

Factors Influencing Professional Identity among Faculty in Private Higher Education Institutions in Chengdu, China

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Abstract: Professional identity among faculty members in private higher education institutions plays a vital role in shaping the quality and sustainability of these institutions. This research aims to investigate the factors influencing the professional identity of teachers in Chengdu's private higher education institutions. The study employs a theoretical framework centered on "identification" with behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging as fundamental dimensions. Data were collected through questionnaire surveys and analyzed using SPSS 23.0. The study hypothesizes that behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging have a significant positive impact on professional identity among faculty members. Additionally, behavior attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are expected to have a significant positive influence on behavior intention, and subjective norms and perceived usefulness may positively affect sense of belonging. The results are expected to provide valuable insights for enhancing the professional satisfaction and educational quality of faculty in private higher education institutions.

Keywords: Private Colleges and Universities; Sense of Identity; Behavioral Intention; Behavioral Attitude

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, private higher education institutions have significantly expanded in China, contributing to the democratization of higher education and enriching the educational landscape. However, these institutions often face challenges in maintaining a stable faculty workforce, which impacts their competitiveness in the education sector. High-quality and stable faculty members are essential for the survival and growth of private higher education institutions, directly affecting the institutions' academic standards and long-term development (Wang X., 2019)^[1].

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, China has witnessed rapid growth in private higher education institutions, particularly in regions like Chengdu, which has emerged as a new first-tier city with a thriving economy and numerous established private higher education institutions. Understanding the factors influencing the professional identity of faculty members in these institutions has become increasingly significant.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the factors influencing the professional identity of faculty members in private higher education institutions in Chengdu, China. Specifically, the study seeks to analyze the impact of behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging on professional identity. It also investigates the relationships and significance between the various dimensions and professional identity.

2. Research Scope

The scope of this study is limited to faculty members in private higher education institutions in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. The sample will be drawn from a diverse range of institutions to ensure a representative dataset. The study will focus on faculty members'

educational qualifications, gender, salary income, and job position as demographic variables, aiming to build a comprehensive understanding of the influencing factors on their professional identity.

3. Theoretical Framework

Professional identity, as the central construct, encompasses behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging. Scholars in the field have provided various definitions of behavior intention, such as the "appreciation of worth, quality, importance, etc," indicating the individual's willingness to accept new ideas and suggestions (Ajzen, 1991)^[2]. Additionally, behavior attitude represents an individual's cognitive inclination towards specific behaviors based on their values, perceptions, and preferences (Liu W., 2022)^[3]. Sense of belonging, also known as affiliation, refers to an individual's internal connection with a particular group and reflects their psychological manifestation of identification, acceptance, and maintenance with the group (Zhang L., 2022)^[4].

4. Research Limitations

Despite the rigorous research design, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the limited literature on the factors influencing professional identity among faculty members in private higher education institutions might constrain the comprehensive understanding of this construct. Secondly, the design and data collection of the questionnaire may not cover all aspects of faculty members' professional identity, leading to potential bias in the analysis results. Lastly, the use of SPSS 23.0 for data analysis may limit the depth of exploration into the relationships between variables. Future research could involve more qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, to gain additional insights.

5. Expected Findings

Based on the proposed theoretical framework, we anticipate several potential findings. Firstly, behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging are expected to have a significant positive impact on faculty members' professional identity. This suggests that faculty members' willingness to actively participate in curriculum reform and teaching, their attitudes towards these activities, and their sense of belonging to the institution will directly affect their professional identity. These factors may play a critical role in determining the level of their engagement in their work.

Secondly, behavior attitude may positively influence behavior intention, while subjective norms and perceived behavioral control may positively affect behavior attitude. These findings indicate that faculty members' attitudes towards curriculum reform and teaching activities may influence their willingness to participate, and their personal subjective norms and perceived control may affect their attitudes.

Lastly, subjective well-being and perceived usefulness may positively affect the sense of belonging. This finding implies that faculty members' perception of their well-being and the perceived usefulness of their work may enhance their sense of belonging to the institution. These factors could motivate faculty members to actively engage in their work.

6. Conclusion

This research aims to explore the factors influencing the professional identity of faculty members in private higher education institutions in Chengdu, China. By adopting a theoretical framework centered on "identification" with behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging as key dimensions, we expect to gain valuable insights into the relationship between these factors and professional identity. The findings of this study are expected to have significant theoretical and practical implications.

The results of this study may contribute to the growing body of literature on professional identity in the context of private higher education institutions. Moreover, the findings could provide practical guidance for academic institutions to enhance faculty members' job satisfaction, retention, and engagement, ultimately improving the quality of education.

7. Practical Implications

This research could offer actionable recommendations for both individual faculty members and educational institutions:

7.1 For Faculty Members

Faculty members should recognize the importance of developing a positive attitude towards their work and actively engage in curriculum reform and teaching activities. By understanding the significance of their contributions to the institution and their students, faculty members can foster a sense of belonging, which is essential for job satisfaction and professional identity.

7.2 For Educational Institutions

Educational institutions should invest in creating a supportive and inclusive work environment that promotes faculty members' well-being and provides opportunities for professional growth. Encouraging open communication, collaboration, and feedback among faculty members can strengthen their sense of belonging and improve overall job satisfaction.

8. Future Directions

This research provides a foundation for future studies on faculty members' professional identity in private higher education institutions. Researchers can explore additional factors that influence professional identity and further investigate the complex relationships among different dimensions. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, could be employed to gain deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of faculty members.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of the factors influencing professional identity among faculty members in private higher education institutions in Chengdu, China. The study's theoretical framework, consisting of behavior intention, behavior attitude, and sense of belonging, is expected to shed light on the intricate dynamics shaping faculty members' professional identity. By identifying key factors that positively impact professional identity, this research can serve as a valuable resource for educational institutions seeking to enhance faculty members' job satisfaction and engagement, ultimately improving the overall educational quality. Further studies in this area can build upon these findings, offering deeper insights into the complex interplay between faculty members' attitudes, perceptions, and their sense of belonging, leading to more effective strategies for fostering a vibrant and dedicated faculty workforce.

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