

Why current Chinese youth are enthusiastic about taking the civil service exam

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Abstract. This paper will explore the reasons why young people in China are enthusiastic about taking the civil service exam in the current employment market context, and conduct a specific analysis using Shandong Province as an example. Through the analysis of political science theory, economic theory, and sociological perspectives, this study delves into the sources of attractiveness of civil servant positions to young people from multiple perspectives, and compares the situation in Shandong Province with other regions and countries. The main purpose of this paper is to propose several reasons that lead to Shandong Province's love for taking the civil service exam, to facilitate scholars who are confused about this phenomenon to have a deeper understanding.

Keywords: Chinese civil service exam, Cause analysis, Chinese civil servant boom.

1. Introduction

As one of the provinces with a large population in China, Shandong Province has always been among the top in terms of the number of applicants for the civil service examination in the country. Statistics show that in the past few years, the number of people applying for civil service in Shandong Province has been increasing every year, especially among college graduates, the idea of taking the civil service exam has become increasingly common. This phenomenon reminds us that civil servants are not only a career choice, but also an important window reflecting the current socio-economic development and changes in young people's employment concepts.

The announcement of the 2024 civil service examination in Shandong Province has been released. All levels of government agencies in the province plan to hire 10569 civil servants through the examination (including 708 for provincial-level agencies and their direct affiliated institutions, 1854 for municipal agencies, and 8007 for county-level and below). The number of recruits has reached a new high in recent years, an increase of 2314 people or 28% compared to the previous year. From the past, the number of applicants reached 360000 in 2023, with 8255 recruited. In 2022, the number of applicants was 340000, with 7522 recruited in 2021, there were 300000 registrations and 6291 recruits. The most exaggerated thing is that in 2019, there were 240000 registrations and only 3047 admissions. The competition ratio was 80:1. Looking at fresh graduates again, the number of fresh graduates in Shandong Province was 800000 in 2023 and 790000 in 2022. From this, although the competition for the civil service profession is high and the job supply is not high, it is still an important career choice for fresh graduates. It can even be roughly estimated that nearly half of students will apply for the civil service exam after graduation, but the probability of being admitted is only a few percent. Compared to the situation of civil servants in foreign countries, only 3% of Japanese university students are willing to take the civil service exam, while civil servants in the UK are among the top 20 job averse rankings.

However, from the perspective of the income and salary level of civil servants, according to public data, the average monthly salary of junior civil servants in Shandong Province is about 6000 yuan, and some cadres with longer working hours can earn around 8000 yuan, which is relatively higher than the overall average salary of 80000 yuan in Shandong Province in 2023. We can see that there is no significant excess income in the profession of civil servants.

In economics, the core assumption of all theories is the rational person. People are rational and weigh their own gains and losses to make the best choice. From the above two aspects, the profession of civil servant is undoubtedly a highly competitive and less rewarding one, but people still have a

strong attachment to this profession. It seems that "rational people" do not exist here. So, what is the reason for people's irrational pursuit of the profession of civil servant? Does this violate our assumption of being a rational person?

The following article will mainly explore the reasons that lead to enthusiasm for taking the civil service exam. We will introduce the Pareto business cycle theory of political science, economic and sociological perspectives, and attempt to explain why this has become a rational career choice for college students. We will discuss it from the perspectives of sociological preferences, political science, insufficient internship experience, mismatched industrial needs, and grey income.

2. The research purpose of the paper

The research purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons for the enthusiasm for taking the civil service exam, as well as to deeply analyze the comprehensive impact of this phenomenon on the overall social system, and discuss a reasonable number of civil servants. Therefore, I hope I can help interested scholars better understand China's political system and administrative characteristics.

3. Analysis of the reasons for the popularity of civil servants

3.1. Sociological analysis: Local employment preferences

Local employment preference refers to people's tendency to work in familiar areas or hometowns. This preference may be related to factors such as individual and local emotional bonds, social networks, and cultural identity. This also aligns with the pursuit of stable employment and social status by most Chinese people.

Both students from the west and the east are familiar with the eastern cities. According to local employment preferences, the eastern cities have become one of their important job selection areas. Moreover, economically strong provinces are also important employment preferences for graduates. According to statistics, the proportion of new graduates who are seeking jobs reached 39.87% in 2023, while the proportion of the new graduates in Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai has also exceeded 10%. In 2023, Shandong Province ranks fifth in terms of GDP in the country and has strong economic strength, making it undoubtedly one of the important career target areas for graduates. So, from the above two aspects, Shandong Province has attracted many fresh graduates. So why do so many fresh graduates choose to take the civil service exam? Let's study from another perspective.

3.2. From the perspective of political science, the phenomenon of civil servant fever can be analyzed using Pareto elite cycle theory and promotion difficulties

The Pareto elite cycle theory refers to a power cycle phenomenon that exists in society. This cycle has led to a significant impact on the promotion and advancement of senior officials over lower-level officials. The recruitment needs of employers directly affect the employment choices of college graduates. The employment supervision system of employers is not perfect, and their concepts are not correct. There are usually issues such as prioritizing higher education, employment discrimination, especially gender discrimination, prioritizing experience, and favoritism in private enterprises, the appointment of positions is usually decided by the boss alone. And we can know that bosses like to use their confidants or relatives to be responsible for some key or "oily" departments. Even ordinary employees in private enterprises who work diligently cannot receive sufficient attention and promotion due to their lack of relationship with their bosses. So, when seeking a job, without a relatively strong relationship, individuals would not want to enter a private enterprise. According to a survey conducted by the China Youth Research Center in 2022 on the factors that college students consider the most when choosing future careers, 86.4% of people are most concerned about economic income, 70.24% of people are concerned about power and promotion opportunities, and 65.88% of people hope for comfortable work. This result indicates that college students still have a clear utilitarian mentality when choosing careers. Our own financial interests firmly occupy the first place.

If entering a private enterprise, due to the difficulty of promotion, one's own future will become something that can be seen at a glance. This also makes entering private enterprises not an attractive option. On the contrary, looking at the civil service system the civil service system indicates that if certain conditions are met, corresponding treatment can be obtained, which is relatively more transparent. For some people, if their work experience is long enough, they can enjoy equal treatment even if they cannot obtain the corresponding position. Compared to private enterprises, power and promotion opportunities are more transparent, which also makes the job of civil servant highly sought after.

3.3. From an economic analysis: mismatch between industry development needs and university majors

From an economic perspective, the phenomenon of civil servant fever can be analyzed from two aspects: industry development needs and professional mismatch.

There is a certain relationship between the phenomenon of civil servant fever and the development needs of the industry. In the process of economic development, specific industries or fields may require many professional talents to support their development. However, due to the imbalance of market supply and demand and information asymmetry, there is a mismatch between the employment demand of some industries and the actual talent supply. In the civil service craze, some professionals find it difficult to find job opportunities related to their professional knowledge and skills. The civil service exam is a general exam with low professional requirements, and even an outsider can complete excellent exam results through a certain amount of time of learning. Moreover, civil servant positions provide stable salaries and benefits, making it relatively easier to meet the economic needs and pursuit of employment stability of candidates. This has led to some candidates from non-related majors choosing to apply for civil service instead of seeking employment opportunities in their professional fields.

According to public data statistics, the top ten majors in Shandong Province's 2023 college entrance examination are psychology, artificial intelligence, performance, Japanese, electrical engineering and automation, business management, intellectual property, painting, engineering cost, and chemistry. In contrast, the main industries in Shandong Province include agriculture, textiles, food industry, and heavy industry (mining, petroleum, etc.). From Wikipedia, we can know that the development of the tertiary industry in Shandong Province is relatively lagging, especially in the financial sector and high-end services. From the perspective of popular majors in the college entrance examination, the connectivity between these ten majors and the main industries in Shandong Province is very low. This also makes it difficult for annual fresh graduates to find jobs that match their majors. From the previous conclusion, when fresh graduates look for jobs, their first consideration is their own economic interests. When companies recruit, the salary given to new employees will also be linked to the benefits they can create for the company. If the employee's previous university major and courses have a shallow relationship with the job they are engaged in, then the benefits they can create in this position can also be expected to be very low. So, it will lead to his personal salary not being high as a result, the attractiveness of this job to this employee decreases. According to the article "Research on Employment Issues for College Students Based on the Theory of Job Search", the author proposes that graduates who are dissatisfied with their work location and workplace will choose "proactive unemployment" and expect to continue searching for better job opportunities, rejecting existing job opportunities and forming voluntary unemployment. At the same time, we should see that the civil service exam is a general exam, in which "essay writing is universal, and the design content often contains social hot topics, which the vast majority of people have heard of." In the recruitment exam for clerks, respondents are required to summarize, analyze, and take a unified exam on a material of about 1500 words. The requirement for professionalism is not high. Therefore, these college students who continue to search for jobs fully possess the hard conditions to pass the civil service exam. From the perspective of the inherent attractiveness of the job as a civil servant, the per capita income of civil servants in Shandong Province is no different from the per capita salary

in the province. But civil servants have many opportunities to earn additional gray income. In the article "In depth analysis of the phenomenon of civil servant fever", the author points out that civil servants can have a "gray income", and in 2006, the "abnormal entertainment expenses" that appeared in the national enterprise account books reached 500 billion yuan make the actual income of civil servants far exceed the salary level that appears on the surface. Therefore, these college students who are searching for jobs will embark on the path of taking the civil service exam.

In summary, the main reason for the popularity of civil servants is due to the decoupling between the current college students trained by universities and the actual local industrial demand. Due to the lack of professional skills required for their positions, college students are unable to obtain salary levels that meet their expectations in private enterprises with higher professional requirements. This also leads to the formation of voluntary unemployment among fresh graduates in search of jobs that better meet their expectations. The current civil service examination is more in line with the goals pursued by college students, and the professional requirements are not high and the salary and other alternative income are considerable, making this job more attractive and resulting in the emergence of a craze for taking the civil service exam.

4. Conclusion

1. As discussed at the beginning of the article, the phenomenon of contemporary young people being enthusiastic about applying for civil service positions is pursuing a high paying, low return career, which seems to violate the important "rational person" hypothesis. However, after discussing the above reasons, it is not difficult to see that in fact, fresh graduates and job seekers have also considered various aspects comprehensively and chose the career that can generate the greatest benefits for them. By taking the civil service exam, they can meet their local employment preferences and work in a relatively familiar environment, undoubtedly adding extra benefits to the job of a civil servant. Also, there is a clearer promotion path, and compared to opaque promotions in private enterprises, there is a greater possibility of promotion when taking the civil service exam. On the other hand, being able to engage in what they are interested in, due to the significant disconnect between the talent needs of private enterprises and the professional training of universities, many college students are unable to engage in what they are interested in, thus choosing the career of a civil servant, which is a valuable choice.

2. Many civil servants can also bring some negative impacts. For example, a large amount of salary burden on civil servants brings enormous pressure to the national finance. According to 2023 statistics, the salaries of national public officials such as civil servants and civil servants account for 34% of China's total fiscal expenditure. However, in comparison, the average salary of American civil servants only accounts for 1.4% of federal tax revenue. German civil servants account for 4% -5%, and Canada accounts for 6%. The salaries of a large group of public officials are bound to become a burden on a country's finances, binding the government's fists and making it difficult to implement some applicable fiscal policies.

5. Further Discussion

5.1. Improve the alignment between university education and industry demand

To meet the demand for diversified and specialized talents in modern society, university education needs to be more closely aligned with industry demand. Schools can strengthen cooperation with enterprises, establish practical bases and internship projects, provide practical work experience and professional skills training, to cultivate graduates who better meet market demands. In addition, schools should adjust their teaching content and focus on cultivating practical knowledge and professional competence to enhance the employment competitiveness of graduates.

From the perspective of Shandong Province, agriculture and industry are still core industries at present. There is a huge demand for talent, but currently universities focus more on cultivating talents

in the service industry This will inevitably lead to a shortage of professional matching talents. It can also lead to fresh graduates who had the opportunity to become professional talents, ultimately learning knowledge that is not practical enough, unable to find job positions that meet their own goals, and leading to voluntary unemployment and ultimately embarked on the path of taking the civil service exam. But if university education can recruit students and set courses for local industries. So, after students graduate, finding a job with high salaries and a corresponding major undoubtedly greatly reduces the difficulty.

5.2. Improve career planning and internship mechanisms

To improve the employment preparation and career development level of college students, it is necessary to establish a sound career planning and internship mechanism. Schools can strengthen vocational guidance and provide students with support services such as career planning, career counseling, and employment information. At the same time, we collaborate with enterprises to provide students with diverse and meaningful internship opportunities, helping them gain practical work experience, understand the requirements of professional positions, and enhance their employment competitiveness.

According to the China Human Resources Development Research Association, currently only about 5% of enterprises in China provide internship opportunities for students, and only 11.7% of students have internship experience. This includes students who are forced by schools to have internship experience and go through the back door to stamp but have not actually interned This is a clear and strong contrast with foreign college students, with over 90% of American college students interning 2-3 times within four years, while French universities require college students to intern at least twice before graduation; Undergraduate students in Japanese universities usually start their corporate internships in the spring.

When hiring in a company, more internship experience means more job search weight According to statistics, 57% of corporate recruiters prioritize internship experience and performance when recruiting graduates If graduates can participate in more internship opportunities during their university years, recruiters can usually offer higher salaries, giving companies a better chance of retaining talent.

5.3. Developing non-profit organizations - sharing government functions

On the other hand, an important reason for the growth of the civil service team is that the government needs many civil servants to undertake public functions. As China is a country with a large population, the demand for public goods and services from the public is also increasing Sufficient manpower is needed to ensure the implementation of these functions. If some public goods and services can be undertaken by private organizations, it can improve work efficiency and create job opportunities.

From the perspective of foreign countries, Western countries have long relied on the power of non-profit organizations to undertake some government functions According to statistics, there were 1.51 million registered non-profit organizations in the United States in 2008, with a total revenue of over 1900 billion US dollars Accounting for 8% of the US GDP And one out of every ten people works for a non-profit organization. These non-profit organizations cover a wide range of fields, particularly playing important roles in public education, environmental protection, poverty alleviation and relief Given that the current enthusiasm of Chinese fresh graduates for taking the civil service exam is mainly due to voluntary unemployment, if the government can strongly support non-profit organizations and provide protective support, guiding fresh graduates to enter non-profit organizations for employment, then the employment pressure will also be alleviated.

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