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Career Development and Turnover Intention among Private University Faculty: The Moderating Role of Extrinsic Work Values

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Abstract. Although faculty turnover has become a persistent challenge in private higher education, limited research has examined how organizational development practices are associated with turnover intention under different individual value orientations. Grounded in social exchange theory (SET), this study examines the relationship between career development and turnover intention among faculty members in private undergraduate universities in Guangdong, China, with particular attention to the moderating role of extrinsic work values. A quantitative survey design was employed, drawing on data from 498 faculty members, analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), including latent interaction modeling to assess moderation effects. The findings show that career development was negatively associated with turnover intention ($\beta = -0.24$, $p < .001$), whereas extrinsic work values were positively associated with turnover intention ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < .001$). In addition, a significant interaction effect ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$) indicated that the negative relationship between career development and turnover intention became weaker among faculty members who placed greater emphasis on extrinsic rewards. Although the cross-sectional design and the focus on one province limit generalizability, this study applies SET to examine how value orientations condition responses to developmental resources. The findings suggest that career development may be more meaningful when supported by transparent promotion systems, visible extrinsic rewards,

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stable employment conditions, and ongoing communication in market-oriented private higher education contexts.

Keywords: Career Development; Turnover Intention; Extrinsic Work Values; Chinese Higher Education; Social Exchange Theory

1. Introduction

Retaining qualified faculty has become an increasingly important challenge for private universities, particularly in middle-income countries seeking to strengthen human capital in a knowledge-based economy. China provides a notable example of this trend. Having entered the stage of universal access to higher education, China's private institutions now account for more than one-quarter of all higher education institutions nationwide (Ministry of Education of China, 2024). Although these institutions depend heavily on student enrollment for financial sustainability, their long-term development also relies on their ability to maintain a stable and professional faculty workforce.

Faculty turnover is a major concern in private higher education. Compared with public universities, private institutions often face tighter resource constraints, stronger market pressures, and more uncertain employment conditions (Richter et al., 2020). Turnover intention has therefore attracted growing attention as an indicator of dissatisfaction and psychological disengagement from work (Weinstein et al., 2023). High turnover can disrupt teaching continuity, weaken research capacity, and create substantial costs through repeated recruitment and training (Mather & Bam, 2025; Verma & Kaur, 2024; Yin et al., 2024). This issue is especially salient in Guangdong Province, where the rapid expansion of private higher education has intensified competition for qualified faculty. Recent research highlights that teacher recruitment and retention remain critical challenges for education systems worldwide, underscoring the need for effective retention strategies (Liu & Li, 2025).

Among the factors associated with faculty turnover, career development has been widely recognized as an important retention-related resource. Faculty members are more likely to remain in institutions that provide meaningful opportunities for advancement, skill development, and long-term professional growth. However, faculty in private universities often report limited promotion pathways and insufficient institutional support for career progression. Such constraints may reduce job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thereby increasing turnover intention (Bull et al., 2025). This study draws on social exchange theory (SET) to explain this relationship. SET views the employment relationship as a process of reciprocal exchange in which employees contribute time, effort, and skills in return for organizational rewards and support (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

From this perspective, career development can be understood as a form of organizational investment that may strengthen employees' attachment to the institution. However, the effects of such investment may not be the same for all faculty members. Extrinsic work values, which refer to the importance individuals

place on salary, status, job security, and external recognition, may shape how career development opportunities are interpreted and evaluated (Niemiec, 2023). Faculty with stronger extrinsic work values may place greater emphasis on immediate and visible returns, which suggests that extrinsic work values may moderate the relationship between career development and turnover intention. Despite growing interest in faculty turnover, several gaps remain in regard to private higher education in China.

First, although career development is often discussed as an important retention-related factor, relatively few studies have examined its relationship with turnover intention in Chinese private universities through an SET-based framework. Second, limited attention has been paid to the moderating role of extrinsic work values, leaving insufficient understanding of whether and for whom career development initiatives are most effective (Busque-Carrier et al., 2022). Third, existing studies provide only limited guidance for developing differentiated retention strategies that take individual differences into account.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between career development and turnover intention among faculty at private universities in Guangdong and tests whether extrinsic work values moderate this relationship within the framework of SET. The study has three implications. First, it applies SET to examine how career development is associated with turnover intention and whether this relationship varies according to faculty members' extrinsic work values. Second, it provides contextual evidence from Chinese private universities, a market-oriented higher education setting characterized by strong competitive pressures and relatively limited employment stability. Third, it offers practical implications for developing more differentiated faculty retention strategies in private higher education environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

This study is grounded in social exchange theory (SET), which explains employee attitudes and behaviors as responses to perceived reciprocity within the employment relationship (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In higher education settings, faculty members contribute knowledge, time, professional expertise, and emotional effort, while institutions provide both tangible and intangible returns, including compensation, recognition, support, and opportunities for professional growth (Ahmad et al., 2023; Tsai & Kang, 2019).

From an SET perspective, retention-related attitudes are shaped by how employees evaluate the balance between what they contribute and what they receive. When organizational support is perceived as meaningful and commensurate with employees' efforts, positive exchange evaluations are more likely to emerge; when expected returns are seen as insufficient, withdrawal tendencies may increase.

Within this exchange logic, career development can be understood as an important organizational investment that signals long-term support and future value. When organizations provide growth opportunities, recognize contributions, and support skill development, employees are more likely to perceive the exchange relationship positively, which can strengthen commitment and reduce turnover intention (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Hasaniyah et al., 2022). Conversely, when development opportunities are limited or fail to meet expectations, employees may perceive an imbalance in the exchange relationship, which can contribute to stronger turnover intention (Liu et al., 2023).

Although other perspectives, such as self-determination theory, person-organization fit theory, and employability theory, may also offer useful insights, in that they emphasize different explanatory mechanisms. By contrast, the central concern of this study is how faculty interpret organizational investment in career development and how such interpretations shape retention-related responses. For this reason, SET provides the most appropriate primary framework for explaining the relationship between career development and turnover intention, as well as the moderating role of extrinsic work values in this process.

2.2 Career Development and Turnover Intention

Career development refers to employees' perceptions of their opportunities for advancement, skill acquisition, and professional growth within an organization (Pham, 2021). In academic settings, it is typically reflected in opportunities to improve teaching capability, enhance research performance, gain professional recognition, and progress in academic rank. Prior research suggests that career development functions as an important organizational resource because it signals long-term investment in employees and strengthens expectations of future returns (Aishath et al., 2021). In higher education contexts, development-related support has also been associated with stronger organizational commitment, greater job satisfaction, and lower turnover intention (Anog et al., 2024; Deas & Coetzee, 2020; Räsänen et al., 2020).

From a social exchange theory perspective, career development can be understood as a form of organizational investment that shapes how employees evaluate the exchange relationship. When institutions provide training, promotion pathways, and opportunities for professional growth, employees are more likely to interpret these provisions as evidence of organizational support, which can strengthen attachment to the organization and reduce turnover intention (Sartori et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). By contrast, when development opportunities are limited, delayed, or uncertain, employees may perceive an imbalance between what they contribute and what they receive, thereby increasing turnover intention.

This logic may be particularly relevant in private higher education, where heavy work demands and limited long-term support for career progression can weaken the retention value of development opportunities (Sibisi & Sibisi, 2024). Nevertheless, career development is likely to remain an important retention-related resource because it addresses faculty members' expectations for future

advancement and professional recognition. When universities provide clearer growth pathways and more substantial developmental support, faculty are more likely to perceive the employment relationship as worthwhile and to remain with the institution. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Career development is negatively related to turnover intention.

2.3 Extrinsic Work Values and Turnover Intention

Extrinsic work values refer to the importance individuals attach to external rewards derived from work, such as salary, job security, status, and formal recognition (Ros et al., 1999). In contrast to intrinsic work values, which emphasize personal growth, interest, and self-fulfillment, extrinsic work values are more strongly oriented toward tangible and socially visible outcomes. This distinction is important because employees differ not only in what they receive from work, but also in the kinds of rewards they consider most meaningful. Faculty members with stronger extrinsic work values are therefore more likely to evaluate career success in terms of material return promotion opportunities, employment stability, and institutional recognition.

From a social exchange theory perspective, extrinsic work values shape how employees interpret the returns they receive from their organization. Individuals who place greater emphasis on external rewards are more likely to evaluate the employment relationship through a transactional lens, giving greater weight to immediate, visible, and concrete returns for their time and effort (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When such rewards are perceived as insufficient, delayed, or uncertain, the exchange relationship may be judged less favorably, which can increase turnover intention (Aljbour et al., 2024; Prechsl, 2025).

This logic may be particularly relevant in contexts where salary, promotion opportunities, and employment security are salient concerns. Under such conditions, faculty with stronger extrinsic work values may be more sensitive to perceived shortcomings in tangible and externally visible returns and may therefore be more inclined to consider alternative employment. Taking together, these arguments suggest that stronger extrinsic work values are likely to be associated with higher turnover intention. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Extrinsic work values are positively related to turnover intention.

2.4 The Moderating Role of Extrinsic Work Values

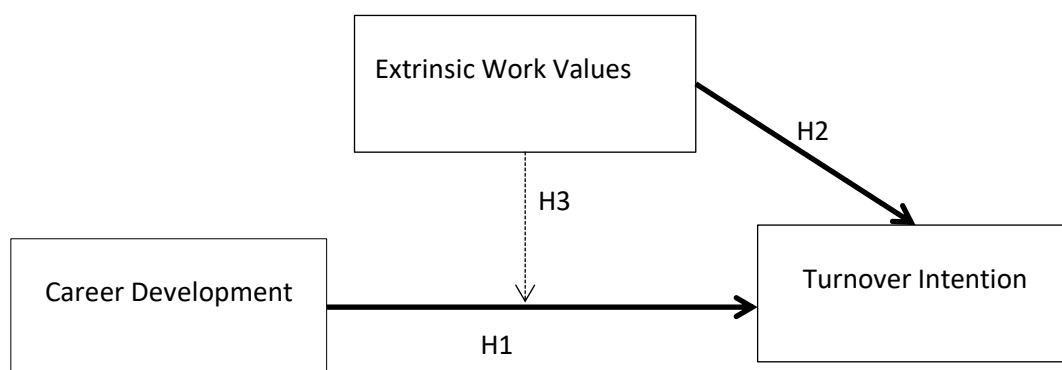
Social exchange theory further suggests that the effects of organizational resources depend not only on what is provided, but also on how those resources are interpreted by employees. In this sense, value orientations may operate as boundary conditions because they shape the criteria employees use to evaluate whether the organization is offering a meaningful return for their contributions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Applied to the present study, faculty with strong extrinsic work values may perceive career development opportunities as weaker substitutes for more tangible and immediate returns, such as compensation and employment security. As a result, career development may be less effective in reducing turnover intention among these individuals.

In addition, career development may enhance perceived external employability, which could further weaken its retention effect within the current institution (Baranchenko et al., 2020; Saufi et al., 2023). For faculty who are more strongly oriented toward external and visible career rewards, development support may therefore function less as a retention signal and more as a resource that increases confidence in pursuing alternative opportunities. Taken together, these arguments suggest that extrinsic work values weaken the negative relationship between career development and turnover intention. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Extrinsic work values moderate the relationship between career development and turnover intention, such that the negative relationship is weaker when extrinsic work values are high.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study. Grounded in social exchange theory, the model specifies career development as the focal organizational resource, turnover intention as the outcome variable, and extrinsic work values as both an independent predictor and a moderating condition. Specifically, the framework proposes that career development is negatively associated with turnover intention, that extrinsic work values are positively associated with turnover intention, and weaken the negative relationship between career development and turnover intention.



Note: Solid lines indicate direct effects, while dashed line indicates the moderating effect

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among career development, extrinsic work values, and turnover intention, as well as the moderating effect of extrinsic work values, among faculty members in private undergraduate universities in Guangdong Province, China. Guangdong was selected because of its large private higher education sector and the continuing challenge of faculty turnover.

3.2 Participants and Sampling Procedure

The study covered all 20 private undergraduate universities in Guangdong Province, thereby achieving full institutional coverage within the defined research setting. The target population consisted of all full-time faculty members employed in these institutions, totaling approximately 22,207 individuals based on official institutional reports.

To determine the minimum sample size, two benchmarks were considered. First, a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1. Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, and statistical power of 0.95, the analysis indicated a minimum sample size of 119 cases (Cohen, 1988). Second, according to the sample size table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a population of this size requires at least 377 responses for adequate representation. Based on these benchmarks and allowing for potential data screening, the target sample size was conservatively set at 500.

Due to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame, proportional quota sampling was combined with convenience recruitment. Quotas for each institution were calculated by dividing the number of full-time faculty members in each university by the total faculty population across the 20 universities and then multiplying the result by the target sample size of 500. This procedure was intended to ensure that the final sample reflected the actual distribution of faculty across the institutions, with quotas ranging from 12 to 40 participants depending on institutional size.

A total of 502 questionnaires were returned. After data screening, four responses were excluded because they were completed in less than one minute or showed unusually prolonged completion times exceeding 30 minutes. The final valid sample comprised 498 responses, which exceeded the minimum required sample size. Because respondents were recruited through proportional quota sampling combined with convenience recruitment, the study used a non-probability sampling approach at the individual level. Although full institutional coverage was achieved, caution is warranted when interpreting the representativeness of the findings at the individual faculty level. Nevertheless, the demographic composition of the final sample appeared broadly consistent with the general faculty profile of private undergraduate universities in Guangdong, particularly in terms of gender, age, and professional title.

The demographic characteristics of the 498 responses are summarized in Table 1. Female respondents accounted for 60.6% of the sample, while male respondents represented 39.4%. In terms of age, 33.3% were aged 30 or younger, 39.8% were between 31 and 40 years old, 22.3% were between 41 and 50 years old, and 4.6% were aged 51 or older. Regarding professional title, Lecturers constituted the largest group (45.8%), followed by Professors and Associate Professors (28.5%), and Teaching Assistants or others (25.7%). In terms of annual income, 62.9% of the respondents reported earning RMB 150,000 or below, while 37.1% reported earnings above RMB 150,000. With respect to institutional tenure, 65.6% had

worked at their current institution for five years or less, whereas 34.4% had served for more than five years.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 498)

Variable	Category	n (%)
Gender	Male	196 (39.4)
	Female	302 (60.6)
Age	30 or younger	166 (33.3)
	31-40	198 (39.8)
	41-50	111 (22.3)
	51 or older	23 (4.6)
Professional Title	Professor/ Associate Professor	142 (28.5)
	Lecturer	228 (45.8)
	Teaching Assistant/Other	128 (25.7)
Annual Income	≤150,000 RMB	313 (62.9)
	>150,000 RMB	185 (37.1)
Tenure at Current Institution	≤5 years	327 (65.6)
	>5 years	171 (4.4)

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Questionnaire Development, Translation, and Pilot Testing

The questionnaire was developed by integrating established scales measuring career development, extrinsic work values, and turnover intention. Because the original career development scale was available in Chinese, whereas the extrinsic work values and turnover intention scales were originally in English, the final questionnaire was prepared in both Chinese and English. To ensure linguistic accuracy and conceptual equivalence, bilingual experts proficient in both languages reviewed the translated items and checked the consistency of the two versions. Minor wording adjustments were made to improve clarity and contextual appropriateness for private higher education in China. Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire was pilot tested and further refined for clarity and comprehensibility.

3.3.2 Research Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first measured the three focal constructs: career development, extrinsic work values, and turnover intention. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The second section collected demographic information, including gender, age, professional title, annual income, and tenure at the current institution. The psychometric properties of the adapted instruments were further assessed through measurement model evaluation, including internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Career development (CD) was defined as the perceived opportunities for professional growth and advancement within the current institution. The construct was measured using a nine-item version of the career growth scale developed by Weng and Xi (2011). To reduce conceptual overlap with extrinsic work values, the compensation growth dimension was excluded. The remaining items captured career goal progress, professional capability development, and promotion opportunities.

Extrinsic work values (EWV) refer to the importance individuals attach to tangible job outcomes such as salary, position, and job security (Ros et al., 1999). The scale was adapted from Stiglbauer et al. (2022) and contextualized for private higher education. Following preliminary psychometric assessment, items with insufficient loadings were removed, resulting in a final four-item scale. Turnover intention (TI) was defined as employees' conscious willingness to leave their current organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). widely validated in organizational research, a five-item measure adapted from Bothma and Roodt (2013) was employed. The scale captured cognitive, behavioral, and intentional aspects of withdrawal, including thoughts of leaving and active job search.

3.4 Data Collection

Data were collected from December 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025, using Wenjuanxing, a widely used online survey platform in Chinese social science research. The survey link was distributed through WeChat and shared with eligible full-time faculty members.

To maintain institutional representativeness, data collection followed the predefined quota framework. A stopping rule was applied at the institutional level, whereby responses from a university were no longer accepted once its quota was reached. Minor over-sampling in two institutions, with one additional case from each, was retained because it did not materially affect the analytical structure. In addition, all questionnaire items were set as mandatory to prevent item-level missing data. Anonymous participation and academic-use-only instructions were also used to reduce evaluation apprehension and the risk of socially desirable responding.

To reduce the likelihood of common method bias, several procedural remedies were applied, including bilingual review of the translated items, pilot testing, and anonymous participation. These measures were intended to improve item clarity, reduce ambiguity, and minimize evaluation apprehension. In addition, common method bias was assessed statistically using the full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) approach in SmartPLS.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SmartPLS 4.1.0.9. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for prediction-oriented analysis and capable of estimating latent interaction effects within a single analytical framework. The analysis followed the two-stage procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2019). PLS-SEM was preferred over CB-SEM because the study focused on prediction-oriented analysis and

moderation testing rather than strict model fit confirmation, and because latent interaction effects can be handled more flexibly within the PLS-SEM framework.

First, common method bias was assessed using the full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) approach. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were then examined for all study variables. Next, the measurement model was evaluated in terms of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), outer loadings, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT).

Second, the structural model was assessed by examining collinearity, path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to test the significance of hypothesized relationships. The moderating effect of extrinsic work values was tested using the latent interaction approach within the PLS-SEM framework.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were informed that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. According to the authors' institutional regulations, formal ethics committee approval was not required for non-clinical survey research.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Preliminary Analyses and Measurement Model Evaluation

Before testing the hypotheses, several preliminary analyses were conducted to assess common method bias, descriptive relationships among the constructs, and the adequacy of the measurement model.

Common method bias was assessed using the full collinearity VIF approach. All VIF values ranged from 1.88 to 3.08, which are below the conservative threshold of 3.3, indicating that common method bias was unlikely to pose a serious threat to the findings (Pu & Huang, 2025). In addition, procedural remedies, including bilingual review of questionnaire items, pilot testing, and anonymous participation, were applied during questionnaire design and administration to reduce this risk.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and inter-construct correlations. The bivariate correlations were consistent with the hypothesized directions. Specifically, career development (CD) was negatively correlated with turnover intention (TI) ($r = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$) and extrinsic work values ($r = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$), whereas extrinsic work values (EWW) were positively correlated with turnover intention ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations(=498)

Construct	Mean	SD	CD	EWV	TI
CD	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.37***	-0.33***
EWV	0.00	1.00	-0.37***	1.00	0.33***
TI	0.00	1.00	-0.33***	0.33***	1.00

Note: Means, standard deviations, and correlations are based on standardized latent variable scores generated in Smart PLS. *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

The measurement model was then evaluated in terms of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As shown in Table 3, all constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.87 to 0.93, and composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.91 to 0.94, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was also supported, as the average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.66 to 0.75, all above the recommended threshold of 0.50.

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Career Development (CD)	9	0.93	0.94	0.66
Extrinsic Work Values (EWV)	4	0.87	0.91	0.71
Turnover Intention (TI)	5	0.92	0.94	0.75

Note: All constructs meet the recommended thresholds (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$, CR > 0.70 , AVE > 0.50).

During the measurement model assessment, two EWV indicators with insufficient outer loadings were removed from the initial item pool. The retained four-item measure continued to capture the core extrinsic aspects of work values relevant to this study. Following item refinement, the construct demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, supporting the psychometric adequacy of the adapted scale. Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values ranged from 0.295 to 0.421, which were well below the conservative cut-off of 0.85. These results indicate that CD, EWV, and TI were empirically distinct constructs. Overall, the results provide adequate support for the use of the measurement model in subsequent structural analyses.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Construct	CD	EWV
CD	—	
EWV	0.421	—
TI	0.338	0.295

Note: All HTMT values < 0.85 , confirming discriminant validity.

4.2 Relationship of Career Development and Turnover Intention (H1)

Prior to hypothesis testing, the structural model was assessed for collinearity and predictive capability. No evidence of problematic multicollinearity was found, as all VIF values were below the recommended threshold of 5.0. The model

explained 21% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.21$), indicating a modest level of explanatory power. In addition, the model demonstrated acceptable predictive relevance, with a Stone-Geisser Q^2 value of 0.15. The model fit indices were also within acceptable ranges (SRMR = 0.05; NFI = 0.91). To test H1, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples was conducted. As shown in Table 5, career development was significantly and negatively related to turnover intention ($\beta = -0.24$, $t = 6.03$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.32, -0.16]). This result indicates that higher perceived career development was associated with lower turnover intention among faculty members. Therefore, H1 was supported.

Table 5: Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	f^2	95% CI	Result
H1	CD \rightarrow TI	-0.24	6.03	< 0.001	0.06	[-0.32, -0.16]	Supported
H2	EWV \rightarrow TI	0.23	5.74	< 0.001	0.06	[0.15, 0.31]	Supported
H3	CD \times EWV \rightarrow TI	0.21	6.39	< 0.001	0.07	[0.15, 0.27]	Supported

Note: β = standardized path coefficient; f^2 = effect size (0.02 = small, 0.15 = medium, 0.35 = large). Results based on bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples.

4.3 Relationship Between Extrinsic Work Values and Turnover Intention (H2)

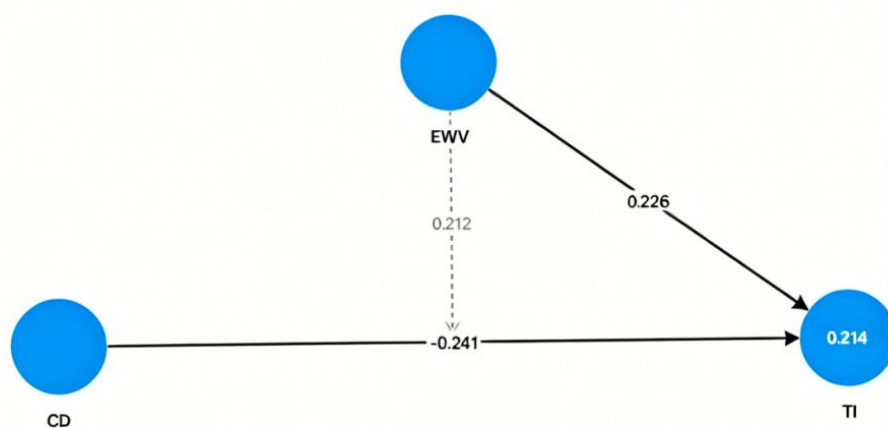
Table 5 also shows that extrinsic work values were significantly and positively related to turnover intention ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 5.74$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.31]). This finding suggests that faculty members who placed greater importance on extrinsic work outcomes, such as salary, job security, and working conditions, were more likely to report stronger turnover intention. Therefore, H2 was supported.

4.4 Moderation of Extrinsic Work Values to the Relationship Between Career Development and Turnover Intention (H3).

The moderating effect of extrinsic work values was examined through the interaction term between career development and extrinsic work values. As shown in Table 5, the interaction effect was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 6.39$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.27]), supporting H3. This positive interaction indicates that extrinsic work values weakened the negative relationship between career development and turnover intention. In other words, the retention effect of career development became less pronounced as faculty members placed greater importance on extrinsic rewards.

To further interpret the interaction, simple slope analysis was conducted. The negative relationship between career development and turnover intention was strongest when extrinsic work values were low (simple slope = -0.45, $p < 0.001$). The relationship remained statistically significant at the average level of extrinsic work values (simple slope = -0.24, $p < 0.001$), but it was no longer significant when extrinsic work values were high (simple slope = -0.03, $p > 0.05$). These findings suggest that career development is more effective in reducing turnover intention

among faculty members who place less emphasis on external rewards, whereas its effect diminishes among those who strongly prioritize extrinsic outcomes. Although the effect sizes were relatively small ($f^2 = 0.06-0.07$), they still indicate non-trivial effects within the present model and should be interpreted with caution. Likewise, the explanatory power of the model was modest ($R^2 = 0.21$), suggesting that additional factors not included in the present study may also contribute to turnover intention. Figure 2 presents the structural model and standardized path coefficients



Note. The dashed line represents the moderating effect. All path coefficients are standardized, $p < .001$.

Figure 2: Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Major Findings

This study examined the relationship between career development and turnover intention among faculty members in private undergraduate universities in Guangdong, China, with particular attention to the moderating role of extrinsic work values from a social exchange theory (SET) perspective. Three main findings emerged. First, career development was negatively associated with turnover intention. Second, extrinsic work values were positively associated with turnover intention. Third, extrinsic work values weakened the negative relationship between career development and turnover intention.

The negative association between career development and turnover intention is consistent with SET, which suggests that employees may reciprocate perceived organizational support with more favorable work attitudes and lower intentions to leave (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In this study, career development appears to function as a valued organizational resource that signals institutional investment in faculty members' professional growth. This finding is also consistent with prior research identifying career growth as an important retention-related resource in academic and professional contexts (Deas & Coetzee, 2020; Räsänen et al., 2020). In the context of private higher education in Guangdong, such support may be especially salient because promotion pathways

and long-term developmental opportunities are not always perceived as equally stable or abundant as in the public sector.

The positive relationship between extrinsic work values and turnover intention found in this study is consistent with prior research suggesting that employees who place greater emphasis on external rewards tend to be more sensitive to tangible returns from the organization. In private higher education settings, this tendency may be further strengthened by market-oriented employment conditions, which make faculty members more likely to compare their current situation with alternative opportunities (Aljbour et al., 2024; Ros et al., 1999).

More importantly, the moderation result supports our argument that career development is not equally effective for all faculty members. Its negative association with turnover intention was weaker among those with stronger extrinsic work values, suggesting that these individuals may place greater emphasis on immediate and tangible returns than on development opportunities. This finding is consistent with the view that the effects of organizational resources depend on how they are interpreted by employees, and that career development may even enhance external employability in ways that weaken its retention effect (Baranchenko et al., 2020; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in showing that the retention value of career development is contingent on faculty members' value orientation. Rather than proposing a wholly new explanatory mechanism, the findings extend SET by demonstrating that the effect of organizational support is not uniform across individuals.

Career development remains an important organizational resource, but its influence on turnover intention depends partly on whether faculty members interpret organizational returns in developmental or extrinsic terms. At the same time, this contribution should be interpreted with caution. The explanatory power of the model was modest ($R^2 = 0.21$), suggesting that turnover intention is influenced by additional factors beyond those examined here. Likewise, although the moderating effect was statistically significant, its practical magnitude was relatively small. The findings therefore identify meaningful, but partial, explanatory factors within a broader faculty retention process.

The results nevertheless have practical relevance for private universities in Guangdong and similar Chinese private higher education settings. Institutions should not rely on career development initiatives alone as a universal retention strategy. Although development opportunities remain important, their retention value is likely to be stronger when they are accompanied by credible extrinsic returns, such as transparent promotion systems, competitive compensation, workload fairness, and greater employment security. In addition, retention strategies may be more effective when they are differentiated according to faculty members' value orientation and career stage rather than applied uniformly across all academic staff. Strengthening retention may also support broader educational

processes and outcomes. In private higher education, frequent faculty turnover can disrupt curriculum continuity, weaken teacher-student relationships, reduce instructional consistency, and limit the accumulation of teaching experience within departments. By contrast, greater faculty stability can help sustain teaching quality, support student learning experiences and outcomes, and promote continuity in educational delivery.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Second, because the data relied on self-reports and voluntary participation through WeChat-based recruitment, common method bias and self-selection bias cannot be entirely ruled out, although procedural and statistical remedies were applied. Third, the study adopted a non-probability sampling approach at the individual level, which limits the representativeness of the findings despite full institutional coverage. Fourth, the model explained only a modest proportion of variance in turnover intention, suggesting that additional predictors should be considered. Fifth, although the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, some scales were adapted for the present context, and two EWV items were removed during the measurement model assessment.

Caution is therefore warranted when interpreting these constructs across different institutional or cultural settings. Finally, because the study focused on private undergraduate universities in Guangdong, the findings should be generalized to other institutional or regional contexts with caution. Future research could adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs to strengthen causal interpretation, incorporate broader organizational and labor-market variables, and compare private and public higher education institutions to clarify the conditions under which career development supports faculty retention.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between career development and turnover intention among faculty members in private undergraduate universities in Guangdong, China, with particular attention to the moderating role of extrinsic work values. The findings showed that career development was associated with lower turnover intention, whereas extrinsic work values were associated with higher turnover intention. In addition, extrinsic work values weakened the negative relationship between career development and turnover intention.

These findings suggest that career development should not be viewed as a uniformly effective retention resource. By incorporating extrinsic work values into a social exchange theory perspective, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of when development opportunities are more or less likely to be associated with faculty retention. From a practical perspective, the findings imply that private universities should move beyond short-term or one-size-fits-all retention practices. Career development initiatives may be more meaningful when they are embedded in longer-term career policy design,

including clearer promotion pathways, sustained professional development support, and more credible employment conditions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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