Professional Identity of Normal University Students from the Perspective of Public Service Motivation
——The Moderating Effect of Life History Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the influence mechanism of public service motivation on teacher professional identity of normal students will help to enhance the willingness of normal students to teach. The public service motivation scale, teacher professional identity scale and life history strategy scale were used to measure 402 normal college students. It was found that: (1) there were significant positive correlations among teacher professional identity, public service motivation and life history strategy of normal university students; (2) Public service motivation could positively predict teacher professional identity of normal university students; (3) Life history strategy moderated the relationship between public service motivation and teachers' professional identity to a certain extent. Compared with the individuals with the "slow" strategy, the public service motivation of the individuals with the "fast" strategy had a more obvious effect on the promotion of teachers' professional identity. The results reveal the formation mechanism of teachers' professional identity, expand the scope of public service motivation, and have a certain guiding role in the career development of normal university students.

Keywords: *public service motivation, teacher professional identity, life history strategy, normal student*

1. INTRODUCTION

The construction of high-level teachers is the fundamental guarantee to improve the quality of education system and the level of public cultural services. Teachers have been a special profession with self-sacrifice and dedication since ancient times. This kind of professional ethics requires teachers to have higher professional rational beliefs, strong public service awareness and practical ability.As the main source group of future teachers, normal students' professional quality, professionalism and willingness to teach have attracted the attention of all sectors of society [1].In addition, normal students are in the pre service training stage of teachers' professional development. Their teachers' professional identity will predict their willingness to teach, and further affect their whole career development.

Individual career development is deeply influenced by their growth experience. Normal students' career identity is rooted in social existence and is a specific reflection of specific social ideology, which must reflect a certain social, family and educational background

[2].The theory of life history, derived from the theory of evolution, is used to explain how individuals allocate limited resources to adapt to their living environment during their growth.Individuals who grow up under different economic conditions form unique environmental adaptation strategies -- life history strategies.Therefore, from the perspective of life history strategy, this study examines the impact of normal students' public service motivation on their teachers' professional identity, in order to reveal the impact of environmental and personal factors on normal students' teachers' professional development, and provide ideas for further enriching the field of action of public service motivation theory and deepening the formation mechanism of normal students' teachers' professional identity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teachers' professional identity of normal students

Teacher professional identity refers to the synthesis of

teachers' cognition, experience and behavioral tendencies towards their profession and their internalized roles [3]. Teachers' professional identity is not a static cognition, but a process of development and change. It is a dynamic balance process between individual and environment caused by the interpretation of the interaction between their own words and deeds, daily practice and environment [4]. From the perspective of professional and career development of teachers, normal university students belong to the category of pre-service teachers. Teacher professional identity of normal university students is a positive attitude towards their future teaching profession and a positive preparation for the teaching profession in college. Li xinyu divided the teacher's role attitude of normal university students into four aspects: professional will, professional expectation, professional values and professional efficacy [5].

At present, researches on teachers' professional identity in China have entered a period of stable development [6]. Researches on teachers' professional identity of normal university students mostly focus on the groups of free normal university students, influencing factors and formation mechanism. For example, the research of Ye Xiaoli (2021) found that normal students' self-concept and learning investment can positively predict teachers' professional identity, and learning investment plays an intermediary role between self-concept and teachers' professional identity[7]; Zhang Yan (2011) investigated the teachers' professional identity of free normal students and found that free normal students' identity of teachers' internal value is higher than external value and will action identity. Teachers' professional identity has a significant positive correlation with learning motivation. Teachers' professional identity can stably predict their sense of academic achievement [8]. Although empirical studies have shown that normal students' teachers' professional identity is generally positive and their professional cognition is the highest [9], when Li Bing investigated the changes of new teachers' professional identity, he found that after one year of employment, the new teachers' professional identity decreased significantly in all dimensions, especially in job satisfaction [10]. It can be seen that teachers' professional identity will change with the passage of time and the transformation of normal students' identity and role. Previous studies have pointed out that the decline of teachers' professional identity is caused by social factors such as salary. On the other hand, individual factors should not be ignored, such as the lack of teaching experience and the limitation of personalized teaching style in practical teaching, which can lead to the decrease of autonomous decision-making efficiency and thus the decrease of professional identity [10]. Hence, from the perspective of teachers' internal value and motivation, combined with the particularity of teachers' professional development, it is of great significance to explore the factors affecting teachers' professional identity of normal students.

2.2 public service motivation

Public service motivation is a classic proposition in the field of public administration science. Scholars predict the willingness and execution of public service activities of civil servants by measuring their concern and love for public service. Perry (1990) first defined public service motivation as the psychological tendency of individuals to sensitively reflect important and unique goals of public institutions [11]. Later, on the basis of this definition, scholars combined public service motivation with different research fields and objects to expand the connotation and extension of public service motivation. For example, Vandenabeele defines public service motivation as going beyond the attitudes, values and beliefs of individuals or small groups, focusing on the interests of broader groups and organizations, and inspiring individuals to take appropriate measures [12]. From the perspective of psychology, Liu Bangcheng, a Chinese scholar, believes that public service motivation is the internal power source of individuals, and in essence, it is an altruistic motivation to maintain individuals engaged in public service [13].

The research on public service motivation is mainly concentrated in the field of public utilities. And the objects are mainly civil servants, social workers, soldiers and doctors, and few are teachers or normal students.In the few studies on teacher-related groups, they mainly explore the antecedent variables of public service motivation, which is, how to stimulate and maintain public service motivation, and rarely involve the outcome variables of public service motivation for teachers or normal university students. For example, Guo Yue (2020) found that the policy familiarity of publicly funded normal university students can significantly improve the motivation level of public service, especially the predictive incentive policy (employment policy, staffing security) can significantly improve the ratio of normal university students to devote themselves to public service when facing career choice [14].Yi Ben (2021) investigated the influencing factors of public service motivation by taking college teachers as the research object, and found that transactional, relational and developmental psychological contracts can positively predict public service motivation, and deep-seated emotional labor can strengthen the relationship between psychological contract and public service motivation [15]. From the previous research results in the field of public management, there are at least three outcome variables of public service motivation, such as job satisfaction, turnover intention and effort. According to the existing research results and the particularity of teachers' work, it can be inferred that normal students with high level of public service motivation may show higher teachers' professional identity.

2.3 Life history strategy

The life history theory derived from the theory of evolution emphasizes that individual experiences with different economic conditions and growth backgrounds form a set of unique environmental coping strategies, that is, considering how to allocate and maximize benefits under the condition of limited resources [16]. The acquisition of environmental adaptation strategies is deeply influenced by individual life experience. Researchers found that individuals who grow up under the conditions of lack of resources and harsh environment are prone to lack of security. They have uncertain expectations for the future and tend to form fast strategies, that is, they mature earlier, expect to occupy a lot of resources in a short time, have more children, but make less parental investment. On the contrary, children growing up in wealthy families are full of confidence in the future and pay more attention to the quality of life. They are more inclined to form slow strategies. Such individuals are late marriage, late childbirth or delayed satisfaction [17] [18].

Teachers are not only a profession that needs dedication, but also a profession that really practices "it is never too old to live and learn". Becoming a teacher means putting down the heart of fame and wealth, concentrating on teaching skills and subject knowledge, and sacrificing oneself to illuminate students. From this point of view, normal students with slow strategy seem to be more in line with the requirements of teaching work. They are not eager for quick success and instant benefits and are willing to spend time and energy to improve their professional ability; If the normal students with fast strategy can't study the teaching process and teaching and research activities, it is difficult to adapt to the teaching practice.In addition, when studying intergenerational altruistic behavior, Fang Xueting found that the ratio of intergenerational altruistic behavior of "fast" strategy group was significantly lower than that of individuals with slow strategy [19]. As mentioned above, public service motivation is essentially an altruistic motivation. Combined with Fang Xuiting's research results, it can be inferred that compared with normal university students with fast strategy style, slow strategy students are more willing to study teaching skills, improve teachers' quality and improve teaching quality, so as to obtain higher professional identity of teachers.

2.4 hypothesis

To sum up, this study proposes a moderating effect model to explore the impact of public service motivation on teachers' professional identity and the moderating effect of life history strategy. Specific assumptions are as follows: H1: Public service motivation can positively predict teacher professional identity of normal university students; H 2: Life history strategy has a moderating

effect on public service motivation and teacher professional identity.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research object

In this study, 450 normal university students were selected from three provincial normal universities in Shaanxi Province by stratified sampling and convenient sampling, 429 questionnaires were collected and 402 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective rate of 93.7%, after removing 27 pieces of data with missing information and incomplete filling.Among them, there are 206 boys and 196 girls; 106 freshmen, 100 sophomores, 94 juniors and 102 seniors; 141 in liberal arts, 201 in science and 59 in art; the only-child students numbered 197, and non-only-child 205.

3.2 research tool

3.2.1 Normal students' professional identity scale

This study adopted the normal students' professional identity scale prepared by Wang Xinqiang[20]. The scale is a 5-point scoring scale, divided into four dimensions of occupational will, occupational value, occupational efficacy and occupational will and expectation, a total of 12 questions. The higher the score of each dimension and total score, the stronger the student's professional identity as a teacher. The total reliability of the scale (Cronbach α) = 0.933.

3.2.2 Public Service Motivation Scale

We adopted the public Service Motivation Scale adapted by BaoYuanjie (2016) [21]. On the basis of maintaining the core meaning of public service motivation, the scale is built with good reliability and validity combined with Chinese local characteristics. The scale includes four dimensions: attractiveness of public policy-making, commitment to public interests, compassion and self-sacrifice, with a total of 8 questions. The scale adopts a 5-point scoring method. The higher the score is, the higher the level of public service motivation is. The overall reliability of the scale Cronbachα= 0.911.

3.2.3 Life History Strategy Scale

We adopted the Chinese Simplified Life History Strategy Scale translated and revised by Chen Binbin et al. (2017) [22]. The scale consists of 20 items and is scored on a 7-point scale (-3= strongly disagree; 3= strongly agree), the higher the score, the more obvious the tendency of slow life history strategy. In this study, the internal consistency reliability of the scale was good (Cronbach α=0.943).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Common method deviation control

In order to avoid common methodological bias caused by self-reporting scales, this study was controlled mainly through research procedures: First, questionnaires were filled in anonymously; Secondly, after data collection was completed, Harman single factor test was used to find that six factors with characteristic roots greater than 1 were extracted without rotation. Among them, the variance explanation rate of the first factor was 28.53%, less than the critical point of 40%, indicating that there was no serious common method bias.

4.2 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis test

Table 1 lists the mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of each variable and its dimensions. The results showed that teachers' professional identity, public service motivation and life history strategy were positively correlated. In terms of dimensions, except professional will, all dimensions of teachers' professional identity are significantly positively correlated with the four dimensions of public service motivation.

Table 1 Variable description statistics and correlation analysis

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Policy attractiveness	4.03	0.86	1.00									
2.Benefit commitment	4.21	0.84	0.70**	1.00								
3.Compassion	3.93	0.81	0.67**	0.62**	1.00							
4.Self-sacrifice	3.95	0.89	0.71**	0.66**	0.67**	1.00						
5.Professional commitment	3.17	0.66	0.04	-0.01	0.07	0.14**	1.00					
6.Professional value	3.77	0.90	0.20**	0.09	0.16**	0.29**	0.48**	1.00				
7.Career effectiveness	3.94	0.86	0.19**	0.15**	0.17**	0.26**	0.50**	0.76**	1.00			
8.Career aspirations	4.03	0.84	0.23**	0.23**	0.20**	0.27**	0.37**	0.73**	0.78**	1.00		
9.Public service motivation	4.03	0.74	0.90**	0.86**	0.85**	0.89**	0.07	0.21**	0.22**	0.27**	1.00	
10.Teachers' professional identity	3.85	0.78	0.20**	0.13**	0.18**	0.29**	0.54**	0.91**	0.91**	0.88**	0.23**	1.00
11.Life history strategy	3.38	2.12	0.22**	0.22**	0.14**	0.23**	0.13**	0.28**	0.33**	0.40**	0.23**	0.34**

Note: * $P< 0.05$, ** $P< 0.01$.

4.3 Moderating effect test

When gender and grade were controlled, Model 1 in PROCESS for SPSS developed by Hayes (2013) was adopted to investigate the moderating effect of life history strategy on public service motivation and teacher's professional identity [23]. In order to avoid the influence of collinearity on data analysis, all variables were standardized before entering the model. The results were shown in Table 2. Both public service motivation (β=0.14, P =0.005) and life history strategy (β=0.31, P < 0.001) had significant positive predictive effects on professional identity. The interaction terms of independent variables and moderators had significant regression coefficients (β=-0.04, P =0.06), indicating that life history strategy had a moderating effect on the relationship between normal university students' public service motivation and teachers' professional identity to a certain extent.

Table 2 Moderating effect test

Model		Model fitting index			Regression coefficient test			
Dependent variable	Predictor variable	R	R^2	*F*	β	*t*	*p*	95%CI
Professional identity		0.43	0.19	17.98**				

gender	-0.21	-2.16	0.03	[-0.39,-0.02]
grade	-0.12	-2.86	0.01	[-0.20,-0.04]
Public service motivation (P)	0.14	2.81	0.005	[0.04,0.23]
Life history strategy (L)	0.31	6.61	<0.001	[0.11,0.40]
P×L	-0.07	-1.88	0.06	[-0.14,0.003]

Note: **p<0.01.

As the moderating variable in this study is a continuous variable, and the coefficient of the interaction term is at the marginal significant level (0.05 < P < 0.1), Johnson-Neyman method (J-N method for short) is used to test the moderating effect in order to find out the change range of the moderating variable in a more detailed way.Find the value range of the regulating variable when the simple slope is significantly not 0 [24].

It was found (FIG. 1) that when the value of the life history strategy is less than 0.4113, the simple slope is significantly not 0 (95%CI does not include 0). In other words, when the score of life history strategy is lower, the tendency of "fast" strategy is more obvious, and the public service motivation has a more obvious positive predictive effect on teacher professional identity.
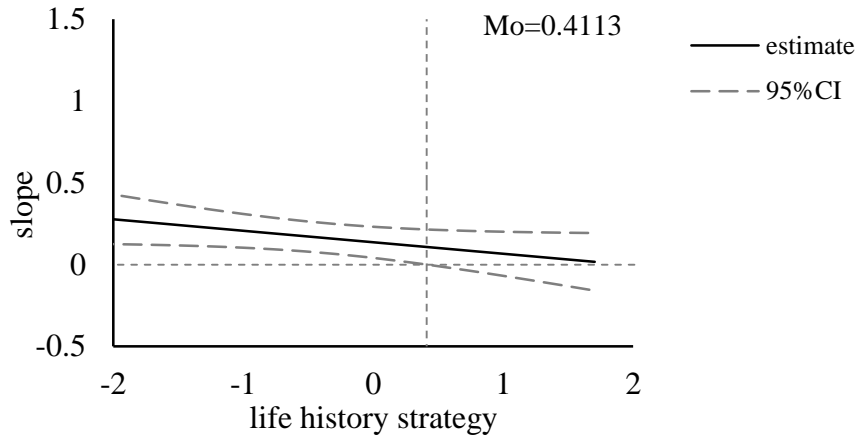

Figure 1 The moderating effect of life history strategy on the relationship between public service motivation and teachers' professional identity

In order to clearly obtain the influence of public service motivation on teachers' professional identity under different life history strategies, this study also conducted a simple slope test. According to the regression equation, the influence of public service motivation on teachers' professional identity in the "slow" strategy (1 standard deviation above average score) and "fast" strategy (1 standard deviation below average score) was calculated. The results showed that the improvement of public service motivation will not significantly affect the improvement of teachers' professional identity in the "slow" strategy (Simple Intercept = 0.931, T =5.4205, P =0.001; Simple slope = 0.0664, T =0.9584, P =0.3384); In the "fast" strategy, teachers' professional identity will increase significantly with the promotion of public service motivation (Simple Intercept =0.3032, T =1.8987, P =0.0583, Simple Slope = 0.207, T =3.9119, P =0.0001).

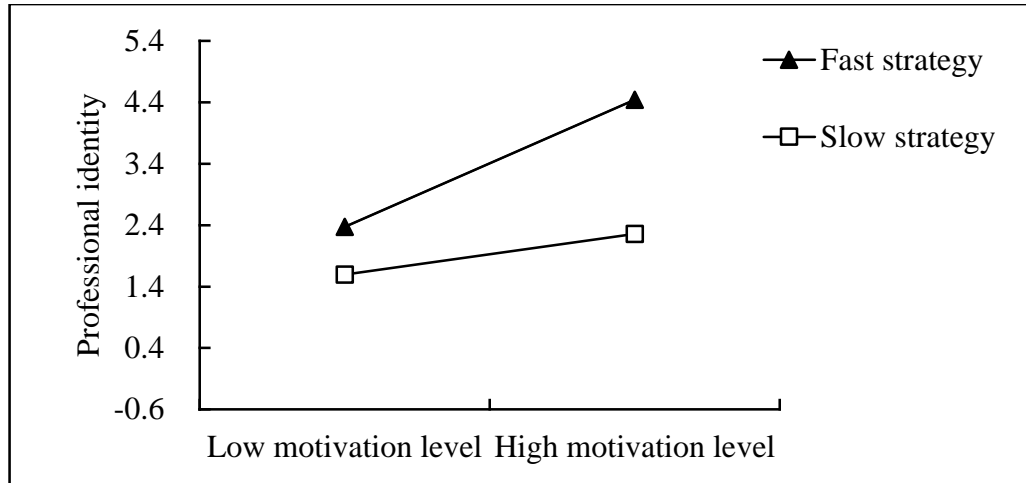**Figure 2** Schematic diagram of simple slope test of adjustment variable

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study applied the theory of public service motivation to normal university students and explored the influence mechanism of teacher professional identity of normal university students in combination with the life history theory. Some interesting and valuable research results were obtained, which would have certain enlightening significance for the theoretical and practical analysis of related fields in the future.

5.1 Correlation analysis

This study found that there was a significant positive correlation between public service motivation and teacher professional identity, which verified hypothesis 1, namely, the higher the level of public service motivation of normal university students, the stronger the teacher professional identity. However, in terms of dimensions, the study found that the scores of teachers' professional will and public service motivation were not significant. The professional will dimension in the professional identity scale of normal university students examines whether normal university students are willing to engage in teaching activities for a long time from the perspective of time. From the results of relevant analysis, public service motivation seems to only stimulate normal university students' willingness to teach, but does not play a role in maintaining it. Given the current grim employment situation, it is not easy for normal university students to find a teaching job in their major immediately after graduation. But if you want to be a teacher for a long time, it will be affected by many factors. For example, When He Shuhu et al. (2021) investigated the occupational attractiveness of rural teachers, they found that salary level, working conditions, leadership work and promotion space had a positive impact on teachers' willingness to stay [25]. In addition, some studies have found that teachers' altruistic work value and preference for correcting social inequality in their work will affect job satisfaction and staff turnover [26].

There was a significant positive correlation between life history strategy and public service motivation, which was consistent with Fang Xueting's research results. Life history strategy is closely related to altruistic behavior [19]. There was a significant positive correlation between life history strategies and teachers' professional identity, which was consistent with the description of the handling styles of the two different life history strategy individuals mentioned above, that was, compared with the "fast" strategy individuals, the "slow" strategy individuals did not care about the temporary gains and losses, and they were easier to calm down and study teaching skills, so as to obtain a higher sense of teachers' professional identity.

5.2 The moderating effect of life history strategy

The moderating effect test of this study found an interesting result, that is, on the premise that there is a significant positive correlation between public service motivation, life history strategy and teacher professional identity, the interaction term of public service motivation and life history strategy has a negative impact on teacher professional identity (marginal significant). In order to clearly reveal the moderating effect of life history strategy on public service motivation and teacher professional identity, the J-N method and simple slope test were used to demonstrate the moderating effect. J-N method found that when the tendency of life history "fast" strategy was more obvious, the impact of public service motivation on the positive change of teacher professional identity was more obvious. This result was also supported by the simple slope test. Compared with the "slow" strategy, the slope of the regression equation was statistically significant in the "fast" strategy. In addition, the intercept of the regression equation under the "slow" strategy (Simple Intercept = 0.931) was larger than that under the "fast" strategy (Simple Intercept =0.3032), which indicated that although the influence of public service motivation on teachers' professional identity

grows slowly under the "slow" strategy, However, the overall level of teachers' professional identity was still higher than the condition of "fast" strategy. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was verified.

It can be seen that under the condition of "slow" strategy, teacher professional identity has reached a certain height, which makes the influence of public service motivation on them decline. In the "fast" strategy, improving the public service motivation of normal university students can effectively improve teachers' professional identity and prompt them to quickly enter the role of teachers. In other words, when facing individuals with different life history strategy types, the role space of public service motivation is different: for individuals with "slow" strategy, they may already have high teacher professional identity. If they still want to strengthen their professional identity by improving public service motivation at this time, the effect will not good; When individuals with "fast" strategy want to change their life status through efforts, but lack clear values to guide them, the intervention of public service motivation makes them have a stronger sense of social responsibility and dedication, which will significantly improve their teachers' professional identity and sense of belonging.

6. EDUCATIONAL ENLIGHTENMENT AND REAEARCH PROSPECT

6.1 Educational enlightenment

Based on the conclusions of this study, several suggestions are put forward on standardizing the education of normal university students and improving the professional identity of normal university students.

First, optimize the allocation of educational resources and enhance the awareness of public service of normal university students. The results showed that public service motivation could significantly and positively predict teachers' professional identity of normal students. Normal university students belong to pre-service teachers. From the perspective of teacher career development, normal universities should set up corresponding courses, on the one hand, to help normal university students establish professional confidence and professional belief; On the other hand, schools should make normal university students truly feel the simplicity and true greatness of the teaching profession through visits, internships and listening to advanced deeds, so as to inspire students' spirit of sacrifice and enhance their sense of identity with the teaching profession [27]. From the perspective of talent training, colleges and universities should do a good job in communication and cooperation with local education management departments and employers, and do a good job in connection with teacher training, talent introduction, standardized management and difficulty solving, so as to make the training of normal students targeted, the quality of teacher

introduction guaranteed by employers and the transition of normal students' role and identity, From the establishment of policies and systems to the implementation, from hardware configuration to software assistance, we should effectively dispel the doubts of normal students about low wages and difficult employment as teachers, and engage in education and teaching at ease.

Second, We should optimize the teacher training system and take targeted measures to comprehensively improve the sense of belonging of teachers in normal university students. The moderating effect of this study found that improving public service motivation can significantly improve teachers' professional identity of fast strategy normal students compared with slow strategy normal students. Combined with the actual situation of normal universities, the number of girls is more than that of boys, including many students from rural areas or poor family economic conditions. Therefore, it is the primary intention of most normal students, especially girls, to choose to become teachers after graduation. However, the longitudinal study conducted by Li Bing (2019) found that compared with male teachers, female teachers who had been employed for one year had a faster decline in teacher identity and a higher turnover rate [10]. On the one hand, colleges and universities should improve the service consciousness of normal students and strengthen the dedication of teachers' profession through education, teaching and educational practice; On the other hand, colleges and universities should infiltrate the content of correcting irrational beliefs and cultivating frustration consciousness in teacher education courses, so that normal students can understand that teaching and educating people is a long process, correctly face the difficulties encountered in practical learning and work, and devote themselves to studying the skills of teaching and educating people. In addition, both universities and employers should give some practical help to normal students according to the actual situation, which can solve the task conflict of multiple roles, so that normal students can feel the warmth from their alma mater and units before and after work, so as to improve their sense of belonging Peace of mind teaching.

6.2 Research prospect

First, the significance test of the moderator in this study is only at the marginally significant level, which indicates that there may be some important moderator variables or control variables that play an important role between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Future research can relatively systematically examine different types of the role of intermediate variables between public service motivation and teachers' professional identity.

Second, teachers' professional identity is both a state

and a process. This study reveals that the formation mechanism of professional identity is slightly weak by means of cross-sectional research. In the future, we need to consider investigating the development and changes of teachers' professional identity before and after employment in the form of vertical tracking, especially through the vertical tracking of internal action mechanism. It can better reveal the changing trend of different mediating or moderating factors over time and provide a theoretical basis for the educational administrative department to take targeted measures.

7. CONCLUSION

(1) There is a significant positive correlation between normal students' public service motivation, life history strategies and teachers' professional identity;

(2) Life history strategy has a moderating effect on the relationship between public service motivation and teacher professional identity to some extent. Compared with normal university students with the tendency of "slow" strategy, public service motivation of normal university students with the tendency of "fast" strategy has a stronger promoting effect on teacher professional identity.

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