

A Survey and Analysis of Contemporary Youth's Willingness to Take Public Sector Employment Examinations and Its Influencing Factors

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of shifts in the job market landscape, young people's preference for applying to civil service and public institution positions has become increasingly pronounced. To clarify the logic behind young people's career preferences for positions within the public sector, a questionnaire survey was conducted. Using multinomial ordered logistic regression, this study delves deeply into young people's willingness to take civil service exams and the factors influencing it from both individual and family perspectives. The results show that educational attainment and parental attitudes have a significant positive impact on young people's willingness to take civil service exams, and students majoring in agricultural sciences exhibit a significantly higher willingness to do so than students in other majors. Based on these findings, the following five differentiated governance strategies are proposed: "Strengthening the rational construction of individual career cognition and the development of diverse competencies"; "Establishing a scientific and rational intergenerational family employment guidance mechanism"; "Deepening the integration between the employment education system in higher education institutions and recruitment policies"; "Optimizing the social employment discourse ecosystem and community support networks"; and "Improving the provision of policies and institutions and guiding human resource allocation."

Keywords: Young people; Intention to pursue public-sector recruitment examinations; Employment choice; Influencing factors; Logistic model

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1. Introduction

At present, society is paying increasing attention to young people's pursuit of public-sector recruitment examinations, and related discussions have sparked widespread debate online. Word cloud **Figures 1** and **2** show that terms such as "establishment position," "examination," and "successfully passing the examination" occur with high frequency and occupy central positions, intuitively reflecting that young people regard

public-sector recruitment examinations as an important pathway to career stability. The dense distribution of associated terms such as “written examination” and “exam preparation” also reveals the fierce competition behind the current craze for public-sector recruitment examinations. Meanwhile, in recent years, the number of young people taking such examinations has increased year by year. In 2026, the number of applicants for the National Civil Service Examination exceeded 3.5 million for the first time, an increase of 300,000 compared with 2025, setting a record high and indicating increasingly intense competition. Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current employment situation, young people’s employment outlook is gradually changing. A large number of young people are directing their job-seeking attention toward more stable public-sector positions, and the structural contradiction of a one-way influx of talent resources into the public sector has become prominent. Given this severe social phenomenon, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study on contemporary young people’s intention to pursue public-sector recruitment examinations and its influencing factors, so as to further propose differentiated optimization strategies for guiding young people toward high-quality and full employment.

Figure 1. Word cloud distribution of views on public sector recruitment examinations

Figure 2. Word cloud network diagram

value while undervaluing social value; public sector positions align with their economic demands and thus become an important motivation for taking such exams ^[1]. Moreover, youth who have lived in high-risk epidemic areas or experienced quarantine tend to have a stronger sense of stability in their employment values ^[2]. Another view holds that layoffs and unemployment, salary cuts and involution, overtime culture, and workplace uncertainty prompt youth to adopt more conservative employment attitudes, thereby giving rise to the surge in public sector examination-taking ^[3]. Entering the public sector not only satisfies the basic psychological need for security but also brings social status and reputation ^[4]. At the family level, first, family economic conditions directly affect youth's employment choices: the better the family economic condition, the lower the youth's willingness to return to their hometown and take public sector exams; those from poorer families are more inclined to seek stability and achieve class security through public sector exams ^[5]. Second, parents' occupational backgrounds and family resources, through social capital, influence youth's willingness to take public sector exams; parents' career concepts and workplace experiences subtly shape their children and significantly affect their choices ^[6]. Finally, regional traditions and ethnic culture are also motivations for youth to take public sector exams. Wang Yuming, through interviews with 30 returning youth, found that local attachments and traditional family values prompted youth to choose to return home and take public sector exams ^[7]. At the social level, Li Tao et al. studied the employment status of college graduates in 2021 against the backdrop of the pandemic and found that after the pandemic, the preference for public sector employment was evident ^[8]; among unemployed graduates, 40.47% listed civil service or public institution positions as their first choice. Liu Baozhong et al. compared the employment quality of graduates from 19 universities nationwide before and after the pandemic and found that the proportion of public sector employment increased ^[9]. Youth face severe employment conditions and insufficient job opportunities in reality, while civil service positions are regarded as a relatively stable and secure form of employment ^[10].

In summary, existing research exhibits two major characteristics: first, research has become increasingly refined, analyzing the factors influencing youth's willingness to take public sector exams from multiple dimensions, ranging from macroeconomics to individual psychology; second, the research perspective has extended from phenomenon description and theoretical discussion to policy recommendations, guiding youth toward rational career choices. However, existing research still has shortcomings: in terms of research methods, most focus on theoretical analysis or case descriptions, lacking large-sample quantitative studies; insufficient exploration of the diverse differences in youth's willingness to take public sector exams and the tendencies of different groups, lacking refined stratified comparisons; and there are relatively few questionnaire surveys and empirical analyses. Based on this, this paper, grounded in quantitative survey data and integrating the practical orientation of public employment services and public institution recruitment policies, identifies the stratified driving logic of youth's willingness to take public sector exams, clarifies the differentiated impacts of individual and family factors on employment behavior, and provides empirical support and governance references for the government to optimize public employment services, universities to improve employment education systems, and society to promote balanced allocation of human resources and achieve high-quality full employment for youth.

3. Analysis of factors influencing the degree of willingness to take civil service examinations based on multivariate ordered logistic regression

As a classic tool for analyzing ordinal categorical variables, the ordered logistic regression model can

effectively identify the independent marginal effects of antecedent conditions and clarify the direction and significance level of the effects of different factors on the outcome variable. Therefore, this paper employs a multivariate ordered logistic regression model to examine the driving factors behind young people's degree of willingness to take civil service examinations.

Data collection for this study relied on questionnaires, combining offline intercept surveys with online web-based surveys, and conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews with individuals from various occupations (including but not limited to university teachers, public-sector employees, and young people preparing for civil service examinations). A total of 1,009 questionnaires were collected, of which 985 were valid, yielding a valid response rate of 97.62%. The questionnaire passed reliability and validity tests, with all indicators meeting the required standards, thereby ensuring data quality.

3.1. Descriptive statistics of the data

Among the valid samples, the 18–25 age group accounted for 81.43% of the total sample (this age group constitutes the main force among those taking civil service examinations). The number of respondents whose families resided in urban areas was slightly greater than that in rural areas. The educational level of most respondents was regular undergraduate, followed by other institutions, while samples from Double First-Class universities and Project 985 universities were relatively few. Most respondents were currently enrolled undergraduates, among whom those majoring in economics and management accounted for the largest proportion. Among employed respondents, corporate employees and public institution staff made up a relatively large share. Overall, the surveyed group covered various populations differing in age, family residence, education level, and status, and thus possesses a certain degree of representativeness.

3.2. Variable specification

The independent variables selected as individual factors included major related to willingness to take civil service examinations (*maj1–8*), only-child status (*child*), and education level (*edu*). The variables selected as family factors included parents' attitudes toward taking civil service examinations (*attit*), father's occupation (*fjob1–8*), mother's occupation (*mjob1–8*), and annual household income (*inc*). Here, only-child status, major, father's occupation, and mother's occupation are unordered polytomous variables; therefore, following the general practice in statistics, they were set as dummy variables. Not being an only child, majoring in economics and management, and having an occupation categorized as "other" were set as the reference categories. The degree of willingness to take civil service examinations (*y*) was assigned five progressive ordinal levels, with values ranging from 1 to 5, representing young people's willingness from weak to strong, thereby revealing the differential mechanisms through which various individual- and family-level factors influence young people's preference for employment within the public sector.

3.3. Empirical results

As shown in **Table 1**, education level has a significant positive effect on the degree of willingness to take civil service examinations. As educational attainment increases, young people gain more diversified channels of employment information during their studies and are able to comprehensively perceive the developmental characteristics of different employment tracks. At present, the scale of college graduates continues to expand, and competition in the job market is intensifying. Recruitment for public offices and public institutions

features standardized procedures and open, transparent selection rules, which can provide job seekers with stable career expectations and have therefore attracted sustained attention from highly educated groups.

Table 1. Results of multivariate ordered logistic regression

Variable	Regression coefficient	Standard error	Variable	Regression coefficient	Standard error	Variable	Regression coefficient	Standard error
edu	0.365***	0.111	maj7	0.746*	0.452	mjob1	0.615	0.446
child	0.115	0.158	maj8	-0.376	0.395	mjob2	0.186	0.374
attit	0.869***	0.083	fjob1	0.339	0.441	mjob3	0.288	0.388
inc	-0.027	0.052	fjob2	0.273	0.403	mjob4	0.464	0.361
maj1	0.103	0.232	fjob3	0.322	0.417	mjob5	0.496	0.414
maj2	-0.217	0.181	fjob4	0.045	0.392	mjob6	0.040	0.376
maj3	-0.378	0.288	fjob5	0.024	0.432	mjob7	-0.192	0.478
maj4	0.498	0.398	fjob6	0.157	0.415	mjob8	0.452	0.390
maj5	-0.207	0.337	fjob7	0.224	0.508			
maj6	-0.348	0.805	fjob8	-0.039	0.601			

Parental attitudes toward public sector recruitment examinations had a highly significant positive effect on young people's willingness to pursue such examinations. The more supportive the parents' attitudes, the higher the children's willingness to take these examinations. The family is the core environment for youth socialization, and parents profoundly shape their children's values and career perceptions. When parents hold supportive attitudes, they subtly guide their children to recognize the occupational value of public sector positions. Preparing for public sector recruitment examinations is highly stressful and prone to generating anxiety and self-doubt. Parental support can provide emotional comfort, enhance psychological resilience, and help young people confront the challenges of examination preparation. At the same time, parents also provide practical assistance in terms of information, social networks, financial resources, and learning resources, thereby reducing obstacles in examination preparation, increasing the probability of success, and further strengthening young people's willingness to pursue public sector recruitment examinations.

Students majoring in agriculture-related fields (maj7) showed significantly higher willingness to pursue public sector recruitment examinations than students in other majors, which served as the reference group. Agriculture-related majors have distinct characteristics, with employment concentrated in areas such as agricultural research, agricultural technology extension, and agricultural product processing. Affected by the slow transformation of traditional agriculture and the fact that emerging agriculture has not yet taken shape, the matching industrial structure is imbalanced, and suitable positions are very limited. Meanwhile, the enrollment scale of agriculture-related majors has not decreased, resulting in an oversupply of graduates. Competition within the same major is severe, and graduates do not hold an advantage in cross-major competition, making the employment competition extremely fierce. Under this severe employment situation, positions with established status are stable and well-matched, making them a preferred choice for agriculture-related majors and further intensifying their willingness to pursue public sector recruitment examinations.

However, variables such as only-child status, annual household income, and father's and mother's occupations were not significant. This indicates that family demographic structure, household income level, and parents' specific occupational types alone cannot independently exert a stable influence on young

people's willingness to pursue public sector recruitment examinations. Compared with objective family endowment conditions, factors such as the employment attitudes formed by parents, young people's own educational level, and their disciplinary track play a more central role in the career decision-making process. This further suggests that in promoting youth employment governance and optimizing human resource allocation, policy efforts should focus on key dimensions such as attitude guidance and discipline-specific employment support, rather than simply predicting young people's employment choices based on family economic status or parental occupational background. This will enable precise allocation of employment service resources and better support high-quality full employment for young people.

4. Differentiated governance strategies for high-quality full employment under the characteristics of contemporary youth's career choice of public sector recruitment examinations

4.1. Strengthening the rational construction of individual career cognition and diversified competency reserves

Empirical evidence indicates that young people's willingness to pursue public sector recruitment examinations is significantly and positively correlated with their educational level. The higher the educational attainment, the stronger the tendency toward employment within the public sector, reflecting the structural difficulties faced by highly educated groups in the market-oriented employment sector. The key to overcoming this dilemma lies in building an adequate career cognition support system. At present, public institution recruitment policies have shown a rationalizing trend of "adjustment according to demand," with many regions relaxing the upper age limit for highly educated applicants and grassroots service positions, thereby providing broader institutional space for young people. It is recommended that public employment service agencies, in collaboration with universities, provide standardized career competency assessment and job-matching analysis services for young people, helping them accurately identify the appropriate application level and position type based on their own conditions. At the same time, career values education should be incorporated into the employment service system. Through industry trend analysis, emerging occupational mapping, and other methods, young people should be guided to establish a multifaceted evaluation framework based on occupational value, personal competence, and social contribution. While paying attention to positions with established status, they should also actively explore the development space of emerging occupations such as digital management specialists and artificial intelligence trainers, thereby fundamentally broadening the cognitive boundaries of career choice.

4.2. Building a scientific and rational intergenerational family guidance mechanism for employment

Empirical analysis shows that parental attitudes toward public sector recruitment examinations have a highly significant positive effect on young people's willingness to pursue them. The family is an important field for the socialization of employment concepts, and public employment services should incorporate families into the target groups of policy intervention. At present, most families obtain employment information mainly through oral accounts from relatives and friends and fragmented media, with information lag and cognitive biases being widespread. It is recommended that, relying on grassroots public employment service platforms and community governance networks, a regular notification system on the employment situation for parent

groups be established, regularly releasing local employment market data, industry talent demand reports, and public institution recruitment updates, so as to help parents break through the traditional cognition of “establishment status only.” On this basis, family support should be promoted to transform from “emotional fallback” to “rational empowerment,” helping parents master scientific methods of guiding career decisions. On the basis of fully understanding the real situation of the employment market, parents and children should jointly conduct information collection, risk assessment, and path comparison, so that the family truly becomes a supportive force for young people’s rational career choice.

4.3. Deepening the integration between university employment education systems and recruitment policies

The willingness of agriculture-related majors to pursue public sector recruitment examinations is significantly higher than that of other majors. This not only reflects the structural contradictions in the employment market for specific disciplines but also imposes higher requirements on precise employment guidance in universities. At present, public institution recruitment policies are undergoing profound adjustments, with recruitment continuously tilting toward the grassroots. Universities should actively align with these policy changes and incorporate the interpretation of recruitment policies into the career education system. For major groups with a relatively high willingness to pursue public sector recruitment examinations, such as agriculture-related majors, the mismatch between talent cultivation and industrial demand should be thoroughly analyzed. By optimizing curriculum design, deepening industry-education integration, and expanding corresponding employment channels, the absorptive capacity of market-oriented employment should be fundamentally expanded. At the same time, in cooperation with human resources and social security departments, public employment services should be promoted on campus, and a career planning education system running through the entire study period should be established, guiding students to peel away the shell of “stability” through internships and practice and to explore the real working environment. In addition, the information-sharing mechanism of home-school collaboration should be improved, regularly releasing employment trends and industry developments, helping families shift from “one-way pressure” to “collaborative decision-making.”

4.4. Optimizing the public opinion ecosystem for employment and community support networks

Word cloud analysis shows that words such as “establishment status” and “examination” appear with high frequency, reflecting that excessive public opinion focus on public sector positions has intensified employment involution. It is recommended that propaganda authorities, in collaboration with mainstream media, systematically plan communication activities themed “diverse occupational values.” Through forms such as typical figure reports, occupational visit documentaries, and industry prospect analyses, the occupational value of ordinary positions in manufacturing, modern services, and emerging industries should be demonstrated. At the same time, advertising by public examination training institutions should be regulated to prevent them from using anxiety marketing to amplify the social atmosphere of “establishment status only.” At the community level, guiding young people’s employment concepts should be incorporated into the basic functions of governance and services. Employment situation briefings and parent exchange activities should be held regularly. Public employment service agencies should extend career guidance and

information consulting services to communities, forming a three-tier coordinated network of employment concept guidance involving “residential compound – street – community.”

4.5. Improving policy and institutional supply and guidance for human resource allocation

Ultimately, addressing the overheating of young people’s participation in public sector recruitment examinations requires optimizing human resource allocation at the institutional level. At present, many regions have begun to adjust the recruitment inertia of “preference for fresh graduates,” gradually conducting recruitment for university graduates with grassroots work experience. On this basis, it is recommended to appropriately increase the proportion of targeted recruitment for groups with grassroots work experience, forming a positive incentive of “practice first, then obtain establishment status.” At the same time, the institutional environment for market-oriented employment should be improved, social insurance subsidy policies for flexible employment should be implemented, and the social security gap between inside and outside the public sector should be narrowed. Through programs such as “Three Supports and One Assistance” and grassroots service projects, transitional channels that balance stability and development should be provided for young people, and support for innovation and entrepreneurship should be increased. In addition, it is recommended that human resources and social security departments establish a multidimensional monitoring indicator system for youth employment quality, incorporating “over-concentration in public sector recruitment examinations” and “duration of full-time examination preparation” into the early warning scope for abnormal fluctuations in the employment market, and regularly releasing employment quality reports by region, industry, and educational level, so as to provide data support for the precise adjustment of public employment policies.

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