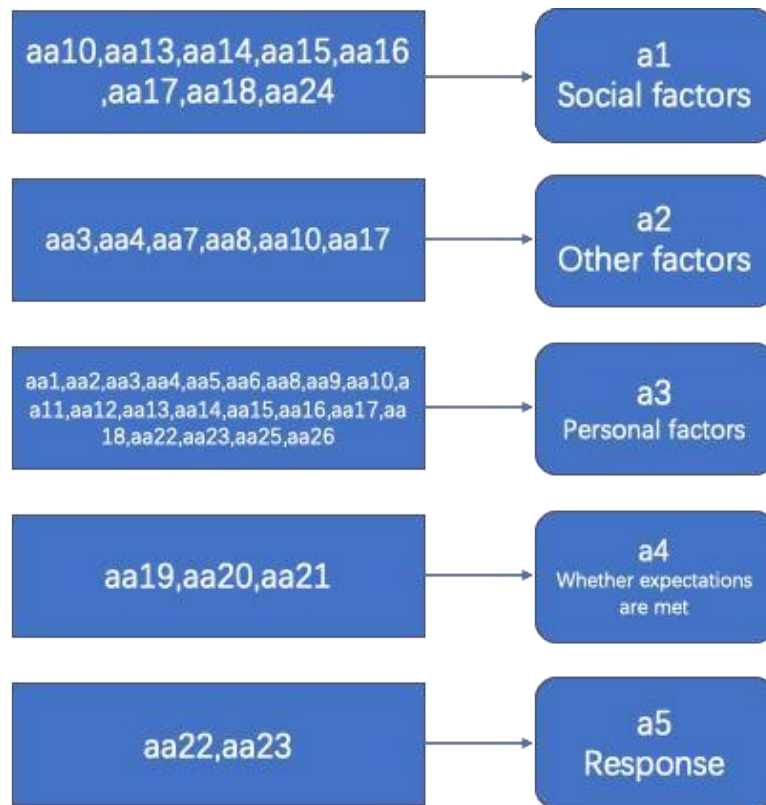
Figure 4.1: Axial coding process

aa10, aa13, aa14, aa15, aa16, aa17, aa18, aa24 can be combined into axial coding 'a1' on the basis that all of these open-ended codes are socially influenced and are therefore coded as 'a1 ', representing social factors.

aa3, aa4, aa7, aa8, aa10, aa17 can be combined as axial coding 'a2' on the grounds that these open-ended codes are part of participants' employment expectations at the job and company level and are not part of the personal and social factors, so they are coded as 'a2', representing other factors.

The open coding of aa1, aa2, aa3, aa4, aa5, aa6, aa8, aa9, aa10, aa11, aa12, aa13, aa14, aa15, aa16, aa17, aa18, aa22, aa23, aa25, aa26 can be combined as axial coding 'a3' on the grounds that these factors all came from the individual participant and not from social and other factors, so they are coded as 'a3' for the individual factor.

The open coding of aa19, aa20 and aa21 can be combined into the axial coding 'a4'. The rationale is that these open-ended codes are taken from participants' perceptions of whether they had been employed to meet their employment expectations at the time, and so they are coded as 'a4', representing whether they met expectations.

The two open codes aa22 and aa23 can be combined as axial coding 'a5', on the grounds that this factor depends on the participant's response to a deviation in employment expectations from actual employment, so it is coded as 'a5', which represents coping measures.

Combining trait-factor theory, career development theory and three theories of sociological career guidance, it can be seen that career development theory examines the developmental stages of career choice from different perspectives at different periods of growth (Zhang, 2016). It can be seen that employment expectations at different times may be changed by external influences, such as the social environment and economic conditions. People's considerations in choosing a career are becoming more and more complex, and their ability to choose a career based on their own conditions is becoming stronger. Therefore, we can learn that we can rely on career choice theory to analyse the personal and social factors of participants.

Career expectations can influence individuals' subjective career choices and plans, which have the potential to impact their lives(ibid). The attainment of career goals depends not only on individual subjective conditions such as professional skills, personal abilities, interests, and professions but also on the appropriateness of the career expectations set by the individual(Zhang,2019). Moreover, when selecting careers, people are influenced by factors from the state, society, family, school, and their personalities.

Herzberg's two-factor theory can be seen to have more perspectives related to the company level, such as: remuneration packages, work environment, corporate systems

and management, employee achievements and development prospects. Material and motivational factors are combined to analyse participants' attitudes towards these factors in order to identify the specific factors that lead to the gap between expectations and actual situations (Wang & Ren, 2008).

4.1.3 Selective Coding

Selective coding is a further exploration of the most important and core concepts in the data based on axial coding, which has formed the core categories of grounded theory and established links to form a complete theoretical system.

a1, a2 and a3 can be combined into selective coding 'A1' representing future employment expectations, as employment expectations are formed from personal factors, social factors and other factors.

a4, a5 can be combined into selective coding 'A2' to represent personal planning, as whether participants' planning arrangements in terms of employment need to consider a transition period when actual employment fails to meet employment expectations.

4.2 The Social environment

Combined with the theory of career choice we can know that the performance of graduates' career expectations is closely linked to the macro environment formed by the state and society. Policies and institutions create an environment that produces specific and unique career expectations.

4.2.1 Stability

During the epidemic period of 2020-early 2023, employment stability played a crucial role in society due to downward economic pressure. Companies closed down and went bankrupt, leading to massive layoffs and an increase in unemployment rates,

negatively impacting the social economy and productivity (Chen,et al,.2023). Additionally, employment is essential for sustaining livelihoods, making job stability a key expectation for participants seeking future employment.

Participant 2 commented: "Three years ago, my employment expectations were to be able to earn more money and to work less hard. But now I want to have a secure job where I can earn enough money to cover my daily expenses."

The word stability was mentioned 43 times in the interviews and was seen to be a key factor in the participants' employment expectations.

Participant 6 expressed a strong desire for job stability, stating that "after three years of thinking about the epidemic my expectations for employment have become stronger and I would like to work in a state-owned enterprise or a government related organization, I really want to have a job with a stable income."

The remaining eight participants all expressed their desire for a stable job. Of these, participant 3 wanted to have a stable job with a good salary.
In conjunction with career choice theory, the participants' career needs have become more stable due to the socioeconomic downward spiral. At the same time, Ginzburg's career development theory, which states that there are different needs for careers at different stages, shows that the contrast between the needs three years ago and three years later changes from monetary aspirations to job stability.

Job stability is a guarantee for the participants in their job search and in their lives, as they do not have to worry about being dismissed.

4.2.2 Labour market Policies

Since it's introduction in 1978, the 'Talent Introduction' policy has been refined,

influencing or changing the employment expectations of participants to some extent. The Talent Introduction policy is a way of bringing in people with higher qualifications and abilities than local job seekers to work in the region on the basis of high salaries, tax breaks for car and house purchases and other benefits. As the talent introduction policy continues to improve, there are corresponding advantages and disadvantages. The introduction of talent pushes graduates to continue to seek education and improve their qualifications. The competition for graduates who want to find jobs immediately after graduation is undoubtedly fierce, and many graduates choose to further their education in order to enjoy the social benefits of the 'Talent introduction' policy (Ge, 2007).

Participant 1: "Because I personally follow social news, I pay more attention to social policies. For example, the introduction of talents nowadays, it is not only the introduction of domestic universities, but also overseas famous universities. Based on the rankings alone, Chinese universities are ranked lower in the world than European and American countries, which is an added pressure for our domestic graduates" (5.2.2023, interview transcript).

Participant 3 also referred to international students returning from overseas and expressed similar views, suggesting that international students are more comprehensive and capable than domestic students studying abroad, a view he shared with Participant 1.

Participant 5 thought that there were too many competitors in the labour market and that the improved policy on the introduction of talents led to her own advantages not being enough to compete for a position, so she chose to improve her education to enhance her advantages.

The remaining seven participants did not mention social policies, so perhaps it is possible that they do not pay much attention to this, or that their employment

expectations are not overly influenced by social policies.

Due to the limited number of jobs available, some participants were influenced by social policies to improve their qualifications and abilities, just to enhance their own competitiveness, so that they could obtain jobs that meet their employment expectations and match their employment expectations with their actual employment.

4.2.3 Fierce Competition in the Labor Market

During the rapid development of industrialisation and information technology, many traditional industries and sectors have been replaced by new technologies, and the whole job market landscape is changing. In this context, many young people often have difficulty adapting their professions or skills to the needs of the job market, which makes it difficult for them to find suitable jobs (Liu, 2022). In recent years, the number of university and postgraduate graduates has been increasing, making the competition among job seekers more and more intense. Factors such as lack of sufficient competitive awareness, professionalism and insufficient understanding of society lead to deviations between employment expectations and actual employment. Another element in the formation of employment expectations is to have a good understanding of the job market in order to seek employment opportunities and make expectations a reality (ibid).

25 times out of the 10 participants in the interviews mentioned that the labour market was highly competitive. This implies that the psychological quality of the participants may be influenced by the labour market, leading to changes in the participants' employment expectations.

Participant 1 felt that "the socio-economic downturn caused by the epidemic has led to many companies going bankrupt and even laying off workers, which has increased unemployment and intensified the competitive pressure in the labour market"

(5.2.2023, interview transcript), and three others expressed similar concerns in this regard.

Participant 2 argued that "the workers laid off due to the epidemic included people with a lot of employment experience. Faced with millions of graduates every year, society is increasingly demanding qualifications and the market is becoming saturated with highly qualified people, which is certainly a huge pressure" (5.2.2023, interview transcript).

Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 6, and Participant 7 all indicated that they had wavered in their former employment expectations due to the fierce competition in society, and that there was a deviation in their perception of their own ability conditions in relation to the job in question. Therefore, they aspire to improve their qualifications in order to alleviate the great pressure they face in the labour market (5.2.2023 & 6.2.2023 & 7.2.2023, interview transcripts).

In this analysis, the fact that graduates do not have an advantage over their competitors due to the enormous pressure and competition they face, leads some participants to have self-doubts about their own conditions and to be unable to clarify their employment expectations, which can lead to deviations from actual employment and therefore become one of the influencing factors.

4.2.4 Degree of fit between the actual employment position

Participants shared their experiences of finding jobs that matched their expertise, which enabled them to leverage their skills and contribute to the company. The consistency of previous education and employment expectations is a factor in their choice of career. This is because participants know the core knowledge content of an employment position, and will have relatively skilled handling methods and abilities.

During the interview, participants' desire for a job that matches their major was

mentioned 17 times, leading to the conclusion that one of the factors influencing their employment expectations is that the expectation is to find a job that is closely related to their degree.

According to participant 2"My previous job was in line with my major in undergraduate studies and the company was recruiting for professionals. The company I interviewed with was an Internet company based in Hangzhou, and it mainly dealt with basic services, such as information search, enterprise information services and e-commerce. However, it did not meet my own employment expectations at the time, as the work was stressful and required overtime at all times" (5.2.2023, interview transcript). Four other participants also expressed the same response that their former employment position matched their major, and likewise, they hoped that in the future they could also find a position that matched what they had studied in their major.

There were also cases where participants' previous employment positions did not match their majors, with participant 9 saying: "My previous job did not match my undergraduate major. The main reason for the mismatch was that my major was in industrial economics, but the job was in sales, which I felt was a bit of a mismatch with my major and subsequently the expected conditions. In the future I hope to find a job that matches my major" (8.2.2023, interview transcript). Three other participants had similar responses and agreement, while all of them added that the main reason why their actual employment once did not match their employment expectations was that they were not professionally competent enough to meet the needs of the position. Participant 10 felt that the position she had been employed in was not a complete mismatch, but she would like to have a future job that matches her major.

Through the participants' interviews, we know that the participants expect their employment expectations to be related to their major, i.e. their interest preference, which belongs to the trait factor theory. According to the theory, we can learn that

employment expectations should depend on personal interests, professional fields and other traits, to meet the needs of traits, in order to further improve the match between actual employment and employment expectations.

4.2.5 Family factors

Various factors influence university students' career choices, and family, as a key aspect of social life, can heavily impact these decisions(Qiao,2010). Parental expectations and socio-economic status may leave an imprint on the career decision-making process of their children. Although this influence decreases as students become more knowledgeable and independent, the family's backing force does not disappear. Especially when students seek guidance in their career choices, parental will can magnify, significantly impacting students' career choices(ibid).

According to participant 5 "I think my employment expectation is more or less influenced by family factors, because my family is not particularly rich, so I expect to have a stable and good job, which can help my family to lighten the burden" (6.2.2023,interview transcript). In addition to this there were four participants whose employment expectations were influenced by family factors and who wanted to be able to work in the position their parents worked in due to the stability of the position they worked in. Participant 3 mentioned that his employment expectations were influenced by his family and that his family's influence was more about wanting him to work in a first-tier city. Participant 8 mentioned in his answer to the question about city choice that he was influenced by family factors and chose to give up his expectation of working in a first-tier city and stay in his own city.

In summary, career development theory depends more on the participants' personal employment expectations, which are related to the participants' personal interests, the professions they have studied and other attributes, but are altered by factors influenced by the environment.

For example, the family factor changed the participants' personal plans to a large extent, even if the family's expectations were contrary to the participants' personal plans. Based on the content of the interviews, it is known that graduates measure their own conditions among competitors due to the influence of high social pressure. Negative emotions arise when there is a gap in their own conditions with other competitors, leading to the possibility that self-doubt can occur. Thus the high pressure of the social environment, as well as parents' expectations of their children, can have a negative impact on graduates' employment expectations to some extent.

4.2.6 Unclear knowledge of the current situation of society

Social development is rapidly changing, and the short internship time of graduates results in a lack of understanding of the social labor market and job search market, which leads to deviations between their actual employment and employment expectations (Zhang, 2019). Due to the lack of understanding of the current social situation, graduates may generate excessive employment expectations without a thorough understanding of their professional abilities, job requirements and other conditions(ibid), thus making the gap between employment expectations and actual employment larger.

Participant 4 believes: "There is certainly a gap between actual employment and employment expectations, but not a big one. I think the main reason for the gap is a lack of clarity in positioning one's personal abilities, asking too much of oneself and not knowing what the needs of society are" (6.2.2023, interview transcript). Participant 1, Participant 7 and Participant 9 all gave similar responses.

Participant 8 responded that he did not understand the social job market and also mentioned the lack of job training at his undergraduate university. He argued: "I think the reason for the gap is that individuals have no practical experience of work and rely

on their own imagination, and there is no relevant workplace training at the university, and at the same time much of the talk about the workplace in society is complimentary, which deepens our filter" (8.2.2023, interview transcript).

It is the graduates' lack of understanding of the current state of society that leads to high employment expectations, so that a gap with actual employment arises. The findings suggest that employment expectations are created in a social context. Graduates need to understand the current situation and the social context in order to form a contextual framework for their employment expectations and create a structure for their own employment planning.

Based on the analysis of the content of the interviews we can conclude that the two factors that influence employment expectations are personal and social factors. The personal factors of employment expectations come from personal interests, majors studied and academic abilities. Social factors come from family, social and societal policies and education. However, reasonable employment expectations do not only require a combination of personal and social factors, but also a clear perception of oneself and the environment.

According to the above analysis, the five participants' employment expectations were too high due to their neglect of self-perceptions and environmental perceptions, and eventually their actual employment did not match their employment expectations. Therefore, in order to form a reasonable employment expectation, it is necessary to have a clear judgment on self-perception and environmental perception, in addition to considering personal and social factors, so as to correctly set a reasonable employment expectation and avoid the phenomenon of over-expectation in employment.

As shown in Figure 4.1 below, based on the theoretical framework of career choice theory, self-cognition and environmental cognition are added to this study, so that

graduates can clarify their employment expectations and set a reasonable employment expectation based on their own conditions and understanding of the current situation of the social labour market and job market, thus increasing the match between employment expectations and actual employment. (Figure 4.1, the theoretical framework of career choice theory in this study).
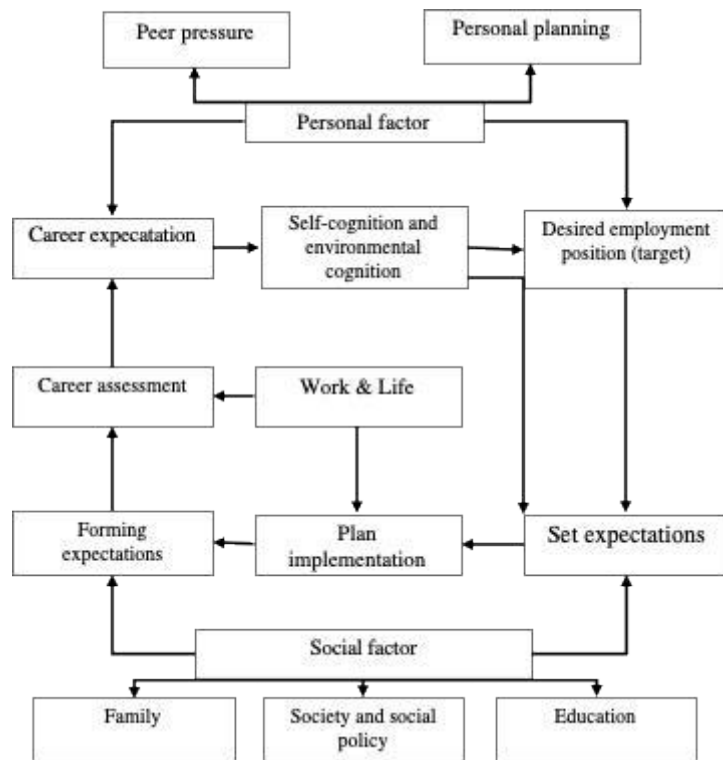

Figure 4.1, Theoretical model of career choice theory for this study

4.3 Herzberg's research results applied to company factors

As stated in the section on theoretical framework, Herzberg's two-factor theory has two sets of factors: hygiene factors and motivational factors. Hygiene factors relate to the work environment, including wages, job security, working conditions, company policies and interpersonal relationships. Motivational factors, on the other hand, relate to the work itself and include recognition, achievement, responsibility and personal growth. This section will therefore focus on the analysis of the factors of remuneration and benefits, choice of city, interpersonal relationships and development

prospects.

4.3.1 Hygiene Factors

As can be seen from the theoretical framework section, hygiene factors refer to workers' satisfaction with their work environment and compensation, including remuneration and benefits, work environment, and company management style. These factors are directly related to the material needs and quality of life of individuals.

4.3.1.1 Remuneration and Benefits

Wage levels in China vary from sector to sector, including basic pay, performance pay, allowances and subsidies, social insurance and welfare benefits, which vary according to the level of the job. At the same time, the different types of cities represent the degree of economic and political development of the city. Therefore a large number of graduates will first look to first-tier cities, super-tier cities and mega-cities, as their minimum wages are much higher than those of other cities. City classification depends on the resident population of the city's urban area and whether the city's infrastructure is well developed. For example, Beijing is a mega-city because it is economically and politically developed, has a resident population of over 10 million in the urban area, and has a sound urban infrastructure.

In all 10 interviews, pay and benefits were a frequent mention in the interviews of the 10 participants. A total of 43 times were counted as being mentioned, so remuneration package was also a factor in shaping employment expectations.

Participant 3 felt that "my employment expectations have not changed much, because my goal is to be able to find a good paying job after graduation to improve my quality of life" (5.2.2023, interview transcript). A further eight participants expressed similar responses.

One of them, participant 7, was more explicit about the amount of salary he expected, saying that "my employment expectation is to find a job that I like, to earn more than before, to earn 7,000 to 8,000 a month, and to show my talents as much as possible" (7.2, 2023, interview transcript).

According to Herzberg, remuneration benefits are attributed to hygiene factors because they provide the material support and security that employees need at work (Herzberg, 1959). 9 participants wanted to improve their quality of life with the help of remuneration benefits, which are part of employment expectations to some extent, and are the participants' expectations at the level of the company where they will be employed in the future.

4.3.1.2 City Choice

The choice of city often represents a specific working environment and salary. The maximum and minimum wages vary from city to city in China, and typically the richer a city's resources and better its economic and political development, the higher the minimum wage will be. However, this results in a highly competitive job market and pressure to secure employment. Additionally, the choice of city varies depending on external circumstances, personal values, family influence, and societal expectations.

Participant 3 (previously employed in Beijing) said "Since I grew up in the countryside, I am eager to experience life in big cities. Larger cities have robust infrastructure, medical institutions, and other resources, so I would choose places like Beijing, Hangzhou, etc., for my work"(6.2.2023, interview transcript)

Participant 9 gave a similar answer. She is from Shanghai, which has a well-developed economy and is well endowed with educational and medical resources, so she chose to return to Shanghai for employment after graduation.

Participant 8 believes that "the more developed the city the more competition there is and the more pressure there is." Participant 8 chose to give up the option of going overseas for employment after considering various aspects, especially after comparing the competition from city to city. Three other participants had similar responses.

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, city choice can be considered as a hygiene factor. Because the choice of city made by participants depends primarily on the economic development of the city, as well as the infrastructure of the city, city choice can be considered a basic work environment factor. The level of development of the city determines the development conditions of the city, and the more companies are distributed in economically developed cities, the more jobs are offered. City choice therefore becomes a consideration in participants' employment expectations.

4.3.1.3 Interpersonal Relationships

The more time and space university students have for interpersonal interaction, the richer their spiritual life, the more opportunities they have for support and help, and the better they can maintain their psychological balance (Xuan et al,.i, 2011, 115-117). If interpersonal needs are not met, this can lead to frustration, internal conflicts and contradictions, and emotional isolation and emptiness can often occur, bringing about a range of negative emotional reactions that can lead to psychological disorders (ibid). Therefore, good interpersonal relationships are a prerequisite for the development of good employability skills, which contribute to the accumulation of their basic personal skills, the learning of their professional skills, and the enhancement of their personality, creativity and innovation.

Participant 8 said: "I am not particularly satisfied with my previous job. The unit I worked in before was not very big, the overall work process and working methods were still quite old, the management style was mainly humanistic, the quality of the staff was not particularly high, and there was a lack of a positive working atmosphere.

I felt that I grew slowly in it and learned very little" (7.2.2023, interview transcript). Two other participants also felt that interpersonal relationships and the work environment were important.

One of the participants10 believes that a good working environment is also important as a good working atmosphere creates good interpersonal relationships, where colleagues can be friendly with each other and reduce unnecessary misunderstandings. Participant 1's expectations for her future employment were that her job would be stable and that she would have a good working environment and good relationships with her colleagues, and that she would have regular holidays. She expressed that she does not like competition between colleagues and that she wants her work environment to be relaxed and enjoyable.

Interpersonal relationships and employment interact with each other and are proportional to the growth of employability development (Xuan et al.,2011, P.115-117).In Herzberg's two-factor theory, good or bad interpersonal relationships determine the work climate and employment experience as a hygiene factor, as interpersonal relationships have a positive rent on job satisfaction. If workers are less satisfied with their jobs, they may choose to quit. It negatively affects the productivity and performance of the organization (Dartey-Baah&Amoako, 2011,P. 1-8). Therefore, organizations need to focus on the hygiene factor of their employees and increase their motivation by improving it.

4.3.2 Motivational factors

4.3.2.1 Development Prospects

The development prospect of post determines the development of graduates after employment, which is closely related to the individual planning of graduates' employment expectation.

Participant 7: "I will continue to work in a related field after graduation and will not consider changing industries. I studied at postgraduate level to build up my skills so that I can get a higher salary and a bigger platform to develop when I am employed in the future" (7.2.2023, interview transcript). A similar response was given by participant 9, who felt that the prospective development of the job must be clear so that their value in life can be realized.

Development prospects are linked to participants' personal plans, and job prospects are linked to the achievements and responsibilities that come with the upward mobility of the position (Sanjeev & Surya, 2016, p. 155-173). The process of attaining achievement determines whether they are able to realize their self-worth and meet their job expectations. It also contributes to the development of the company to improve its effectiveness, thus gaining its trust and receiving a certain bonus or promotion as an incentive.

From the company's point of view, remuneration and benefits, working environment, choice of city and development prospects are some of the most important elements for the participants. Combining the initial expectations of the participant's employment goals with the further choice of employment, a company that can offer the participant these points will facilitate the matching of actual employment with employment expectations. From the above analysis, the theoretical model for exploring employment expectations from the firm's perspective, as found in Herzberg's two-factor theory, is shown in Figure 4.2: (This theoretical model, based on the analysis of the data in this study, finds that it is possible to analyse what factors influence employment expectations from a company perspective.)
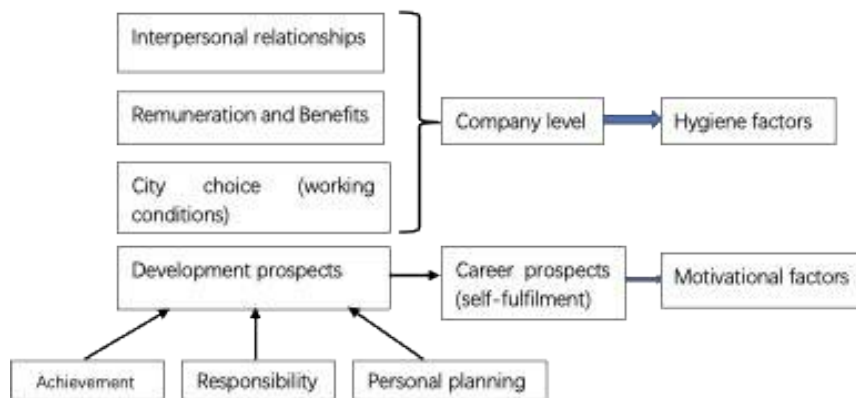
Figure 4.2: Herzberg's two-factor theoretical model for this study

4.4 Discussion

From the above analysis, the formation and influencing factors of graduates' employment expectations are divided into three parts: personal factors, social factors and company factors.

In terms of personal factors, nine of the participants in this study had high employment expectations and were unable to meet them because they did not consider or clarify their self-perceptions and environmental perceptions when forming their initial employment expectations. Among the personal factors, this study found that seven participants had been employed in jobs that did not match their majors and were not related to their interests, and the participants did not know much about the job requirements. Combined with the trait factor theory, the participants' previous employment expectations contradicted the trait factor theory that job seekers' employment expectations should be connected to their own interests, professions and other traits. Because the participants did not take into account their own conditions and job requirements, the actual employment deviated from their employment expectations.

In terms of social factors, they are influenced by different perspectives such as the labour market, social policies and family factors leading to participants' inability to

clarify their employment expectations. Combined with the sociological career guidance theory, employment expectations are shaped by a combination of factors, including family background, educational experiences and cultural values. Of all the interviews, five participants were influenced by family factors to change their employment expectations. nine participants mentioned a competitive labour market, doubtful uncertainty about their abilities, and considered lowering their employment expectations.In relation to career development theory, Ginzburg's career development theory states that the various stages and developmental tasks that individuals go through in their careers have a significant impact on career development. In turn, individuals' employment expectations are influenced by their career development stages and developmental tasks. In all interviews, five participants indicated that their employment expectations were once too high in comparison to their actual situation and that they would lower their employment expectations in the future. In summary, the analysis shows that the participants have been influenced by social factors to have wavering thoughts about their employment expectations, and the lack of a clear employment expectation has led to a discrepancy between the participants' actual employment and their ideal employment expectations.

In terms of company factors, graduates expect companies to provide a comfortable and safe working environment as well as a working atmosphere. Combined with the coding process, it is easy to see that a good location and personal development prospects are both key points of concern for graduates' employment expectations. Remuneration and benefits as a hygiene factor is a source of livelihood security and is a keyword mentioned by graduates many times.

In overview, based on the results of the study, three reasons for the gap between graduates' employment expectations and actual employment can be identified:

First, the employment expectations are too high, but the graduates' professional ability, ability and strengths are unable to meet the job requirements. As graduates have been

in campus life for a long time before employment, they lack social experience, and then the lack of attention to social practice will make college students fall into a difficult job search. When making career choices, these graduates do not understand the nature of each position, responsibilities and job content and salary status, etc., so it is difficult to make a reasonable career planning. They also have difficulty in distinguishing their priorities due to a lack of job-seeking skills, making it difficult for them to be favoured by recruiters.

Second, social competition is fierce, and graduates have wrong perceptions of themselves, social cognition, job requirements and other conditions, and their employment outlook is out of touch with reality, and they are unable to plan reasonable and correct employment expectations. Graduates' personal employment cognition is formed and developed by career values, which refers to graduates' cognition of their own situation and their social environment in the process of career selection. Insufficient self-cognition and incorrect understanding of the social environment are common problems in the process of career selection of university students today.

Third, they are not firm enough in their own employment expectations due to family factors, which leads to deviations in their own employment expectations and thus cannot be matched with actual employment. According to the analysis, it can be seen that graduates will have some changes to their planned employment expectations when faced with advice from their parents and from their parents' expectations. For example, the choice of city, the industry of work, the position, etc. For example, the types of occupations that parents or elders are engaged in may influence children's perceptions and interests in certain occupations, the employment status of parents or elders may have a subtle influence on their children's employment expectations, etc.

Chapter 5

Suggested measures to promote job matching for graduates

In conjunction with the data analysis of the formation and influencing factors of graduates' employment expectations, this paper provides the following general recommendations based on the findings.

Personal factors:

According to the analysis it was concluded that the personal factors affecting employment expectations stemmed more from the participants' own abilities, interests, professional competencies, etc. However, the participants lacked the ability conditions to match the positions, and because they lacked the professional fieldability conditions (specifically the participants' professional level and personal working ability, etc., according to the interviews), they were unable to set employment expectations based on their own abilities, so the actual employment positions could not match the employment expectations.

Universities should insist on career guidance courses and add psychology courses to ease graduates' nervousness when choosing a job and applying for a job. It is also advisable to introduce career guidance courses earlier in the student's study period to avoid concentrating the courses on the graduation year.

Colleges can guide graduates towards specialization, enhance their own strengths and provide a public summary of information on professional examinations. For example, professional documents such as CPA(Certified Public Accountant), bar qualification, CFA(Chartered Financial Analyst), etc. This promotes the all-round development of

students.

Social factors:

Due to the high competitive pressure in the labour market, which is influenced by social policies and other influences, the competition among participants is intense. Some participants say that they do not have a clear understanding of the job market, resulting in an excessive gap between once actual employment and employment expectations, therefore this paper offers the following recommendations.

The government should popularise existing employment benefits policies among graduates, e.g. benefits from existing policies such as housing subsidies and shopping tax reductions. The government should actively and correctly guide graduates to understand the employment welfare policies. After understanding the employment welfare policies, graduates can make reasonable employment plans and employment expectations according to their own situation.

Company factors:

According to the analysis of the data in this study, company-level factors were found to be city choice, salary and benefits, and development prospects.

Universities can provide more effective information on relevant companies for graduates by compiling statistics and making information publicly available on the salaries of previous graduates. Cooperation with various enterprises should also be strengthened. For example, by making public the employment rates and average salaries of graduates in different disciplines, it would facilitate the understanding of the job market and the relevant industry salary standards for graduating or current students.

Universities should avoid over-theorising education and can work with companies to provide internships that combine practice and theory so that students can study their expertise in the context of reality. For example, homework and social practice should be combined, and examinations should not be restricted to exam papers alone, but could come more from students' practical projects. The integration with social practice will enable students to understand the management systems of different companies and be able to plan their employment more clearly. At the same time, universities should strengthen the existing internship incentives and actively guide students to participate in internships so that they can understand the current situation of the job market in advance.

In terms of city choice, it is clear from the analysis that six out of ten participants aspire to work in first-tier cities because they are economically and politically developed and rich in resources. The influx of talent into Tier one cities, super Tier one cities and mega cities will lead to an uneven distribution of talent across the country and increase the gap between different cities. In order to alleviate this uneven distribution of talent, first-tier cities should strengthen their support for second-tier and third-tier cities to share resources and avoid brain drain and talent concentration.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Employment expectations are the preparation and comprehensive thinking of Master's graduates before they enter the job market. Employment expectations determine graduates' career development, and this behaviour determines at a large level whether master's graduates can find positions that meet their career expectations, achieve the goal of matching employment expectations with actual employment, and moreover determine whether they can realise their life values in their future career development (Li & Su, 2022, p. 31-32). With the number of master's students in China growing year by year, competition in the labour market will only intensify and it is particularly important to establish reasonable employment expectations in the future to keep the social economy moving forward to alleviate the downward spiral.

The objectives of this thesis are to understand the factors that influence employment expectations and to analyse the reasons for the mismatch between employment expectations and actual employment, and to propose three research questions: First, did the career expectations of master's degree students at the time of their former employment match exactly with their actual employment? Second, do master's degree students have an understanding of career expectations, job-seeking abilities and the current situation in society? Third, why are there differences between the career expectations of master's students and their actual employment?

This research was conducted through qualitative research by means of semi-structured interviews for data collection and coding of data in a grounded theory approach. A theoretical framework of career choice theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory was

developed to investigate the factors that influence graduates' career expectations and the reasons for the mismatch between employment expectations and actual employment. In addition, we analyse the reasons that contribute to the mismatch between graduates' employment expectations and actual employment, and provide relevant suggestions and countermeasures for graduates' job search.

The analysis of the data revealed that the employment expectations of Masters students are influenced by a number of factors including social, personal, company and family. This study also found that these influences are consistent with previous research in that they all have social, personal and family factors. The company factor, on the other hand, needs to be derived from the graduate's expectations of the company.

The shortcomings of this thesis are that the sample size was limited due to time constraints, and there was no in-depth understanding or interviews with companies and universities, and the grasp of how the research was conducted was rather sketchy. The summaries of the influencing factors in this thesis are all based on the content of the interviews with the interview participants, which will have their more subjective statements, and therefore may not be comprehensive enough in terms of data collection. There are other reasons that are not summarized in this part of the thesis, which needs to be studied in more depth. For example, a study of enterprises to analyse the issue of matching graduates' employment expectations with actual employment from the perspective of enterprises, which can provide a clearer understanding of the needs of enterprises for graduates.

Accordingly, this thesis combines the findings of the study to make three recommendations:

In terms of optimising the cultivation of university resources, it is recommended that universities strengthen guidance on the alignment of employment market demand and

promote the matching of university education with market demand. At the same time, it is recommended to optimise the design of talent cultivation in colleges and universities, and to strengthen the guidance on the accumulation and application of professional abilities for graduates.

In terms of improving the allocation of employment resources, universities, employers and graduates should coordinate closely to create a good employment environment to guide the improvement of resource quality and allocation efficiency.

In terms of building graduates' career expectations, it is recommended that graduates should raise their awareness of employment choices and development, actively understand the labour market and seek opportunities to improve their professional abilities.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

1. Did your previous job match your major as an undergraduate? Details of the company where you were interviewed (nature of the company, location, products or services)

2. Do the circumstances of your job match the conditions you were expecting? (nature and content of the work, remuneration and benefits, type of leave, city of work)

3. How do you feel about your previous work experience? Would you consider continuing to work in a related field after graduation? Would you consider changing industries?

4. What are your current employment expectations for the future?

5. In your previous job-seeking experience, what do you think is the influence of your own qualities on your choice of career, apart from your employment concept? /Family factors?

6. The 3-year epidemic has led to more competition in the job market, what is your opinion on this?

7. Your employment expectations have not changed even after 3 years of the epidemic?

8. What were your employment expectations 3 years ago? What are your

employment expectations now? (Salaried industry/state enterprises/foreign enterprises/civil servants/private enterprises)

9. Do you think your employment expectations are influenced by family factors? Including your city of employment, etc.

10. What influences your employment expectations? Why have they changed/why have they stayed the same? (give examples)

11. Have your expectations of employment changed since graduating from postgraduate university?

12. Is there a big gap between actual employment and employment expectations? What do you think are the reasons for the gap? (Individual, university, society)

13. Do you think your employment expectations are too high or too low? Would you consider adjusting them to some extent?

14. Are you satisfied with the job you have had? What are the reasons for your satisfaction? What are the reasons for dissatisfaction? What aspects of your employment met your expectations?

15. When your actual employment was different from your employment expectations, Has it created a psychological disparity?

16. Have you ever considered looking for a more satisfying job after a transition period following the discrepancy?

17. Did these deviations affect your employment expectations?

Table: Axial coding process

"Quotation" (Part of the interview as an example of the coding process)	Opening coding	First level coding
My previous job matched my undergraduate major.	Major match	aa1
The previous work experience did not match my employment expectations except for the major match.		
My previous job did not match my undergraduate major.	Not a professional match	aa2
My actual employment does not match my employment expectations at all.		
The company I worked for was a state enterprise.	State- owned enterprise	aa3
I work in a branch of a state-owned enterprise.		
I worked in the private enterprise.	Private enterprise	aa4
I have worked in a private school as a language teacher.		
I think it still meets expectations.	Meets expectations	aa5
The previous job was not up to my expectations.	Does not meet expectations	aa6
I didn't like my previous job because it was so far from what I thought it would be.		
Shanghai is the economic centre of China and is rich in resources such as education and healthcare, I think I will return to Shanghai for employment.	City choice	aa7
I would prefer to stay and work in a big city.		
Future employment expectations I hope that the salary may maintain my current quality of life.	Compensation and benefits	aa8

Compensation and benefits I hope will be higher than my previous job, I hope to maintain around 7000-8000 RMB.		

Employment is linked to my professional ability, which is probably one of the reasons why my actual employment does not meet my expectations, as I do not have an advantage in my own ability.	Competency base	aa9
If I want to win the competition, I need to improve my skills and enrich my resume in order to get a better job		
My previous job required me to work a lot of overtime and I couldn't get enough rest.	Work pressure	aa10
I hope to be less stressed in my future work and not feel very exhausted.		
I am currently working hard to improve my professional knowledge in my postgraduate studies, so that I can be a solid winner in my future job search. On the other hand, I have relevant employment experience that can help me to have a better performance in the workplace.	General competence	aa11
More than just a pool of expertise, I think we need to become all-rounders.		
My previous job actually consumed a lot of my energy, but I had enough work experience to understand the requirements of the position.	Importance of work experience	aa12
Work experience can be an advantage for my next career choice.		
I hope to work in the government sector in the future so I don't have to worry about being made redundant.	Stability	aa13
I would like to have a stable job in the future.		
There is too much competition in the labour market and I am under a lot of pressure.	Hight competition in the labour market	aa14
I want to improve my qualifications to reduce my advantage in the labour market		

My parents want me to work in a big city.	Family Factors	aa15
I was advised by my parents that I might stay in the area to prepare for the civil service exams.		
Due to the epidemic, the socio-economic downturn was severe and many companies went bankrupt.	Economic downturn	aa16
In the face of the severe socio-economic downturn, I would like to have a stable job more.		
For the work environment is important to me.	Work environment	aa17
I have high requirements for my future work environment and I would like it to be in a central location with easy access to the city.		
The psychological difference between actual employment and expectations can be significant.	Psychological factors	aa18
Of course there will be a gap and a loss of heart.		
May have lowered expectations.	Lower expectations	aa19
Expectations were a bit high before, but I will adjust them to reality		
My previous expectations were very much in line with my own and will probably remain the same in the future.	No change in expectations	aa20
Previously, my expectation was to have a job, so it led to a job that did not match with my major and was stressful, and in the future I will combine myself to improve my employment expectation.	Expectations increase	aa21
I will raise a part of my employment expectations, and not massively, after all, it is not realistic.		
I would consider a transition period to ease the pressure of choosing a career.	Take transitions period into account	aa22
I'm in a transition period and I'm looking to improve my qualifications to strengthen my competitive edge.		
Time is limited and I will not consider a transition period, I will continue with my application preparation.	No consideration of transition period	aa23
Not prepared to consider a transition period, I will look to myself for reasons to prepare for my next employment		

Employment expectations have changed as a result of the impact of the epidemic.	Epidmeic	aa24
I'm considering more stable jobs after the outbreak.		
I hope that my future employment with a company will achieve my personal plans.	Personal planning	aa25
I hope to have a wider range of future employment opportunities.		
Nowadays, society demands more and more academic qualifications, so you can only rely on upgrading your qualifications to find a good job.	Educational advancement	aa26
Improving my education was already in my plans and I think it was the right choice		