A Study on Influence of Psychological Capital of Chinese University Teachers Upon Job Thriving: Based on Motivational Work Behavior as an Intermediary Variable

Xiaoxia Liu¹, Bei Lyu²,³,⁴,⁵, Jiayu Fan⁶, Shu Yu⁷, Ying Xiong⁸, and Hui Chen⁴

Abstract
With the continuous development of the information process, a series of revolutionary changes are occurring in universities such as knowledge acquisition methods, teaching methods, as well as the relation between teaching and learning, which lead to new and higher requirements for teaching staff. Combining the development requirements of China’s new era, starting from the perspective of capital development in universities, we should discuss the influence of universities teachers’ psychological capital on job thriving. Through the literature, we found that the psychological capital of universities teachers cannot affect the job thriving directly. Therefore, we would try to find an intermediary variable-motivational work behavior and establish an intermediary model to study the relationship between variables. Through the establishment of models, the use of empirical analysis methods, analysis the data from electronic questionnaires, use software analysis, and we reveal the role of university teachers’ psychological capital on the job thriving, and how to improve teachers’ job thriving, the organization brings greater benefits to provide countermeasures and suggestions and provides more new enlightenment for the management of universities.

Keywords
university teachers, psychological capital, job thriving, motivational work behavior, mediating effect

Introduction
Higher education in China has boomed dramatically since the new century; China has proposed a strategy to improve the accessibility of higher education. The Ministry of Education issued “Action Plan for Education Rejuvenation for the 21st Century” in 1999, which marked the prelude to the expansion of China’s higher education (Ministry of Education, 1998). Ascribed to the remarkable increase in enrollment of higher education around 2006, China has overshadowed the United States in terms of the total number of college students and evolved to be the largest body of higher education in the world. By the year of 2009, Chinese universities have experienced a decade of enrollment expansion, during which the number of enrolled students in Chinese universities has increased from 1.59 million in 1999 to 6.29 million in 2009, with the average annual enrollment rate nearly at 30%. The net enrollment rate of higher education has increased from 10.5% to 24.2%. How did the enrollment expansion affect the overall development of Chinese universities? For the quality of university development, has the enrollment expansion imposed other influence than the rising number of college students? Is the...
enrollment expansion inordinately oriented with the simple increase in the number of students, instead of sufficient emphasis on the connotative reformation in the higher education of China? Under constraint from China’s overall personnel system, however, colleges and universities are relatively conservative in employment, easier recruitment than resignation, so the development of talent teams in colleges and universities is not holistically guaranteed. The important mission of higher education is to cultivate talents using high-quality education.

For colleges and universities, talent cultivation is the lever to push up their competitiveness and an accelerator to promote the improvement of their scientific research. Compared with other occupations, teaching in universities and colleges specifically features personality traits, working methods, psychological needs as well as values. Compared with knowledge-based talents at enterprises, university teachers show a stronger sense of self-discipline, with much concentration on challenging tasks, personal improvement, unceasing knowledge acquisition, and constant career development. Based on Maslow’s (1943) demand theory, performance improvement is largely triggered by the self-achievements if personal survival is realized, college teachers are more self-motivated, with wishes to vigorously generate outputs.

At present, colleges and universities are deluged with excessive work pressure. Due to the heavy workload of teaching and scientific research, plus part-time administration tasks, lack of motivation, passion, and interest in work, and even deprived happiness have stemmed from tedious tasks, inordinately long working time, and a string of evaluation indicators, which directly impairs the quality of teaching, innovative talent training, and the level of scientific research. For high-level teachers like professors, our attention must be paid to creating a good working atmosphere for more outputs (Amabile et al., 1996). For young teachers, our emphasis must be placed on material rewards with the provision of larger development scope. Under the current management system of colleges and universities, “return on investment” is still an important indicator that affects managers’ decision making. For university teachers, the standards of high-level benefits still predominate their performance appraisal, and the performance distribution is in connection with the level of a professional title. Colleges and universities are bogged down in such a dilemma; many teachers are snatching at limited quotas of titles. Despite the deficits mentioned above, the awareness of personal care has not been fully taken to individual teachers (Robertson, 2016).

Luthans et al. (2007, 2008, 2010) proposed the concept of Psychological Capital that a positive psychological state is manifested by individuals in the process of growth and development, a core psychological element beyond human capital and social capital, and also a kind of psychological resources for promotion of personal growth and performance improvement. The study on psychological capital shows that psychological capital can promote the job thriving and thus stimulate the development of human potential. The initial research shows that the job thriving can herald the performance of individuals and overshadow effects brought by some common variables like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. From the perspective of nature, the job thriving is also proven to play a vital role in the generation of innovation and innovative ideas (Weick, 2003); it is also found that the job thriving is also related to important personal achievements, such as overall health, burnout, and tension, in addition to the development of the family, community, and social relations. Spreitzer et al. (2005) pointed out that the job thriving is “adaptive, helping individuals to clarify directions and helping change the surrounding environment to promote individual development.” Organization staff assess their job thriving and take appropriate measures to correct and enhance their work vitality and learning ability to promote their development in high-level ways. As both psychological capital and psychological thriving have originated in the West, in the process of introducing practice, it is, of course, adapted to China’s social reality and cultural background when introduced and applied. Given that most of the current research is focused on the corporate sector, there is a lack of more in-depth empirical analysis of relevant research in the field of education. Under the background of specific organizations, how psychological capital and job thriving play a role in the group of college teachers remains to be tested.

**Basic Theory**

**Social Cognitive Theory**

Originated from the Gestalt psychology founded by Wertheimer (1923), the theory holds that a large proportion of the acquired knowledge of humanity is through observing others. This kind of observation is carried out in social communication and social experience, not through educational scenes or media. When people observe the patterns of actions and the results of actions, people remember the sequence of these events and consider that there is a correlation or causality between these events. Observing these behavioral patterns can encourage observers to participate in these behaviors they have learned (Bandura, 1985). People’s learning of various behaviors is not only through their efforts but also through the reaction and understanding of other people’s actions, such as getting rewards or being punished for behaviors; the observer will decide on whether to repeat these actions. Advances in modern media and information technology have made this kind of learning even more important because we have access to more patterns of people’s behaviors in different environments and situations. The theory of social cognition was first proposed by Holt (1931). He
believed that all animals’ behaviors are derived from their physical and psychological needs, such as emotions and desires. Later, Dollard and Miller (1941) revised the view; he believed that human learning comes from the combination of five elements. The five elements are motivation, clues, feedback, rewards, and punishments. In addition to the five elements, there is a driving factor, which is social excitation. Whether the behavior will be imitated is based on the feedback on whether this behavior is positive or negative (Dollard & Miller, 1941). These theories were finally summarized by Albert Bandura. Bandura (2001) introduced social cognition theory into the field of mass media and argued that researchers should use social cognition theory to analyze how symbiotic generality affects human thinking, emotion, and action. The theory shows how psychological factors can spread new behaviors to the whole society and ultimately affects mergers and acquisitions. Bandura (2001) studied how social cognitive processes affect health and demographic factors in their latest research, which in turn affects external environmental factors. In his article, he believes that people’s behavior and perception will be influenced by TV series. The media can show the correct behavior patterns to the audience and then improve social issues in population and health in this way. The model of cognitive theory mainly includes three aspects, namely, ternary interaction determinism, observation learning theory, and self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is the core part and the most important theoretical part of social cognitive theory. According to Bandura’s (1985) theory, people with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to face difficult tasks rather than evade.

**Self-Determination Theory**

The theory of self-determination was initiated by Deci and Ryan (2000). The focus of the theory is to explore the dynamics of human behavior. The theory of self-determination has matured and improved after nearly 40 years of evolution and development. The theory of self-determination always holds the view that the social environment interacting with individual internal resources encourages individuals to develop certain motivations, specific behaviors, and mental states in specific situations. According to the theory of self-determination, individual prosperity as a concept describing the positive psychological state, its production and mechanism, must be the result of the interaction between the social environment and the resources within the individual. Doing extensive literature review, it is found that the researches on the prosperity of individuals are based on the self-determination theory and proposes the idea that different situational factors and individual resources work together or interact to produce job thriving. Therefore, exploring the self-determination theory has an irreplaceable significance for the theoretical foundation of this article.

In summary, the concepts of psychological capital and job thriving were originally proposed in the context of Western culture. In theoretical research, a large proportion of the research is based on the corporate organization. As Chinese culture has special characteristics, and college organizations have unique situational nature compared with general enterprise organizations, it is necessary to continue putting these theories into the context of Chinese university organizations, and to deeply explore the functions of psychological capital, job thriving. Reviewing the existing literature, no research has focused on the role of motivational work behavior as an intermediary variable influencing job thriving through psychological capital.

**Basic Assumption**

**Theoretical Hypothesis**

Psychological capital includes hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans & Youssef, 2007) and confirmed that psychological capital belongs to the second-order core concept both conceptually and empirically later on. The role of the core structure prediction of psychological capital as a whole concept goes far beyond its four separate components (Dawkins et al., 2013; Luthans et al., 2007). Luthans et al. (2007) stated that psychological capital is “based on positive impacts and evaluations and with active efforts, persevering in success and overcoming difficulties.” A recent data analysis has shown that it has a major impact on the required work attitude, work behavior, and job performance (Avey et al., 2011). “Positive evaluation” also stimulates motivational work behavior. When the staff considers whether to focus on task performance, the most decisive factor is the perceived possibility of successful completion of the task. Those with high levels of psychological capital believe that they can succeed in task completion (efficacy), they use goal-oriented behaviors and abilities to actively plan tasks they believed that they can accomplish task performance (hope), in the face of difficulties (tenacity), and they always maintain a positive and optimistic attitude toward work and the environment (optimism). The combination of these factors makes it possible for employees with high levels of psychological capital to be more likely to focus on tasks because they expect to do so and expect achievements.

Bandura (2001) also pointed out that for individuals to contribute to the collective, individuals must understand how their contributions are expressed in the collective and are willing to obey the affiliation (i.e., related concerns) for the benefit of the group. Individuals must recognize that doing so will have positive outcomes or benefits for their work or performance. The four components of psychological capital will all play a role in this, but self-efficacy seems to be particularly important in comprehensive capabilities. Bandura (2001) also confirmed in empirical research that “a high degree of self-efficacy can effectively promote the formation of prosociality, and each member will benefit from each
other, and the collective will also receive corresponding positive results.” Therefore, we derive the following research hypothesis (Model 1):

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Psychological capital has a positive impact on motivational work behavior.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Psychological capital is relevant to job thriving.

According to the research by Ted et al. (2013), psychological capital is connected with job thriving through two dimensions: task focus and relevance focus. Psychological capital includes hope, self-efficacy, endurance, and optimism (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007), and is conceptually and empirically proven to be a second-order core construct. Luthans et al. (2007) pointed out that psychological capital is a positive behavior, and in subsequent empirical models, it was confirmed that mental capital has a work attitude, behavior, performance (Avey et al., 2011), and influences. This “positive evaluation” also affects the setting of agentic work behaviors. When employees consider whether they are fully focused on or focus on task performance, the key determinant may be the possibility to complete the task-psychological capital. People with higher levels believe that they can complete tasks (self-efficacy), use goal-oriented energy, and proactively plan tasks to find ways and means to complete tasks (hopefully). When in the face of difficulties (endurance), they can persist in evaluating self-motivation and eliminating negative factors (optimistic). By combining these factors, people with higher levels of psychological capital are more active at the focus level of the task because they expect results and complete the task. Also, if individuals want to contribute to the collective, they must understand that individual contributions represent the collective and obey the interests of the collective. Individuals must realize that doing so will bring positive results to them. The four components of psychological capital will play a role in this, but self-efficacy is particularly important in collaborative efforts. Bandura (2001) summarizes empirical evidence of self-efficacy that “a high sense of efficacy fosters a pro-social orientation through cooperation, helping others, and sharing, and has a vested interest in reciprocity.”

Bandura (2001) showed that when individuals’ behaviors are more motivated, employees will control their behavior consciously and purposefully. This kind of intentional, self-directed behavior is more likely to bring a sense of vitality and active learning to the work, and people usually take the initiative to generate such behavior (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Bandura (2001) also pointed out that people are a human being because they can control the nature and quality of life, and they will be linked to the enthusiasm and vitality of life which is intrinsic vitality nature. Those who can actively self-direct and work autonomously will be more likely to experience learning at work because they are more willing to find new ways to do work rather than just “do as required.”

In our research model, we focus on two types of motivational work behaviors proposed by Spreitzer et al. (2005): task focus and related concerns. Based on the theoretical basis, the following assumptions are made (Figure 1):

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Motivational work behavior has a positive impact on job thriving.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Motivation work acts as an intermediary between psychological capital and job thriving.

**Research Method**

To ensure that the survey question has high reliability and validity, the variables involved in this study are based on existing mature scales and are revised based on these scales. The psychological capital scale is based on the psychological capital questionnaire developed by Luthans et al. (2010), which consists of four dimensions: self-confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience. Each dimension includes six items.
Motivational work behavior is based on Rothbard (2001). Four questions are used to evaluate the focus of the task measuring the focus of the work. For related concerns, we use a scale developed by Bijlsma Frankema et al. (2005), which consists of five items. The job thriving scale combines the 16 questions proposed by Porath et al. (2012), with four dimensions including learning, initiative, vitality, and responsibility. These four dimensions were proposed by Hui et al. (2014) after a survey with a large sample, including 16 items.

**Samples and procedures.** In this research, Chinese colleges and universities are taken as a sample source, and the in-service teachers at colleges and universities are the research subject in consideration of the research and teaching tasks. The universities participating in the survey mainly include Fuyang Teachers’ College, Anhui University, Anhui Medical University, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, University of Science and Technology of China, Institute of Electronic Engineering of the People’s Liberation Army, Hefei University, Hefei University of Technology, Dalian Medical University, Xinjiang University, Lanzhou University, Guangxi University, Guilin University of Electronic Science and Technology, Baise University, Xiamen University, Quanzhou Normal University, Zhejiang Normal University, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics, China Jiliang University, Zhejiang University of Science and Technology, Hangzhou Dianzi University, Zhejiang Ocean University, Zhejiang Institute of Communications, Zhejiang University, Zhejiang University of Technology, Jiangsu Normal University, Nanjing Audit University, Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, Shanghai University, East China University of Science and Technology, Beijing Jiaotong University, Heilongjiang Polytechnic, University of Sanya, Sanya Institute of Technology, and Guangdong College of Hotel Management. The questionnaire was distributed electronically, covering the Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern, and Central regions. A total of 600 questionnaires were issued, with 519 questionnaires returned. The samples are all valid.

Among the subjects in this survey, males accounted for 43.7% and females 56.3%; teachers under 30 years old accounted for 9.2%, teachers aged 30 to 40 years old accounted for 59.2%, teachers aged 41 to 50 years old accounted for 22.9%, and teachers over 50 years old accounted for 8.7%; teachers working for less than 5 years take up 16.0%, 5 to 10 years is 24.3%, 11 to 20 years is 41.0%, and more than 20 years is 18.7%. Teaching assistants share 13.7%, lecturers 49.5%, associate professors 27%, professors 9.8%, and the teachers who hold management posts account for 14.1%, those only on technical positions 65.5%, and those on positions of both management and technical titles 20.4%. Among individual subjects, 41.3% are in majors of literature and history, 50.2% in science and engineering, and 8.5% in arts. For universities participating in the survey, comprehensive universities account for 29.7%, universities of science and technology 16.05%, universities of finance and economics 12.5%, normal universities 22.0%, universities of languages 0.4%, universities of political science and law 0.6%, military universities 3.3%, universities of agriculture and forestry 1.3%, medical universities 10.8%, universities of art 2.7%, and universities of sports 0.8%; the percentage of teachers at ordinary undergraduate universities is 67.1%, those at universities in “211” or “985” plans 21.6%, and those at junior colleges 11.4%. The majority of teachers have acquired a master’s degree, accounting for 83.4%.

**Measurement of variable.** The corrected item-total correlation (CITC) values of all items in the self-efficacy dimension of the Psychological Capital Scale are greater than 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .859, which meets the criterion of greater than 0.7, and thus, all measurement items in the self-efficacy dimension are retained; the CITC values of all items in the endurance dimension are above 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .917, which meets the criterion of greater than 0.7, so all the measurement items in the endurance dimension are retained; and the CITC values of all items in the optimistic dimension are greater than 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .825, which meets the criterion of greater than 0.7. Therefore, all measurement items in the dimension of optimism are retained. The overall Cronbach’s alpha value in the scale of psychological capital is .933, indicating that the internal reliability of the scale is very high.

The task focus dimension of the motivational work behavior scale has a CITC value greater than 0.5 for all items, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .842, which meets the criteria greater than 0.7, and thus, all measurement items in the dimension of task focus are retained. The CITC values of related items in the dimension of interest are all greater than 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .918, which meets the criteria of greater than 0.7, so all items in the relevant dimension of interest are retained. The overall Cronbach’s alpha value in the scale of motivational work behavior is .882, indicating good internal reliability.

In the scale of job thriving, the CITC values of all items in the dimension of aggressive learning are greater than 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .823, which meets the criteria greater than 0.7, so all measurement items in this dimension are retained; all CITC values of all items in the dimension of responsibility are greater than 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .909, which meets the criterion of greater than 0.7, so all measurement items in this dimension are retained. The CITC values of all items in the dimension of vitality are greater than 0.5, and the overall Cronbach’s alpha value is .808. The overall Cronbach’s alpha value in the scale of job thriving is .831, indicating that the internal reliability is good.

**Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing**

To analyze the data from electronic questionnaires, the analysis is undertaken on the correlation between motivational work behavior and psychological capital, and between motivational work behavior and job performance, to determine the
SAGE Open

Correlation between psychological capital and motivational work behavior. The analysis comprises the test of the correlation of variables as a whole, and the study on the three dimensions of psychological capital (confidence, optimism, resilience; the dimension of hope is purified in the pre-investigation) and the related strength between the two dimensions of the motivational work behavior (task focus, related concerns).

**Correlation analysis between psychological capital and work behavior.** The result of correlation analysis between psychological capital and three dimensions (confidence, optimism, resilience; the dimension of hope is purified in the pre-investigation) and between motivational work behavior and two dimensions (task focus, related concerns) is shown in Table 1.

As can be seen from Table 1, there is a significant correlation between psychological capital and motivational work behavior. Among them, self-confidence, optimism, and resilience are positively correlated with task focus and related concerns.

**Correlation analysis between motivational work behavior and job thriving.** The result of correlation analysis between motivational work behavior and two dimensions (task focus, related concern) and job thriving and three dimensions (learning, responsibility, vitality) is shown in Table 2.

As can be seen from Table 2, there is a significant correlation between motivational work behavior and work prosperity, among which task focus, related attention and learning, and responsibility and vitality are significantly correlated.

**The intermediary role of motivational work behavior in the influence of psychological capital on job thriving.** Construct the structure model chart and test the intermediary role of the whole of motivation work behavior in the relationship between the whole of psychological capital and job thriving. The fitting results show that the model has a relatively ideal fitness (as shown in Table 3). The $\chi^2/df$ value is 3.109, which is less than the standard value of 5. Therefore, the original hypothesis is accepted; the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.064, less than the standard value of 0.08; the values of normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) are all between 0 and 1, the value of 1 indicates that the model is fully fitted, and the values of this structural model are all close to 1, indicating that the model has a good fit; the values of goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) are greater than the standard value of 0.8, indicating that the actual data and the theoretical model have a good fit.

Path coefficient statistics through the structure model are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 1. Spearman’s Correlation Analysis.**

|                   | Psychology capital | Self-confidence | Endurance | Optimism | Working behavior | Task focus | Related concern | Working thriving | Study | Responsibility | Vital |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Self-confidence   | .808***            | 1.000           |           |          |                 |            |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| endurance         | .921***            | .668***         | 1.000     |          |                 |            |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| Optimism          | .843***            | .512***         | .695***   | 1.000    |                 |            |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| Working behavior  | .565***            | .454***         | .542***   | .486***  | .846***         | 1.000     |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| Task focus        | .466***            | .417***         | .430***   | .387***  | .844***         | 1.000     |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| Related concern   | .509***            | .380***         | .502***   | .447***  | .852***         | .465***   | 1.000           |                 |       |                 |       |

**Table 2. Analysis of Correlation Between Motivational Work Behavior and Job Thriving.**

|                   | Working behavior | Task focus | Related concern | Working thriving | Study | Responsibility | Vital |
|-------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Working behavior  | 1.000            |            |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| Task focus        | .844***          | 1.000      |                 |                 |       |                 |       |
| Related concern   | .852***          | .465***    | 1.000           |                 |       |                 |       |
| Work thriving     | .545***          | .492***    | .447***         | 1.000           |       |                 |       |
| Study             | .443***          | .413***    | .342***         | .850***         | 1.000 |                 |       |
| Responsibility    | .400***          | .311***    | .401***         | .613***         | .330**| 1.000           |       |
| Vital             | .415***          | .396***    | .327***         | .751***         | .411**| .374**          | 1.000 |
Table 3. Motivational Work Behavior as a Whole Examines the Intermediary Role Between the Overall Psychological Capital and the Prosperous Relationship.

| $\chi^2/df$ | RMSEA | GFI   | AGFI  | NFI   | IFI   | TLI   | CFI   |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 3.109       | 0.064 | 0.853 | 0.827 | 0.888 | 0.921 | 0.912 | 0.921 |

Note. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index, IFI = incremental fit index, TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index.

Table 4. Structure Model.

| Nonstandard parameters | SE   | CR     | p     | Standard-parameters |
|------------------------|------|--------|-------|---------------------|
| Working behavior      | 0.738| 0.074  | 9.991 | 0.794               |
| Working thriving       | 0.861| 0.182  | 4.720 | 0.782               |
| Working thriving       | 0.179| 0.136  | 1.315 | 0.175               |
| Self-efficiency        | 1.000|        |       | 0.799               |
| Endurance              | 1.136| 0.077  | 14.836| 0.927               |
| Optimism               | 1.174| 0.081  | 14.462| 0.843               |
| Task focus             | 1.000|        |       | 0.725               |
| Related concern        | 0.932| 0.097  | 9.569 | 0.688               |
| Study                  | 1.000|        |       | 0.753               |
| Responsibility         | 0.662| 0.063  | 10.555| 0.635               |
| Vital                  | 0.890| 0.088  | 10.069| 0.721               |
| CO4                    | 1.000|        |       | 0.828               |
| CO3                    | 0.988| 0.051  | 19.511| 0.777               |
| CO2                    | 1.171| 0.054  | 21.565| 0.840               |
| CO1                    | 0.713| 0.043  | 16.704| 0.688               |
| TO6                    | 1.000|        |       | 0.792               |
| TO5                    | 0.946| 0.048  | 19.836| 0.789               |
| TO4                    | 0.980| 0.050  | 19.698| 0.784               |
| TO3                    | 0.932| 0.044  | 21.278| 0.832               |
| TO2                    | 0.955| 0.043  | 22.327| 0.862               |
| TO1                    | 0.926| 0.047  | 19.850| 0.789               |
| OP4                    | 1.000|        |       | 0.829               |
| OP3                    | 1.126| 0.047  | 23.933| 0.907               |
| OP2                    | 0.746| 0.048  | 15.568| 0.642               |
| OP1                    | 0.618| 0.048  | 12.971| 0.552               |
| HR1                    | 1.000|        |       | 0.720               |
| HR2                    | 1.137| 0.059  | 19.164| 0.860               |
| HR3                    | 1.093| 0.059  | 18.564| 0.833               |
| HR4                    | 1.161| 0.059  | 19.710| 0.885               |
| HR5                    | 1.121| 0.058  | 19.254| 0.864               |
| AT1                    | 1.000|        |       | 0.671               |
| AT2                    | 1.316| 0.085  | 15.462| 0.775               |
| AT3                    | 1.394| 0.082  | 17.087| 0.915               |
| AT4                    | 1.200| 0.086  | 13.908| 0.685               |
| A3                     | 1.000|        |       | 0.843               |
| A2                     | 0.917| 0.056  | 16.472| 0.710               |
| A1                     | 0.842| 0.045  | 18.521| 0.799               |
| B2                     | 1.029| 0.051  | 20.247| 0.941               |
| B1                     | 1.000|        |       | 0.885               |
| B3                     | 1.000|        |       | 0.743               |
| B4                     | 1.085| 0.075  | 14.452| 0.912               |
behavior plays as an intermediary between psychological capital and job thriving. At the same time, according to the path coefficient analysis and the above correlation analysis, the hypothesis is verified. H1: Psychological capital has a positive impact on the motivational work behavior. H3: The motivational work behavior has a positive impact on the job thriving.

To further verify the mediating role of motivational work behavior between psychological capital and job thriving, it is part of the intermediary or complete intermediary. This article analyzes the bootstrap in AMOS to further test whether the mediating effect of motivational work behavior is significant (Table 5), determining the mediation effect.

Based on the results of the bootstrap analysis with significant mediating effect in the above table, 95% confidence interval of the total effect does not include 0, indicating that the total effect exists, and the mediation model is meaningful; 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect does not include 0, indicating the existence of indirect effects; 95% confidence interval for the effect includes 0, indicating that the direct effect does not exist. The indirect effect exists and the direct effect does not exist, indicating that this model is fully intermediary.

### Discussion

The purpose of this research is to test how psychological capital affects job thriving of university teachers. The research also further tests that individual motivational work behaviors play a mediating role between psychological capital and job thriving. The study found that there is a significant positive correlation between psychological capital and motivational work behavior. These findings are consistent with previous studies. Luthans et al. (2007) stated that psychological capital is “based on positive influence and evaluation, as well as perseverance and success in the case of active efforts, and the ability to overcome difficulties,” and Avey et al. (2011) pointed out that there is a significant positive correlation between psychological capital and required work attitudes, work behaviors, and work performance. From the path analysis of the model, psychological capital positively affects motivational work behavior at a significance level of $p < .001$, and the path coefficient is 0.794, indicating that university teachers will show more motivational work behavior in the case of higher levels of psychological capital. The results of the study show that when staff considers whether to fully pay attention and focus on task performance, the most important factor is the perceived likelihood of completing the task (Francisco et al., 2020). Those with a high level of psychological capital, we believe that they can achieve success in task completion, using goal-oriented behaviors and abilities to actively plan tasks, and they believe that they can complete the task performance, and when faced with difficulties, they always maintain a positive and optimistic attitude toward work and the environment.

Besides, there is a significant positive correlation between motivational work behavior and work prosperity, which is also in line with the research results of previous scholars. Bandura (2001) showed that when individual behavior is more motivational, employees control their behavior consciously and purposefully. This kind of intentional, self-directed behavior is more likely to bring vitality and awareness of active learning at work, which people will actively produce (Spreitzer et al., 2012). From the path analysis, the path parameter between motivational work behavior and work prosperity is 0.782, which also supports the establishment of this hypothesis (Sehrish & Michael, 2019). The results of the study show that those who can actively self-direct and work voluntarily at work are also more likely to experience learning at work, for they are more willing to find new methods or approaches to solve the problem.

Through theoretical argumentation and data analysis, combined with the path coefficient, the coefficient of the relationship between psychological capital and work prosperity is 0.189, which is not significant, and they do not have a direct impact. Motivational work behavior plays a mediating role between them and is completely intermediary; the psychological capital of university teachers cannot directly affect job thriving of university teachers. According to the previous research (Anastasia & Pawan, 2010) and the combination of related theories (Muhammad et al., 2019), psychological capital should have an influence on job thriving through motivational work behaviors, and the theoretical model has also been confirmed. This conclusion is unique in that it mainly uses empirical methods to prove that psychological capital affects the job thriving of university teachers and reveals that the psychological capital has a positive effect on job thriving, which is useful for the future development and cultivation of teachers’ psychological capital in China.

### Table 5. Bootstrap.

| Path                          | Effect | Effect estimation | 95% confidence interval | Intermediary judgment |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Psychological capital–working behavior–working thriving | Overall | 0.794             | 0.699 Online 0.878 Offline | .000 Fully |
|                              | Direct | 0.175             | -0.359 Online 0.420 Offline | .359 intermediary |
|                              | Indirect | 0.621           | 0.405 Online 1.197 Offline | .001 |

[8] SAGE Open

[95% confidence interval]
Conclusion

The effect of psychological capital on motivational results shows that psychological capital positively affects motivational work behavior at a significant level of $p < .001$, with a path coefficient of 0.794, indicating in case that college teachers have higher levels of psychological capital, there will be more motivational work behavior. Specifically, psychological capital not only positively affects the task focus (path coefficient is 0.725, $p < .001$) but also positively affects related concerns (path coefficient is 0.688, $p < .001$). The path coefficient of the dynamic work behavior to the prosperous work is 0.861. It is further found that the confidence and optimistic dimensions of psychological capital have a significant positive impact on the innovation behavior at the $p < .001$ significance level, and the path coefficients are 0.388 and 0.350, respectively. On this basis, an in-depth analysis of the impact of the various dimensions of psychological capital on the two dimensions of the motivational work behavior (task focus and related concerns) was carried out. Through theoretical demonstration and data analysis, it is concluded that there is a significant correlation between psychological capital, motivational work behavior, and job thriving. Psychological capital cannot directly affect the job thriving, and motivational work behavior plays a fully mediating role. The conclusions of this article reveal the important contribution of psychological capital and various dimensions to the job thriving and give a new paradigm for the stimulation and promotion of the job thrive.

Implications of the Research

Developing new selection proposals for job candidates. Regarding the work environment, Chinese universities share something in common with enterprises despite differences between the two: competition for taking on positions. Psychological capital evaluation could be appropriately added to written tests and interviews. Furthermore, the influences imposed by psychological capital upon dimensions of work performance are varying with dimensions of psychological capital; so to find more right staff, when recruiting for, it is necessary to assess different focuses in the psychological capital of candidates during different job recruitments.

Carrying out consistent psychological capital training carried out to promote the job thriving of teachers. To improve the professional quality and work efficiency of knowledge workers, the introduction of psychological capital training can promote the improvement of work performance. Psychological capital is an individual characteristic similar to the state and can be induced and developed. Therefore, carrying out the ongoing psychological capital training will inevitably help knowledge workers to carry out self-psychological funding. This positioning and enhancement will enable you to better develop your work potential and provide high-quality work services to your organization.

Creating an organizational culture that values the development of psychological capital. To preserve the vitality and passion of college teachers for a long time and develop their sense of self-efficacy, hope, and optimism, they must constantly inculcate the organizational culture of positive intellectual capital with such knowledge organization members. Only in a harmonious, uplifting, unyielding cultural environment can we cultivate faculty and staff who are motivated, daring, confident, and hopeful for the future, and can only create high job performance when the organization has such a group of employees.

Establishing a goal-oriented performance management model. The cultivation of self-efficacy of college teachers requires the same goal as the employees of the enterprise. Only by constantly practicing and achieving success under the guidance of the goal can the self-efficacy be continuously sublimated. Therefore, the goal management of teacher efficacy can give them more space to play and enhance, and thus promote job thriving to make their work have more motivated and creative.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The study is supported by Special Key Project for University Counselors (No. 2020FDY02ZD).

ORCID iD

Bei Lyu https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7023-6009

References

Amabile, T. M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Lazenby, J., & Herron, M. (1996). Assessing the work environment for creativity. Academy of Management Journal, 39, 1154–1184. https://doi.org/10.2307/256995

Anastasia, A. K., & Pawan, S. B. (2010). Causal relationship between HRM policies and organisational performance: Evidence from the Greek manufacturing sector. European Management Journal, 28(1), 25–39. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2009.06.001

Avey, J. B., Reichard, R. J., Luthans, F., & Mhatre, K. H. (2011). Meta-analysis of the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 22(2), 127–152. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.20070
Bandura, A. (1985). Prentice-Hall series in social learning theory. Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Prentice Hall. https://doi.org/10.2307/258004

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. Annual Review Psychology, 52, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1

Bijlsma Frankema, K. M., Rosendaal, B. W., & Van de Bunt, G. G. (2005). Does trust breed heed? Differential effects of trust on heed and performance in a network and a divisional form of organizing. In K. M. Bijlsma Frankema & R. J. A. Klein Woolthuis (Eds.), Trust under pressure: Empirical investigations of trust and trust building in uncertain circumstances (pp. 206–233). https://doi.org/10.4337/9781845427962.00015

Dawkins, S., Martin, A., Scott, J., & Sanderson, K. (2013). Building the positives: A psychometric review and critical analysis of the construct of Psychological Capital. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 86(3), 348–370. https://doi.org/10.1111/joosp.12007

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. Psychological Inquiry, 11, 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327966PI1104_01

Dollard, J., & Miller, N. (1941). Social learning and imitation. Yale University Press.

Francisco, R. C., Adrián, S. C., Cristina, G. A., & Gabriela, T. (2020). The mediating role of psychological capital between motivational orientations and their organizational consequences. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(13), 4864. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17134864

Holt, E. (1931). Animal drive and the learning process: An essay toward radical empiricism (Vol. 1). Henry Holt. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232567164_Animal_drive_and_the_learning_proc-ess_A_n_essay_toward_radical_empiricism

Hui, Q. S., Lou, L., & Cao, X. S. (2014). Research of employee psychological capital structure under the background of Chinese culture. International Business Research, 7(7), 175. http://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v7n7p175

Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., & Peterson, S. J. (2010). The development and resulting performance impact of positive psychological capital. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 21(1), 41–67. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.20034

Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Norman, S. M. (2007). Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. Personnel Psychology, 60(3), 541–572. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00083.x

Luthans, F., Norman, S. M., Avolio, B. J., & Avey, J. B. (2008). The mediating role of psychological capital in the supportive organizational climate-employee performance relationship. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 29(2), 219–238. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.507

Luthans, F., & Youssef, C. M. (2007). Emerging positive organizational behavior. Journal of Management, 33, 321–349. https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063073000814

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review, 50(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Ministry of Education. (1998). Action plan for education rejuvenation for the 21st century. Beijing Normal University Press. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_177/tnull_2487.html

Muhammad, W. A. N. R., Mahdani, I., & Saiful, B. (2019). The practice of work culture, suitability of tasks, leadership style that has an impact on performance: The role of job satisfaction as mediating. International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science, 8(4), 114–123. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v8i4.277

Porath, C., Spreitzer, G., Gibson, C., & Garnett, F. G. (2012). Thriving at work: Toward its measurement, construct validation, and theoretical refinement. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 33(2), 250–275. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.756

Robertson, S. L. (2016). Piketty, capital and education: A solution to, or problem in, rising social inequalities? British Journal of Sociology of Education, 37(6), 823–835. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2016.1165086

Rothbard, N. P. (2001). Enriching or depleting? The dynamics of engagement in work and family roles. Administrative Science Quarterly, 46, 655–684. http://doi.org/10.2307/3094827

Sehrish, S., & Michael, K. M. (2019). Positivity at the workplace: Conceptualising the relationships between authentic leadership, psychological capital, organisational virtuousness, thriving and job performance. International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 27(3), 494–523. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-05-2017-1167

Spreitzer, G., Porath, C. L., & Gibson, C. B. (2012). Toward human sustainability: How to enable more thriving at work. Organizational Dynamics, 41(2), 155–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2012.01.009

Spreitzer, G., Sutcliffe, K., Dutton, J., Sonenshein, S., & Grant, A. M. (2005). A socially embedded model of thriving at work. Organization Science, 16(5), 537–549. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0153

Ted, A. P., Luthans, F., & Wonho, J. (2013). Thriving at work: Impact of psychological capital and supervisor support. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 35(3), 434–446. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1907

Weick, K. E. (2003). Organizational design and the Gehry experience. Journal of Management Inquiry, 12(1), 93–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492602250523

Wertheimer, M. (1923). Investigations on the theory of shape, Toward radical empiricism. International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 2017-1167

Sage Open