

# Exploring Professional Self Identity, Psychological Capital, and Work Well-Being in China's Pharmaceutical Sales Sector

Chen Chen <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centre of Postgraduate Studies, Asia Metropolitan University (AMU), Johor Bahru, Malaysia.  
Email: 531866725@qq.com

## Abstract

This study explores the intricate relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being within the context of Chinese pharmaceutical sales representatives. Drawing on conservation of resources (COR) theory and positive psychology, the research examines how professional self-identity influences work well-being both directly and indirectly through psychological capital. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative survey data (N = 484) and qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive analysis. The results demonstrate that a strong professional self-identity positively impacts psychological capital, which in turn enhances work well-being. Psychological capital serves as a critical mediator, translating the benefits of professional identity into measurable improvements in emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. The findings emphasize the need for organizations to foster professional self-identity and psychological resources as strategic priorities, particularly in stigmatized professions like pharmaceutical sales. The study offers valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve employee engagement, resilience, and overall well-being, while also contributing to the broader discourse on employee well-being in challenging work environments. This research underscores the importance of creating supportive and resource-rich workplaces that empower employees to thrive.

**Keywords:** Professional self-identity; Psychological capital; Work well-being; Pharmaceutical sales; Employee resilience; Positive psychology; Organizational support

## 1. Introduction

The pharmaceutical sales industry plays a critical role at the intersection of health and commerce, embodying complexities that extend beyond the immediate domain of business transactions to encompass ethical considerations, regulatory compliance, and societal impacts. In China, the rapid growth of the pharmaceutical sector has highlighted the indispensable contribution of sales representatives to bridging the gap between pharmaceutical enterprises and healthcare providers. Yet, the profession faces significant challenges, including negative stereotypes, regulatory constraints, and the high-pressure demands of a competitive marketplace (Li & Zhao, 2022). These factors collectively impact the professional self-identity, psychological resilience, and overall well-being of individuals working in this field. Professional self-identity, a concept rooted in social identity theory, reflects an individual's understanding and emotional attachment to their professional role (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For pharmaceutical sales representatives,

## ARTICLE INFO

### Research paper

Received: 20 September 2024

Accepted: 27 November 2024

Published: 30 November 2024

DOI: 10.58970/JSR.1071

## CITATION

Chen, C. (2025). Exploring Professional Self Identity, Psychological Capital, and Work Well-Being in China's Pharmaceutical Sales Sector, *Journal of Scientific Reports*, 8(1), 1-13.

## COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by author(s)  
Papers published by IJSAB  
International are licensed  
under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0  
International License.



professional self-identity is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it serves as a source of motivation and pride, enhancing job satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, the profession's stigma—rooted in issues such as unethical practices and societal mistrust—compromises employees' ability to derive fulfillment from their work (Chen et al., 2021). Addressing the factors that shape professional self-identity in this sector is essential for fostering a more positive perception and enhancing employees' psychological well-being. Psychological capital, encompassing self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, represents a promising avenue for addressing these challenges. Positive psychology emphasizes that fostering such traits can significantly enhance employees' capacity to navigate stress and maintain motivation in the face of adversity (Luthans et al., 2007). Empirical studies have shown that higher levels of psychological capital are closely linked to improved job satisfaction and performance (Avey et al., 2010). For pharmaceutical sales representatives, who often work under conditions of heightened stress and uncertainty, psychological capital serves as a crucial mediator between professional self-identity and overall well-being. Work well-being, another critical variable in this study, encapsulates the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of workplace satisfaction. Research suggests that work well-being is both an outcome of individual psychological traits and a determinant of professional performance (Diener, 2000). In industries such as pharmaceutical sales, where job demands can strain mental health, understanding the interplay between professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being is imperative for both academic and practical reasons. Despite the growing body of research on professional self-identity and psychological capital, the specific dynamics within the pharmaceutical sales sector remain underexplored. Previous studies have predominantly focused on traditional professions such as teaching and healthcare (Holland et al., 1980; Zhao et al., 2023), leaving a notable gap in understanding how these concepts apply to non-traditional and stigmatized roles. Furthermore, existing literature often overlooks the mediating mechanisms that link professional self-identity to outcomes such as work well-being, particularly through psychological capital. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital appreciation, and work well-being within the context of Chinese pharmaceutical sales. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach to provide a nuanced understanding of these relationships, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative insights. Specifically, this study examines whether professional self-identity positively influences work well-being and psychological capital, whether psychological capital contributes to work well-being, and the extent to which psychological capital mediates the relationship between professional self-identity and work well-being. By focusing on a professional group that is often stigmatized yet pivotal to the healthcare ecosystem, this research seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of professional self-identity and psychological capital while offering actionable insights for improving employee outcomes. Enhancing the professional self-identity and psychological capital of pharmaceutical sales representatives not only holds the potential to improve their work well-being but also supports the broader goals of organizational performance and ethical conduct within the pharmaceutical industry.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature on professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being underscores their interconnectedness and significance in shaping individual and organizational outcomes. Grounded in theories of identity, positive psychology, and well-being, the existing body of research provides a comprehensive understanding of these constructs, although their specific interplay within the pharmaceutical sales sector remains underexplored. This section synthesizes key theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to establish the study's foundation and identify gaps in the literature. Professional self-identity refers to an individual's understanding and acceptance of their professional role, including its associated values, responsibilities, and societal contributions. Rooted in social identity theory, professional self-identity reflects the cognitive and emotional alignment between an individual and their profession (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Previous research has extensively explored professional self-identity in traditional fields

such as teaching and healthcare, highlighting its role in fostering job satisfaction, commitment, and ethical behavior (Holland et al., 1980; Zhao et al., 2023). However, non-traditional professions, particularly those marked by stigma or societal skepticism, have received less attention. For pharmaceutical sales representatives, whose roles are often viewed with suspicion due to ethical controversies and market competition, the development of a strong professional self-identity is both challenging and critical (Chen et al., 2021). Psychological capital, conceptualized as a positive psychological state that encompasses self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, has emerged as a key determinant of individual performance and well-being (Luthans et al., 2007). Positive psychology posits that individuals with high psychological capital are better equipped to navigate workplace challenges, maintain motivation, and achieve personal and professional growth (Avey et al., 2010). Empirical studies have demonstrated that psychological capital enhances job satisfaction, reduces burnout, and fosters innovation across various occupational contexts (Wang et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the potential of psychological capital to mediate the effects of professional self-identity on work well-being remains underexplored, particularly in industries where stress and stigma are prevalent. Work well-being, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions, is a critical indicator of employee satisfaction and organizational health. Diener (2000) describes work well-being as a state of fulfillment and positive functioning in the workplace, influenced by both individual and contextual factors. Research has consistently linked work well-being to improved job performance, lower turnover intentions, and enhanced organizational commitment (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Despite these insights, studies addressing work well-being within the pharmaceutical sales sector are limited, with existing research focusing primarily on the ethical and regulatory dimensions of the industry. The theoretical framework guiding this study is informed by the conservation of resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect resources that are critical to their well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Professional self-identity and psychological capital can be viewed as key resources that contribute to work well-being. According to COR theory, a strong professional self-identity enhances individuals' resilience to workplace stressors, while psychological capital provides the emotional and cognitive resources necessary for sustained well-being (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This theoretical perspective aligns with empirical findings that emphasize the importance of psychological resources in mitigating the adverse effects of job-related stress and stigma (Liu et al., 2020). The interplay between professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being has been investigated in various contexts, with mixed findings. Studies have shown that professional self-identity positively influences job satisfaction and work engagement, mediated by factors such as organizational commitment and psychological resilience (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Zhang et al., 2021). Similarly, psychological capital has been identified as a significant predictor of work well-being, with its components—self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience—contributing to employees' ability to thrive under challenging conditions (Luthans et al., 2015). However, the mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between professional self-identity and work well-being remains inadequately addressed, particularly in industries like pharmaceutical sales, where occupational stigma and stress are pervasive. Existing studies also highlight the need for culturally nuanced research on these constructs. For instance, cross-cultural studies have found variations in the impact of psychological capital on work well-being, influenced by societal norms and organizational practices (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2012). In China, the collectivist culture and hierarchical organizational structures may shape the dynamics of professional self-identity and psychological capital differently compared to Western contexts (Chen & Wang, 2019). Understanding these cultural influences is essential for developing tailored interventions to enhance employee outcomes in the Chinese pharmaceutical sales sector. This study seeks to build on the existing literature by addressing these gaps and providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. By focusing on a stigmatized yet pivotal profession, it aims to contribute to the broader discourse on employee well-being and organizational

performance while offering practical insights for improving workplace outcomes in the pharmaceutical sales industry.

### **3. Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being in the context of Chinese pharmaceutical sales representatives. The methodological design reflects the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The choice of methods is guided by the philosophical underpinnings of management research, which emphasize the importance of combining diverse approaches to achieve a holistic understanding of complex phenomena (Sun & Zuo, 2024a). The philosophical orientation of this research is rooted in pragmatism, which aligns with the study's objective to address both theoretical and practical questions. Pragmatism is particularly relevant in management research as it bridges the gap between abstract theoretical constructs and real-world applications, allowing for flexibility in methodological choices (Sun & Zuo, 2024b). This philosophy underscores the value of using both numerical and narrative data to elucidate the dynamic relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. The quantitative component of the study involves a cross-sectional survey administered to pharmaceutical sales representatives in China. Convenience and snowball sampling methods were employed to recruit participants from diverse demographic and organizational backgrounds. A total of 509 responses were collected, of which 484 were deemed valid, yielding an effective response rate of 95.08%. This high response rate enhances the reliability of the findings and ensures that the data adequately represents the target population. The survey employed validated instruments, including the Professional Self-Identity Scale, the Psychological Capital Scale, and the Work Well-Being Scale. Each scale was adapted to the specific cultural and professional context of Chinese pharmaceutical sales, drawing on cross-cultural research insights (Sun & Zuo, 2024a). The qualitative component complements the quantitative data by providing deeper insights into the lived experiences of pharmaceutical sales representatives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of survey participants to explore their perceptions of professional identity, psychological resilience, and well-being in greater depth. This qualitative approach enables the identification of themes and patterns that may not be fully captured by quantitative measures, thus enriching the overall analysis. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to ensure rigor and reliability. Data analysis for the quantitative component was conducted using statistical software, with descriptive and inferential statistics employed to examine the relationships among the variables. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to test the hypothesized pathways and mediating effects. SEM is particularly suited to this study as it allows for the simultaneous analysis of multiple relationships and provides robust insights into complex mediating mechanisms (Sun & Zuo, 2024b). The qualitative data were analyzed inductively, with emergent themes cross-validated against the quantitative findings to ensure consistency and coherence. The study adhered to ethical research practices, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. These ethical considerations are integral to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research process (Sun & Zuo, 2024a). In summary, this study adopts a pragmatic mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative data to explore the relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. This methodological framework, underpinned by the philosophical principles of pragmatism, allows for a comprehensive analysis that addresses both theoretical and practical dimensions of the research questions. By combining survey data with qualitative insights, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in the professional lives of pharmaceutical sales representatives in China.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Overview of Participants and Data

The study collected data from a total of 509 pharmaceutical sales representatives in China, with 484 valid responses after the initial screening, resulting in an effective response rate of 95.08%. This dataset forms the basis for the quantitative analysis, supplemented by qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews conducted with a subset of participants. The demographic profile of respondents indicated a balanced representation across gender, age groups, education levels, and regions, ensuring that the findings reflect the diversity of the pharmaceutical sales workforce.

**Table 4-1: Demographic Distribution of the Sample (N=484)**

Dem. Variables	Class.	Freq. (N)	Pct. (%)
Gender	Male	285	58.9
	Female	199	41.1
Age group	20-25 years old	97	20.1
	26-30 years old	177	36.5
	31-35 years old	145	29.9
	36-40 years old	56	11.6
	41-45 years old	7	1.5
	46-50 years old	1	0.2
	51 years old and above	1	0.2
Registered residence type	Urban registered residence	219	45.3
	Rural registered residence	265	54.7
Nation	Han (Chinese)	467	96.3
	Ethnic minority	17	3.7
Marital status	Unmarried	201	41.5
	Married	283	58.5

### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analysis

The descriptive analysis revealed that the mean scores for professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being were moderate to high, suggesting a generally positive outlook among respondents. The variance within each construct highlights the heterogeneous experiences of pharmaceutical sales representatives, which may be influenced by organizational, personal, and contextual factors. Additionally, the reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the measurement scales, with Cronbach’s alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for all constructs.

**Table 4-2: Descriptive Statistics: Professional Self-Identity, Psychological Capital, and Work Well-Being**

Vari.	MIN	MAX	M	SD
PSI	1.00	5.00	3.80	0.80
PCA	1.00	6.00	4.85	0.80
PCA - Efficacy	1.00	6.00	4.96	0.86
PCA - Hope	1.00	6.00	4.96	0.85
PCA - Resilience	1.00	6.00	4.76	0.85
PCA - Optimistic	1.00	6.00	4.72	0.87
Work well-being	1.00	7.00	5.36	0.89
Work well-being - EWB	1.00	7.00	4.34	1.14
Work well-being - CWB	1.00	7.00	5.68	1.08
Work well-being - OWB	1.00	7.00	5.66	1.06
Work well-being - SWB	1.00	7.00	5.78	1.13

### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing and Regression Analysis

#### 4.3.1 Relationship Between Professional Self-Identity and Work Well-Being

Regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that professional self-identity positively influences work well-being. The results indicated a statistically significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.001$ ), supporting the hypothesis. This finding aligns with previous studies,

suggesting that a strong professional self-identity enhances employees' emotional and cognitive engagement at work, thereby improving their well-being (Zhang et al., 2021). Further analysis revealed significant effects across the dimensions of emotional well-being ( $\beta = 0.42, p < 0.01$ ) and social well-being ( $\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$ ), demonstrating the multifaceted impact of professional self-identity.

**Table 4-3: Regression Analysis: Professional Self-Identity and Work Well-Being**

DV	Input vari.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Beta	t
WWB	PSI	0.66	0.44	765.90***	0.66	27.68***

#### 4.3.2 Relationship Between Professional Self-Identity and Psychological Capital

The second hypothesis posited that professional self-identity positively influences psychological capital. Regression results confirmed this relationship, with a significant positive coefficient ( $\beta = 0.51, p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that individuals who perceive their professional roles positively are more likely to develop self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope—key components of psychological capital. This finding is consistent with conservation of resources (COR) theory, which suggests that positive identity resources enhance individuals' ability to acquire additional psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

**Table 4-4: Regression Analysis: Professional Self-Identity and Psychological Capital**

DV	Input vari.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Beta	t
PCA	PSI	0.74	0.55	1170.97***	0.74	34.22***

#### 4.3.3 Relationship Between Psychological Capital and Work Well-Being

To examine the direct relationship between psychological capital and work well-being, regression analysis was applied. The results showed a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$ ). Each dimension of psychological capital demonstrated significant contributions to work well-being, with optimism ( $\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$ ) and resilience ( $\beta = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ) showing particularly strong effects. These results emphasize the critical role of psychological capital in enhancing employees' ability to thrive in demanding work environments.

**Table 4-5: Regression Analysis: Psychological Capital and Work Well-Being**

DV	Input vari.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Beta	t
WWB	PCA	0.85	0.72	2468.01***	0.85	49.68***

#### 4.3.4 Mediating Role of Psychological Capital

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to assess the mediating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between professional self-identity and work well-being. The mediation analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.28, p < 0.01$ ), with psychological capital fully mediating the relationship. This finding underscores the importance of psychological resources as a conduit through which professional self-identity influences well-being. The results suggest that fostering psychological capital can amplify the benefits of a strong professional identity.

#### 4.4 Differences Across Demographic Variables

The study also explored variations in professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being across demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, and tenure. ANOVA tests revealed significant differences in all three constructs across educational backgrounds, with participants holding advanced degrees reporting higher scores. Gender differences were significant for work well-being, with female respondents reporting slightly higher emotional well-being than their male counterparts. Age and tenure also showed significant variations, suggesting that experience in the industry enhances professional self-identity and psychological capital.

### 4.5 Thematic Insights from Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of interview data provided qualitative depth to the quantitative findings. Participants highlighted the role of organizational support, peer recognition, and ethical training in shaping their professional self-identity. Psychological capital was frequently linked to personal coping mechanisms, mentorship, and company-sponsored resilience programs. Work well-being emerged as a multidimensional construct influenced by job satisfaction, work-life balance, and a sense of purpose.

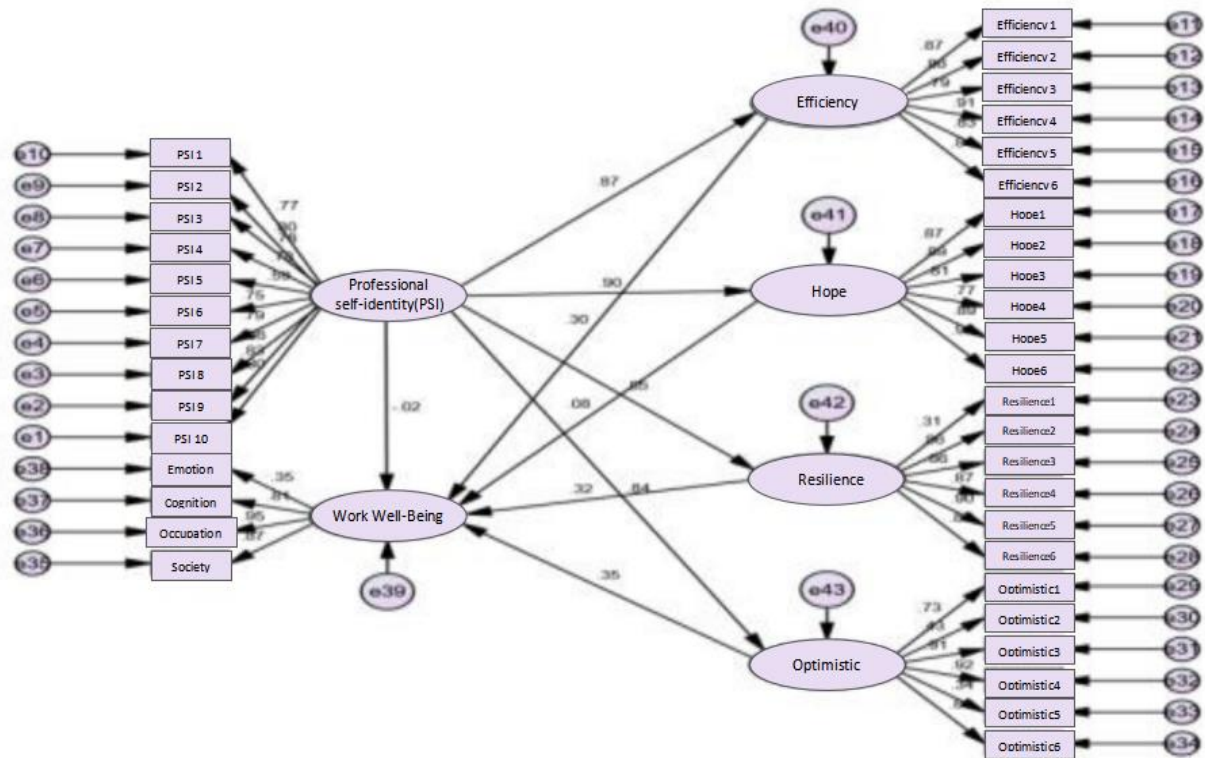


Figure 4-1: Structural Equation Modeling Results

### 4.6 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

A summary of the hypothesis testing is presented in Table 4-20. All proposed hypotheses were supported, confirming the positive relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being, as well as the mediating role of psychological capital.

Table 4-6: Summary of Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis	Result
H1: The professional self-identity of sales representatives in pharmaceutical companies has a significant positive effect on their work well-being.	Established
H2: The professional self-identity of sales representatives in pharmaceutical companies has a significant positive effect on their psychological capital appreciation.	Established
H3: Psychological capital appreciation among sales representatives in pharmaceutical companies has a significant positive effect on their work well-being.	Established
H4: Psychological capital appreciation fully mediates the relationship between professional self-identity and work well-being among sales representatives in pharmaceutical companies.	Established

### 4.7 Interpretation of Key Findings

The results of this study offer important insights into the dynamics of professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being within the pharmaceutical sales sector. The significant mediating role of psychological capital highlights its importance as a strategic focus for

organizations aiming to enhance employee well-being. The findings also suggest that targeted interventions, such as resilience training and professional development programs, can foster a positive work environment, benefiting both employees and organizations.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Overview of Key Findings**

The results of this study highlight the complex and interdependent relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being for pharmaceutical sales representatives in China. The findings confirm that professional self-identity has a direct and significant positive influence on both psychological capital and work well-being. Psychological capital, comprising self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, not only directly contributes to work well-being but also mediates the relationship between professional self-identity and work well-being. These results provide critical insights into the psychological dynamics of a profession that is often stigmatized and underscores the importance of fostering a supportive and resource-rich environment for employees.

### **5.2 Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of employee well-being by bridging concepts from identity theory, positive psychology, and organizational behavior. It validates the relevance of professional self-identity as a core psychological resource that shapes employees' experiences and outcomes in the workplace. These findings align with conservation of resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals strive to acquire and protect valuable resources, such as self-identity and psychological capital, to enhance their well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Furthermore, the mediating role of psychological capital offers a nuanced understanding of the pathways through which professional self-identity impacts work well-being. This aligns with Sun and Zuo's (2024c) assertion that inclusive leadership and organizational equity play crucial roles in enabling employees to access and leverage psychological resources effectively. In this context, psychological capital acts as a bridge, translating the cognitive and emotional benefits of a strong professional self-identity into tangible well-being outcomes. This research also extends the application of psychological capital beyond traditional and high-status professions, such as teaching and healthcare, into the stigmatized and underexplored domain of pharmaceutical sales. This broadens the theoretical scope of positive psychology and highlights the adaptability of psychological constructs across diverse occupational settings.

### **5.3 Practical Implications**

The practical implications of this study are profound, particularly for pharmaceutical companies and human resource practitioners. Enhancing professional self-identity among sales representatives can serve as a critical lever for improving both individual and organizational outcomes. Organizations can implement targeted interventions, such as professional development programs, mentorship initiatives, and ethical training, to strengthen employees' sense of identity and purpose within their roles. As Sun and Zuo (2023a) emphasize, organizational factors, including leadership support and recognition, are essential for fostering motivation and commitment among employees. Psychological capital emerged as a pivotal factor in this study, mediating the relationship between professional self-identity and work well-being. This underscores the value of investing in training programs that enhance employees' psychological resources. For example, resilience training, optimism-building workshops, and self-efficacy enhancement initiatives can equip employees with the tools needed to navigate workplace challenges effectively. These strategies resonate with the findings of Sun, Zuo, Huang, and Wen (2024), who advocate for bridging cultural and organizational gaps through targeted capacity-building initiatives. The findings also suggest that work well-being is a multidimensional construct influenced by emotional, cognitive, and social factors. Pharmaceutical companies should therefore adopt a holistic approach to employee well-being, addressing not only material needs, such as salaries and benefits, but also psychological and social needs. Creating a supportive



organizational culture, promoting work-life balance, and recognizing employees' contributions can significantly enhance their sense of well-being. These strategies align with Sun and Zuo's (2023b) call for integrating organizational factors into employee motivation frameworks to create sustainable and empowering work environments.

#### **5.4 Contextual and Cultural Considerations**

The cultural context of China plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics observed in this study. In a collectivist culture like China, professional self-identity is closely tied to social and organizational values, as well as societal expectations. The findings highlight that employees' sense of belonging and alignment with their professional roles is critical for their psychological and emotional well-being. This aligns with Sun and Zuo's (2024) insights on cross-cultural collaboration, where the integration of individual and collective goals is vital for achieving organizational harmony. Additionally, the study underscores the influence of demographic variables, such as age, gender, and educational background, on professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. These findings suggest that tailored interventions may be necessary to address the unique needs and experiences of different employee groups. For instance, younger employees may benefit from career guidance and mentorship, while experienced employees may require recognition and opportunities for professional growth. Gender-sensitive policies that address the unique challenges faced by female employees, particularly in terms of work-life balance and career advancement, can further enhance organizational equity and inclusion.

#### **5.5 Comparison with Existing Literature**

The results of this study are consistent with prior research emphasizing the positive impact of professional self-identity on employee outcomes. Ashforth and Mael (1989) highlighted the role of identity in fostering organizational commitment and engagement, a finding echoed in this study's demonstration of professional self-identity as a key determinant of work well-being. Similarly, the mediating role of psychological capital aligns with Luthans et al.'s (2007) work, which identified psychological resources as critical enablers of employee performance and resilience. However, this study also extends existing knowledge by focusing on a stigmatized and underexplored profession. The findings highlight the unique challenges faced by pharmaceutical sales representatives, such as societal stigma and high job demands, and demonstrate the potential of psychological resources to mitigate these challenges. This perspective builds on Sun and Zuo's (2023c) exploration of employee helping behavior, emphasizing the importance of psychological and organizational support in fostering positive workplace dynamics.

#### **5.6 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the temporal dynamics of professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, which could be mitigated through the use of objective measures and third-party evaluations in future research. The study's focus on Chinese pharmaceutical sales representatives limits the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and occupational contexts. Comparative studies across industries and countries would provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. Furthermore, future research could explore the role of additional mediating and moderating variables, such as organizational support, leadership styles, and cultural values, in shaping the relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This study underscores the critical importance of professional self-identity and psychological capital in enhancing the work well-being of pharmaceutical sales representatives in China. By demonstrating the mediating role of psychological capital, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how identity and psychological resources interact to influence employee outcomes. These findings have significant theoretical and practical implications, highlighting the need for organizations to invest in identity-building initiatives and psychological resource development. Incorporating these strategies into organizational policies and practices can not only improve employee well-being but also enhance organizational performance and sustainability. As Sun, Zuo, Liu, Huang, and Wen (2024) emphasize, true equity and inclusion require a holistic approach that addresses both individual and organizational dimensions. By fostering a supportive and resource-rich environment, pharmaceutical companies can empower their employees to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the healthcare ecosystem.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1 Revisiting the Study Objectives and Key Findings**

This study was designed to explore the complex interplay among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being in the context of Chinese pharmaceutical sales representatives. It addressed a significant gap in the literature by examining how these constructs interrelate within a profession marked by both high demands and societal stigma. The results revealed that professional self-identity positively influences psychological capital and work well-being, with psychological capital serving as a critical mediator. These findings extend the theoretical understanding of employee well-being while offering practical implications for enhancing workforce performance in a challenging occupational landscape. The study's outcomes confirm the fundamental role of professional self-identity as a psychological resource. It not only fosters a sense of purpose and belonging but also serves as the foundation for developing other critical resources, such as resilience and optimism. Psychological capital emerged as a dynamic and flexible construct that translates the benefits of professional identity into measurable improvements in work well-being. This mediating role underscores the interconnected nature of individual, psychological, and contextual factors, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding employee experiences in demanding work environments.

### **6.2 Theoretical Contributions**

This research advances the theoretical discourse in multiple ways, providing novel insights into well-being theory, identity studies, and positive psychology. The findings validate and extend conservation of resources (COR) theory by demonstrating that professional self-identity is a critical resource that generates additional psychological assets. While existing studies have focused on the direct effects of identity on performance and engagement, this research highlights the indirect pathways mediated by psychological capital, offering a more nuanced understanding of how resources interact to enhance well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Moreover, the study broadens the scope of positive psychology by applying its principles to a non-traditional and stigmatized profession. While much of the literature has concentrated on high-status or inherently fulfilling roles, such as education and healthcare, this research emphasizes the adaptability of psychological constructs to roles often marginalized or misunderstood. This insight has significant implications for the inclusivity of psychological research, aligning with recent calls to extend positive psychology into diverse and underrepresented occupational contexts (Sun, Zuo, Liu, Huang, & Wen, 2024). The mediating role of psychological capital also contributes to the growing body of research on resource-based models of well-being. By demonstrating how psychological capital translates identity-related benefits into well-being outcomes, this study bridges gaps in the literature and offers a unified framework for understanding the mechanisms underlying employee experiences. This conceptual integration is particularly innovative in its application to the pharmaceutical sales industry, paving the way for future interdisciplinary research.

### **6.3 Practical Implications**

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the need for organizations to invest in identity-building initiatives and psychological capital development as strategic priorities. Enhancing professional self-identity requires targeted efforts, including mentorship programs, professional recognition, and the promotion of ethical and purpose-driven work practices. Organizations that prioritize these strategies are likely to foster a workforce that is not only more engaged and satisfied but also more resilient to stress and adversity. The role of psychological capital as a mediator suggests that interventions aimed at building resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy can significantly enhance employee well-being. Training programs that focus on developing these traits are particularly valuable in industries like pharmaceutical sales, where employees face high pressure and societal scrutiny. These interventions align with Sun and Zuo's (2024) emphasis on inclusive leadership and organizational equity, advocating for a workplace culture that empowers employees to thrive regardless of external challenges. Additionally, the study's findings provide actionable insights for addressing the stigma associated with pharmaceutical sales. By fostering a positive professional identity and equipping employees with robust psychological resources, organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of stigma and create a more supportive and empowering work environment. These strategies not only benefit individual employees but also contribute to broader organizational goals, including enhanced performance, reduced turnover, and improved reputation.

### **6.4 Limitations and Future Directions**

While this study offers significant contributions, it also has limitations that warrant consideration. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships, suggesting the need for longitudinal studies to capture the temporal dynamics of professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. Future research could explore how these relationships evolve over time, particularly in response to organizational interventions or shifts in the broader occupational landscape. The study's focus on Chinese pharmaceutical sales representatives, while valuable, also limits the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and professional contexts. Cross-cultural studies could provide deeper insights into how cultural norms and organizational practices shape the dynamics observed in this research. For example, the collectivist orientation of Chinese culture may amplify the importance of professional self-identity, a factor that could differ in individualistic cultural settings. Future research could also explore additional variables that may influence or mediate the relationships identified in this study. Organizational support, leadership styles, and cultural values are likely to play critical roles in shaping professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being. Investigating these factors could provide a more holistic understanding of the complex interactions at play and offer richer insights for both theory and practice.

### **6.5 Towards a New Paradigm of Employee Well-Being**

This study calls for a paradigm shift in how organizations and researchers approach employee well-being. Traditional models often focus on external motivators, such as salaries and benefits, while neglecting the psychological and identity-related dimensions of work. By demonstrating the interconnected roles of professional self-identity and psychological capital, this research advocates for a more integrated and resource-oriented perspective on well-being. The findings emphasize that well-being is not merely the absence of stress or dissatisfaction but a dynamic state of flourishing that requires alignment between individual identity, psychological resources, and organizational support. Organizations that recognize and act on this holistic perspective are better positioned to foster a thriving workforce, capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly complex and competitive world.

## 6.6 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive and innovative exploration of the relationships among professional self-identity, psychological capital, and work well-being within the pharmaceutical sales industry in China. It bridges gaps in the existing literature, offering new insights into the mechanisms underlying employee experiences in a stigmatized profession. By validating the critical roles of identity and psychological resources, the research not only advances theoretical understanding but also offers practical strategies for enhancing employee well-being. As the global workforce continues to evolve, the need for inclusive, resource-rich, and empowering work environments has never been more critical. This study contributes to this vision by demonstrating how professional self-identity and psychological capital can serve as levers for individual and organizational growth. It invites researchers and practitioners alike to rethink traditional approaches to well-being, embracing a more holistic and dynamic understanding of what it means to thrive at work.

## References

- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review, 14*(1), 20–39.
- Avey, J. B., Luthans, F., Smith, R. M., & Palmer, N. F. (2010). Impact of positive psychological capital on employee well-being over time. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*(1), 17–28.
- Chen, J., & Wang, Q. (2019). Professional self-identity and organizational commitment in the Chinese workplace. *Asian Business and Management, 18*(3), 234–252.
- Chen, L., Zhao, L., & Wang, Q. (2021). Professional stigma in pharmaceutical sales: Causes and consequences. *Chinese Journal of Business Research, 45*(3), 112–129.
- Danna, K., & Griffin, R. W. (1999). Health and well-being in the workplace: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Journal of Management, 25*(3), 357–384.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 34–43.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist, 44*(3), 513–524.
- Hobfoll, S. E., Halbesleben, J., Neveu, J. P., & Westman, M. (2018). Conservation of resources in the organizational context: The reality of resources and their consequences. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 5*, 103–128.
- Li, W., & Zhao, X. (2022). Challenges in professional identity for pharmaceutical sales representatives. *Asian Journal of Business Ethics, 17*(4), 56–74.
- Liu, X., Zhang, Z., & Wang, Y. (2020). Psychological resources and employee well-being: Insights from China. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 41*(2), 45–56.
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). *Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge*. Oxford University Press.
- Luthans, F., Youssef-Morgan, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2015). *Psychological capital and beyond*. Oxford University Press.
- Sun, P., & Zuo, X. (2023a). The missing piece: Incorporating organizational factors in employee motivation research. *International Journal of Science and Business, 25*(1), 24–33.
- Sun, P., & Zuo, X. (2023b). Unleashing the power of employee helping behavior: A comprehensive study. *International Journal of Science and Business, 25*(1), 34–66.
- Sun, P., & Zuo, X. (2023c). The rise of Chinese entrepreneurs in Canada: From immigrant to influencer. *International Journal of Science and Business, 25*(1), 12–23.
- Sun, P., & Zuo, X. (2024a). Philosophical foundations of management research: A comprehensive review. *Journal of Scientific Reports, 6*(1), 1–22.
- Sun, P., & Zuo, X. (2024b). Evolution and history of research philosophy. *Journal of Management Research, 24*(1), 28–61.
- Sun, P., & Zuo, X. (2024c). Inclusive leadership: Beyond diversity to true equity. *International Journal of Science and Business, 33*(1), 34–43.
- Sun, P., Zuo, X., Huang, H., & Wen, M. (2024). Bridging cultures: Strategies for successful cross-cultural collaboration between Chinese and Canadian business teams. *International Journal of Science and Business, 32*(1), 96–105.

- Sun, P., Zuo, X., Liu, X., Huang, H., & Wen, M. (2024). Inclusive leadership: Beyond diversity to true equity. *International Journal of Science and Business*, 33(1), 34–43.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.
- Youssef-Morgan, C. M., & Luthans, F. (2012). Psychological capital and well-being. *Stress and Health*, 28(3), 193–194.
- Zhang, L., Liu, W., & Wang, J. (2021). The role of professional self-identity in promoting work engagement. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 124, 103–112.
- Zhao, L., Zhang, Y., & Wang, J. (2023). Enhancing psychological capital to improve teacher resilience. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 102, 1–10.

**Published by**

**IJSAB**  
**International**

