

Job Satisfaction among Chinese Women: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract

This review synthesises recent research on job satisfaction among Chinese women, with a particular focus on the social, cultural, and organisational factors that influence their workplace experiences. Drawing on literature from the past decade, this paper identifies key determinants of job satisfaction, such as work-life balance, organisational support, gender discrimination, career development opportunities, and value alignment. Special attention is given to how traditional gender roles and evolving social expectations interact to shape women's perceptions of career fulfilment. The review also highlights differences in satisfaction levels across industries, job positions, and generational cohorts. By integrating findings from empirical studies and policy reports, this paper provides a holistic understanding of the challenges and enablers affecting Chinese women's job satisfaction. The review concludes with suggestions for future research and practical implications for employers aiming to foster more inclusive and supportive work environments.

Keywords: Chinese Women, Job Satisfaction, Gender Roles, Work-Life Balance

Introduction

Job satisfaction has long been recognised as a central construct in organisational behaviour and labour studies, given its strong associations with employee performance, well-being, retention, and organisational effectiveness (Ramirez-Lozano et al., 2023). Beyond its managerial relevance, job satisfaction has increasingly been examined as a broader social issue linked to workforce sustainability, gender equality, and inclusive economic development. In societies undergoing rapid economic and institutional transformation, employees' subjective evaluations of work have become particularly important indicators of how structural change is experienced at the individual level.

Within this broader discourse, women's job satisfaction has attracted growing attention from scholars and policymakers alike. Although women's labour force participation has expanded significantly worldwide, gender disparities in job quality, career advancement, and work-life integration remain persistent. These disparities are not only reflected in objective indicators such as pay and promotion but also in subjective outcomes such as job satisfaction, which

capture employees lived experiences of work. As a result, women's job satisfaction has become a key lens through which researchers assess the effectiveness of organisational practices and social institutions in addressing gender inequality (Bai et al., 2023; Terpstra-Tong et al., 2025).

The Chinese context offers a particularly important setting for examining women's job satisfaction. China has experienced profound socio-economic transformation over the past several decades, characterised by rapid marketisation, changing employment relations, and evolving gender norms. While Chinese women's educational attainment and labour market participation have improved substantially, traditional gender role expectations regarding family responsibilities and caregiving remain deeply embedded in social and organisational life (Su & Jiang, 2023). These overlapping forces create a unique environment in which women's work experiences are shaped simultaneously by modern employment demands and enduring cultural expectations. Understanding job satisfaction among Chinese women therefore requires attention not only to organisational factors but also to the broader social and cultural context in which work is embedded.

Existing research has identified a range of factors influencing job satisfaction among Chinese women, including work-life balance, organisational support, career development opportunities, workplace climate, and gender discrimination (Deng & Wu, 2023; Li & Zhou, 2023). Studies have also highlighted heterogeneity across industries, occupational positions, and generational cohorts, suggesting that women's job satisfaction is not a uniform phenomenon but varies according to structural location and life stage. However, despite the growing volume of empirical studies, the literature remains fragmented. Many studies focus on specific occupations or regions, adopt diverse theoretical perspectives, or examine isolated determinants of job satisfaction, making it difficult to draw integrated conclusions about the overall patterns and mechanisms shaping Chinese women's job satisfaction.

More importantly, there is a lack of comprehensive reviews that systematically synthesise this body of research within a coherent social and theoretical framework. Existing reviews often address job satisfaction in general or focus on specific professional groups, without explicitly centring Chinese women as a distinct analytical category shaped by gendered labour markets and socio-cultural norms. Furthermore, while recent studies increasingly incorporate themes such as work-life balance, organisational support, and gender role expectations, there has been limited effort to consolidate these findings, identify dominant explanatory pathways, and clarify where empirical evidence converges or diverges. This gap limits both theoretical advancement and the practical translation of research insights into organisational and policy interventions.

In response to these limitations, this review aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of recent literature on job satisfaction among Chinese women. Specifically, it seeks to integrate findings from empirical studies and policy-oriented research to identify the key social, cultural, and organisational drivers of job satisfaction, examine variations across industries, job positions, and generations, and highlight emerging trends and unresolved debates in the field. By situating women's job satisfaction within the broader context of China's socio-economic transformation and gender norms, this review contributes to a more nuanced understanding

of women's work experiences and offers evidence-based insights for organisations and policymakers seeking to promote more inclusive and supportive work environments.

Methodology

This study adopts a comprehensive review methodology to synthesise the existing literature on job satisfaction among Chinese women. The aim is to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing their job satisfaction, particularly in the context of Chinese socio-cultural dynamics. The review includes empirical studies, theoretical papers, and policy reports published from 2020 to 2025, focusing on both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

To ensure a broad yet focused scope, the selection criteria for included studies were based on the relevance to the central theme of job satisfaction among women in China, with particular attention to factors such as work-life balance, organisational culture, career development, and gender discrimination. Studies were sourced from major academic databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), using search terms such as "job satisfaction," "Chinese women," "gender roles," and "workplace equality." Only studies written in English or Chinese were included to maintain cultural relevance while ensuring comprehensiveness. The selected studies were then analysed to identify recurring themes, trends, and gaps in the literature.

Additionally, to provide a nuanced perspective, the review also considers the geographical and industrial contexts in which these studies were conducted (Losacker et al., 2023). Special emphasis is placed on the comparison of job satisfaction between different industries and generational cohorts, with attention to how traditional gender roles and evolving social expectations interact. The methodology aims to offer a holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to job satisfaction among Chinese women, while also identifying areas for future research and practical implications for organisations seeking to improve gender equity in the workplace.

Conceptual Foundations of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that refers to the degree to which employees feel content with their work environment, job role, and overall work experiences (Xu et al., 2023). It encompasses both affective responses (emotional reactions) and cognitive evaluations (thoughtful assessments) regarding various job characteristics (Su et al., 2023). Over the years, numerous theoretical frameworks have been proposed to explain the factors that influence job satisfaction. Among the most prominent are Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and the Job Characteristics Model, which emphasise the significance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in determining job satisfaction.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that job satisfaction is influenced by two types of factors: hygiene factors (such as working conditions, salary, and company policies) and motivators (such as achievement, recognition, and personal growth). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs posits that job satisfaction is linked to the fulfilment of individual needs, starting with basic physiological needs and progressing to self-actualisation. Meanwhile, the Job Characteristics Model, used by Judge et al. (2023) and Chen et al. (2023), highlights the importance of job design, including factors such as task variety, autonomy, and feedback, in

influencing job satisfaction. In the context of Chinese women, these theories are further complicated by cultural factors, such as traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and work-family conflict, which can shape their job satisfaction in unique ways (Su et al., 2023).

This conceptual foundation provides a basis for understanding the diverse factors that contribute to job satisfaction among Chinese women and serves as a framework for the review of the literature presented in this study. Table 1 summarises key theories and factors influencing job satisfaction.

Table 1
Conceptual Framework of Job Satisfaction

Theory/Model	Key Factors	Relevance to Chinese Women
Herzberg: Two-Factor Theory	Hygiene Factors: Salary, working conditions, Motivators: Achievement, recognition, personal growth	Gendered expectations may affect women's access to motivators, particularly in leadership roles.
Maslow: Hierarchy of Needs	Basic Needs: Physiological needs, safety Psychological Needs: Social, esteem needs Self-Actualisation: Personal growth	Chinese women may face societal pressure that affects their ability to achieve self-actualisation, particularly due to work-family conflicts.
Job Characteristics Model	Task Variety, Autonomy, Feedback, Task Identity, Skill Variety	Chinese women in certain industries may experience restricted autonomy due to cultural expectations and organisational hierarchies.
Work-Family Conflict	Work responsibilities vs. family roles, time and energy constraints	Strongly relevant for Chinese women, as traditional gender roles often place more family responsibilities on women, affecting their job satisfaction.
Gender Role Expectations	Societal norms and expectations about women's roles at home and in the workplace	Women in China may face conflict between their professional ambitions and traditional family roles, influencing job satisfaction.

Gendered Patterns of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is inherently influenced by gender, with distinct patterns emerging across different industries, cultural contexts, and organisational structures. Globally, research has consistently shown that women often experience lower levels of job satisfaction compared to men, although the specific factors influencing this disparity can vary significantly (Dvouletý et al., 2025). Women are more likely to report dissatisfaction due to issues such as limited career advancement opportunities, lack of recognition, and unequal access to resources and support. This is particularly evident in leadership roles, where women face additional structural barriers and gendered expectations that hinder their professional growth and job satisfaction (Mehrzaad & Rostan, 2024; Seely, 2024). For example, studies have shown that women in senior management positions experience higher turnover intentions, often due to stalled career progression and challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

In the context of China, these gendered patterns are further shaped by traditional cultural expectations that place a disproportionate burden on women to fulfil family roles, leading to a complex interplay between work and family life. Majority of Chinese women report job dissatisfaction due to work-life imbalance, a factor that disproportionately affects them compared to their male counterparts. According to a survey by Zhaopin (2021), work-family conflict is one of the primary drivers of job dissatisfaction among female employees in China, with women often prioritising familial responsibilities over career advancement. Beside that, job satisfaction of women is closely linked to the organisational climate, including perceptions of fairness, safety, and inclusion. Studies have found that female employees tend to be more sensitive to these factors, and when they perceive a lack of support or fairness, it significantly impacts their job satisfaction levels (Barbosa, 2024). These gendered patterns underline the importance of designing gender-responsive workplace policies that address the unique needs and challenges faced by women in the workplace.

Key Drivers of Job Satisfaction among Chinese Women

Job satisfaction among Chinese women is shaped by a variety of factors that are both individual and organisational (Hong et al., 2023). These factors can be broadly categorised into organisational support, career development opportunities, work-life balance, workplace climate, and gender-related issues. One key driver of job satisfaction for Chinese women is the level of organisational support that they receive. Supportive management practices, such as mentorship programs, flexible working hours, and clear communication channels, are crucial in enhancing their job satisfaction (Li & Setiawan Sanusi, 2023). Furthermore, career development opportunities, including access to training, leadership development programs, and equal promotion prospects, are essential for maintaining high levels of job satisfaction, especially for women seeking career advancement (Zhan & Yang, 2024).

Work-life balance also is another critical factor influencing job satisfaction among Chinese women (Bian & Mohd Sukor, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). In a culture where traditional gender roles often place the burden of domestic responsibilities on women, the ability to balance work with family life becomes a key concern (Tang et al., 2024). Many women report dissatisfaction when they feel they cannot adequately balance these two spheres (Maharani & Tamara, 2024). The workplace climate, including factors like fairness, inclusion, and safety, also plays a significant role in shaping job satisfaction (Nassani et al., 2024). A positive, inclusive organisational culture can mitigate feelings of discrimination and help women feel valued in their roles (Liu et al., 2024).

Lastly, gender-related issues, such as perceived gender discrimination, unequal pay, and stereotypical roles, remain significant barriers to job satisfaction for Chinese women, and addressing these issues is critical for improving overall workplace satisfaction. As shown in Table 2, job satisfaction among Chinese women is influenced by a combination of organisational support, career development opportunities, the ability to maintain work-life balance, perceptions of workplace climate, and experiences related to gender equality. Each of these factors contributes in meaningful ways, either enhancing satisfaction or, when neglected, reinforcing existing disparities in the workplace.

Table 2

Conceptual Framework of Job Satisfaction Among Chinese Women

Driver	Description	Impact on Job Satisfaction
Organizational Support	Supportive management practices, mentorship programs, and open communication.	High support enhances job satisfaction by promoting career growth and providing a sense of belonging.
Career Development	Opportunities for training, leadership development, and equal promotion prospects.	Career advancement is critical for maintaining job satisfaction, especially in male-dominated sectors.
Work-Life Balance	Ability to balance professional and family responsibilities.	A poor work-life balance leads to dissatisfaction and high turnover intentions.
Workplace Climate	Perceptions of fairness, inclusion, safety, and respect within the organisation.	A positive and inclusive workplace climate significantly boosts job satisfaction.
Gender-Related Issues	Gender discrimination, unequal pay, and stereotypes regarding women's roles.	Gender discrimination and inequity lead to lower job satisfaction and hinder career progress.

Implications for Management and Policy

To effectively address job satisfaction among Chinese women and reduce turnover intentions, organisations must implement gender-responsive management practices and policies that specifically cater to the unique needs of female employees. First and foremost, organisations should prioritise organisational support by offering mentorship programs, providing access to professional development opportunities, and ensuring clear communication channels. By fostering a supportive environment, companies can help women feel valued, thereby enhancing their job satisfaction and increasing retention. Additionally, management should focus on career development initiatives that ensure women have equal access to training, advancement opportunities, and leadership roles. Programs that promote women's leadership pipelines can address the underrepresentation of women in senior positions and create a more equitable work environment (Zhang et al., 2023).

Another key area is work-life balance, which is particularly relevant to Chinese women due to traditional family expectations. To improve job satisfaction, organisations should implement flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options, flexible hours, and paid family leave policies. These measures not only help alleviate work-family conflict but also signal to female employees that their well-being is a priority. Furthermore, companies must work to promote workplace equity by creating inclusive and fair organisational cultures. This can be achieved through anti-discrimination training, equal pay audits, and initiatives that combat gender bias. A positive organisational climate that fosters safety, fairness, and inclusion directly impacts job satisfaction and reduces the likelihood of voluntary turnover.

In terms of policy implications, the government could play a critical role in supporting organisational changes through regulations that mandate equal pay, gender equality in hiring and promotions, and protections against workplace harassment. Policies that promote gender-inclusive leadership and encourage organisations to create gender-diverse workforces can further support job satisfaction for women (Chen et al., 2023; Xia et al., 2023).

Finally, encouraging societal shifts in gender norms, such as the redefinition of traditional gender roles, can help reduce work-family conflict and allow women to thrive in their careers while maintaining fulfilling personal lives. By addressing these factors, organisations and policymakers can create a more equitable and supportive environment for Chinese women in the workforce, ultimately enhancing their job satisfaction and reducing turnover.

Future Research Directions

Despite the valuable insights provided by existing research, there remain significant gaps in the understanding of job satisfaction among Chinese women, particularly in the context of their unique cultural, societal, and organisational environments. Future research should explore the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as age, education level, and socioeconomic status. By examining how different demographic groups within the female workforce experience job satisfaction, researchers can provide more nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities that women face in various sectors.

Moreover, further investigation into the role of gendered expectations within Chinese society and their impact on women's career decisions is essential. Research explores how traditional family structures, societal expectations, and evolving gender roles shape women's experiences in the workplace and influence their job satisfaction. For example, longitudinal studies could investigate how changes in societal attitudes toward gender and work-life balance policies in China affect women's career trajectories and job satisfaction over time. Another promising area for future research is the impact of organisational policies and practices on job satisfaction among women. While the importance of organisational support, work-life balance, and career development opportunities is well-documented, studies examining the effectiveness of specific workplace interventions, such as flexible work arrangements, anti-discrimination policies, and leadership training programs, are still limited. Research could assess the long-term impact of these policies on job satisfaction and retention, particularly in high-pressure industries or roles traditionally dominated by men. Additionally, the role of social media and technology in shaping job satisfaction for younger generations of women in China is an emerging area that warrants exploration, particularly in terms of how these platforms influence perceptions of organisational fairness, inclusion, and career development.

Finally, cross-cultural comparisons would enrich the understanding of job satisfaction among Chinese women. By comparing the job satisfaction of Chinese women to that of women in other Asian or Western countries, researchers could identify both universal and culturally specific factors that contribute to women's workplace experiences. These comparative studies could offer valuable insights for multinational companies seeking to implement gender-inclusive policies that are sensitive to both local cultures and global standards. In summary, future research should focus on a broader, intersectional approach to understanding the unique drivers of job satisfaction among Chinese women. By addressing these gaps, scholars can provide more comprehensive solutions to improve the work environment and overall job satisfaction for women in China.

Conclusion

In conclusion, job satisfaction among Chinese women is influenced by a complex interplay of organisational, societal, and gender-related factors. The research highlights that women in

China face unique challenges in the workplace, including traditional gender expectations, work-life imbalance, and limited career advancement opportunities. These challenges often result in lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions compared to their male counterparts. However, organisational support, career development opportunities, and a positive workplace climate can significantly improve job satisfaction and retention for female employees.

Moreover, addressing gender-specific barriers through targeted management practices and policies, such as flexible work arrangements, mentorship programs, and inclusive leadership development initiatives, is essential for fostering an environment where women can thrive professionally. Policymakers also have a crucial role in supporting these efforts through regulations that ensure gender equality in the workplace, promote equal pay, and protect women from discrimination and harassment.

Looking ahead, there is a need for more nuanced research that examines the intersectionality of gender with other demographic factors and explores the long-term effects of organisational interventions on job satisfaction. By continuing to investigate the unique drivers of job satisfaction for Chinese women, researchers and practitioners can develop more effective strategies to support female employees, reduce turnover, and create more equitable and inclusive workplaces. Ultimately, enhancing job satisfaction for women in China will contribute to a more sustainable and diverse workforce, benefiting both organisations and society as a whole.

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