

# Analysis of Career Advancement and Social Mobility of Workers in the Freshwater Pearl Industry

Zhiyang Feng

Experimental Middle School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University, Beijing, 100032, China

18514252219@163.com

**Abstract.** Using a combination of questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews, the author did substantial research on the career promotion and social mobility of the fresh water pearl industry workers in his home town Zhu Ji City, Zhejiang Province, the largest fresh water pearl production and sales area in the world. According to the data analysis of 86 questionnaire feedback and 14 face-to-face in-depth interviews with pearl workers, the career promotion and social mobility of the current pearl workers are greatly affected by age, education level, hukou (house hold registration place) and other factors. And the main obstacles to their promotion and upward mobility are insufficient efforts, work skills and expertise, and management experiences. It is recommended to provide practical policies and initiatives such as strengthening management skills training, providing financial and legal support for workers through the joint efforts of the government, society and individuals. In addition, offering more equal opportunities for education and cross-regional opportunities facilitate upward social mobility for pearl workers and their next generation.

**Keywords:** Upward Social Mobility; Freshwater Pearl; Career Advancement; Supportive Initiatives.

## 1. Research Background, Purpose and Meaning

The sociological classic book "Social Mobility in Contemporary China" has made the author deeply interested in the topic of "social mobility". The author's hometown, Zhu Ji, a county-level city in Zhejiang Province, is the world's largest freshwater pearl production and sales area. During a trip back to the author's hometown, by chance when he chatted with a relative working in the pearl industry, the stories the relative shared about the entrepreneurship of pearl workers reminded him of the books he had read on social mobility, which aroused his great interest in the study of the career development and social mobility of pearl workers in his hometown. So the author started this research project on the career promotion and social mobility status of freshwater pearl workers in his hometown.

The author's research focuses on analyzing the opportunities for career advancement and upward social mobility of pearl workers, hoping to understand the current situation, analyze the reasons, and put forward recommendations by clarifying the factors that contribute and hinder the career advancement and social mobility of pearl workers, with a purpose to attract more attention from scholars and policy makers, creating a more favorable social environment for the freshwater pearl workers and providing more support for the career advancement of both the workers and their next generation. Hope such efforts could assist pearl workers rely on their own abilities and efforts to realize the upward leap of class in a fairer and more equitable environment.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Research about China's Freshwater Pearl Industry

The main production areas of freshwater pearls in China are concentrated in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, especially Zhuji City in Zhejiang Province, Suzhou City in Jiangsu Province and Dongting Lake in Hunan Province. Zhuji City is known as the "Hometown of Pearls in China" and is the largest freshwater pearl farming and processing base in China. In a 2023 research report, China Research Institute provided a nationwide overview of the freshwater pearl industry, "China's freshwater pearl industry is a global leader in terms of scale, production value and market

influence. It is estimated that the country's freshwater pearl cultivation area exceeds hundreds of thousands of mu. The annual output of Chinese freshwater pearls accounts for more than 90% of the global total, with an annual output of about 1,000 tons and an annual output value of more than RMB 10 billion. The pearl industry chain is divided into three major segments: pearl farming, processing and sales" (Zhongyan Puhua Industry Research Institute, 2023).

## 2.2 Studies on Career Advancement and Social Mobility

Career advancement is the process by which an employee progresses from a lower position to a higher position during the course of his or her career, either through increased competence, performance, or access to opportunities. This process is usually accompanied by the expansion of the scope of responsibilities, the increase in the level of remuneration and the enhancement of social status. Career promotion is not only an important symbol of individual career development, but also a key means for organizations to motivate employees and optimize the allocation of human resources. Promotion can occur within the same organization, or it can be achieved by jumping to another organization or personally creating a new organization. The classic study by the famous sociologist Xueyi Lu and his team points out that social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one social status to another, reflecting the change in their social status. It can be upward mobility, downward mobility, intra-generational mobility (mobility within the same generations) and inter-generational mobility (mobility cross generations) (Xueyi Lu, 2004 ).

As for the relationship between career advancement and social mobility, there is fruitful study also. The study of Robert Erikson and John Goldthorpe's book, *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies* (Robert Erikson & John Goldthorpe, 1992) states that career advancement and social mobility are closely linked, and that career advancement serves as a central mechanism for social mobility, which is an important means of achieving social mobility. Meanwhile, the opportunities and conditions of social mobility also profoundly affect the possibilities of career advancement. For example, education level, social network and family background all affect the improvement area for individual career development. A fair career advancement mechanism can promote social mobility and enhance social vitality, while reasonable social mobility can provide more people with equal opportunities for advancement, forming a virtuous circle. Therefore, career advancement and social mobility are mutually reinforcing, and together they promote social stability and development.

## 2.3 Research About the Main Barriers to Social Mobility

Studies by scholars show that the main structural barriers to social mobility in China include the hukou system (Kam Wing Chan, 1994), unequal distribution of educational resources (**Xiaobo Zhang & Ravi Kanbur**, 2005), economic inequality and income disparity (**Martin King Whyte**, 2010, social welfare and barriers to health care across regions, social stratification solidification (**Xiaogang Wu**, 2010), social inequality and discrimination, and unbalanced regional development and ect. (**Wang Feng**, 2008).

## 2.4 Study on Key Initiatives to Enhance Career Advancement and Social Mobility

In general, workers with higher education, technical skills and experience located in economically developed urban areas tend to have higher opportunities for upward social mobility (Qin Xiaozhen, 2024). A variety of approaches could be taken to support workers to achieve upward social mobility, addressing both individual and systemic challenges. Key initiatives to help facilitate career advancement and social mobility of Chinese workers include: First, promote internal mobility by furnishing employees with clear career paths and opportunities for internal promotion, training, or mentorship to help them move up within the same organization, Second, enhance external mobility by providing preferential support, such as tax incentives, for workers who wish to start their own businesses as entrepreneur. Third, promoting education reform and education equity, promoting a balanced distribution of education resources, and narrowing the urban-rural and regional education

gaps (Xiaobo Zhang & Ravi Kanbur (2005). Fourth, offer support in economic policies and employment, such as job training and vocational guidance to support the employment of rural migrant workers and low-income groups (Carl Riskin, 2001). Fifth, strengthen social security and welfare, improving the social security system, and expanding the coverage of medical care and old-age housing security (Martin King Whyte, 2010).

### **3. Field Study Methodology**

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the working situation and career advancement of the pearl workers, the author returned to his hometown of Shan Xia Hu Town, Zhuji City, Zhejiang Province, and conducted an one-week field study. During the study, he visited nearly 10 pearl farming and processing factories, studied and recorded the pearl mussel farming, mussel killing, cleaning, preliminary selection, meticulous selection, polishing, drilling, threading beads, sales and other processes. And through the well-designed questionnaires as well as the face-to-face in-depth interviews with pearl workers, he gained an in-depth understanding of the freshwater pearl industry chain and working and living conditions of the pearl workers.

#### **3.1 Overview of the Field Study Site Shan Xia Hu**

The field study was conducted in the author's hometown of Shan Xia Hu in Zhuji City, which is known as the "Pearl Capital of the World" (People's Government of Zhuji City, 2024). Although it covers an area of only about 42 square kilometers, with 80% of the 29,000 local residents and about 10,000 migrant workers generating more than 50 billion RMB in GDP annually, accounting for 70% of the world's freshwater pearl production and sales amount and 80% of the sales of pearls in China. (Zhuji Municipal People's Government, 2024).

#### **3.2 Key Research Methods Used**

A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis was used in the study field study:

Questionnaire is an effective tool used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and usually consists of a series of structured questions designed to elicit specific information from respondents. Questionnaires are generally used to understand the respondent's opinions, behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics. For quantitative research, the author designed an online questionnaire using Questionnaire Star, 90 questionnaires were actually distributed and 86 valid questionnaires were collected with 95% feedback rate. The respondents came from pearl workers in three different job categories (pearl farming, pearl processing and pearl sales) and nine different factories. Then, the author analyzed the returned questionnaires using both univariate and bivariate analysis and obtained some interesting and valuable findings. The collection of questionnaires was more difficult than expected because most pearl workers said they had never answered this kind of questionnaires and were not willing to do so. Meanwhile, in order to make the survey results more representative, the author set high standards for the sampling of the respondents - randomly selecting pearl workers who were distributed in different workplaces and came from different pearl factories, which also made the questionnaire survey more difficult. Although it took a lot of effort and time, but after a few twists and turns, the final questionnaire survey was successfully completed.

Face-to-face in-depth interviews are a qualitative research method that delves into a specific topic or issue through a direct conversation between the researcher and the interviewee. Face-to-face in-depth interviews are an effective method for gaining in-depth insights. In terms of qualitative analysis, through careful coordination and arrangement of various resources, the author conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with 14 pearl workers from 7 different pearl factories, 3 different positions (pearl farming/processing/sales ) and 3 different levels (workers, middle management and top management), with interview time on average from 30 minutes to 1 hour, during which many interesting interactions were conducted with the interviewees and many real and vivid situations and stories were learned. After the interviews, the author compiled an interview note of more than 6,000 words. It is not easy

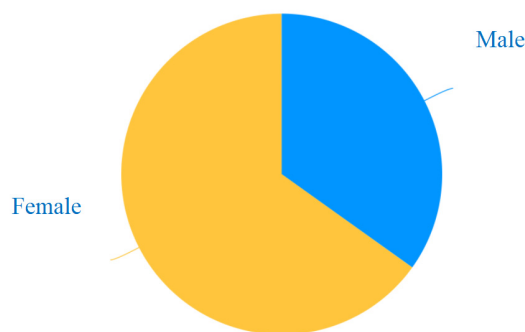
to conduct face-to-face interviews, the author successfully completed the fieldwork with good quality despite all the challenges, from which he deeply felt and experienced the hardship of social research work, and also felt the joy of gaining insights and experiences through efforts to understand the society.

There are some slight differences between the questionnaire survey and the interviews results, the author firstly did the questionnaire survey and then conducted in-depth interviews, in which the differences were double verified. For example, the salary level, the data in the questionnaire feedback is lower than that in the interviews. The authenticity of the information from the in-depth interviews is prioritized over the results of the questionnaire. Some unexpected and interesting findings from the research will be shared in the discussion part of the essay.

## 4. Quantitative Research Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Profile of Survey Respondents

#### 4.1.1 Gender Distribution of the Sample



**Figure 1.** Gender Distribution of 86 Survey Respondents

Of the 86 employees surveyed, 30 were male, accounting for 35%, and 56 were female, accounting for 65%. It can be seen that freshwater pearls, like the traditional Chinese textile industry, is an industry with more female workers. In the pearl industry, except for pearl drilling and sales staff, most workers are women. There are three reasons for this: Firstly, pearl processing work (such as pearl cleaning, selection polishing, drilling, beading, etc.) is usually meticulous, repetitive labor, requiring patience and careful manual operation. These work characteristics are more aligned with the traditional concept of women's "careful" and "patience" qualities; Secondly, pearl processing requires **low physical efforts which is** suitable for women to engage in; Thirdly, pearl processing requires long hours of sedentary work and this kind of work nature is less attractive to men, especially young men tend to choose more physical activities or more challenging work.

#### 4.1.2 Age Distribution of the Sample

**Table 1.** Age distribution of the 86 interviewees

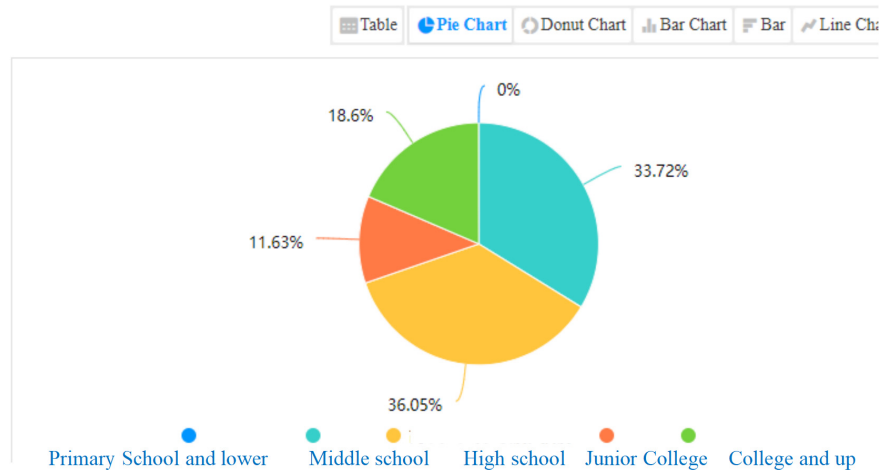
Age	No. of persons	Percentage
50-60 years	50	58%
40-50 years	18	21%
30-40 years old	14	16%
Under 30	4	5%
Subtotal	86	100%

79% percent of those surveyed in the questionnaire were over 40 years of age. Follow-up interviews also confirmed that most pearl workers are older persons. One reason for this is that pearl processing work is labor-intensive, less physically demanding and requires long periods of sedentary

work, which is more suitable for middle-aged and older people, another reason is that the education level of the younger generation has generally improved, and they are more inclined to choose occupations that require higher skills and knowledge rather than traditional labor-intensive work.

### 4.1.3 Educational Level of the Sample

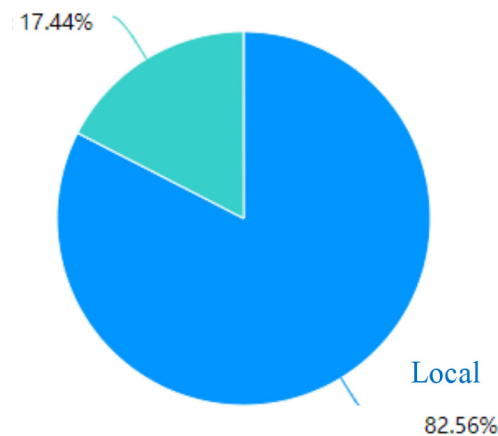
A2、 Your educational level pls?



**Figure 2.** Distribution of Educational Levels of 86 Survey Respondents

The survey shows that about 70% have high school or junior college education or below, which shows that the education level of pearl workers is not high. The main reason for this is that pearl processing work is usually repetitive, low-skill threshold manual labor, which does not require a high level of education. Workers with a low level of education can perform these jobs after a short period of training.

### 4.1.4 Local or Non-local



**Figure 3.** Hukou (Household Registration Place) Distribution of 86 Survey Respondents

When asked whether the interviewees' household registration place is in Zhuji, the survey shows that the majority are Zhuji local people, accounting for about 83%, non-local people accounted for only 17%. The interview also indicates that most of the pearl workers are originally the local farmers in Zhuji. The pearl industry provides the original local farmers with good and stable income much higher than their original income as a farmer, together with unnecessary to leave their hometown to be capable to take care of their family, pearl workers enjoy high satisfaction of their work.

## 4.2 Analysis of Pearl Workers' Career Advancement and Social Mobility Status and Influencing Factors

### 4.2.1 Promotion Experience

Option	No.	Percentage
Yes	11	15.71%
No	45	64.29%
Not remember	14	20%

**Figure 4.** Promotion experience of 86 survey respondents

No. of Years working experience	Percentage
1-4 years	34%
5-9 years	26%
10-19 years	31%
20-30 years	9%

**Figure 5.** Years of working experience of 86 survey respondents

From the analysis of the above data, it can be seen that among the 86 interviewees, despite the fact that 66% of them have been working for more than 5 years (26% for 5-9 years, 31% for 10-19 years, and 9% for 20-30 years), 64.29% said that they have never been promoted. In other words, most of the interviewees have not been promoted even though they have been working for quite a few years, which somehow indicates that pearl workers have very limited opportunities for promotion.

### 4.2.2 Promotion Intention

B15、 Do you hope to be promoted in the next few years?

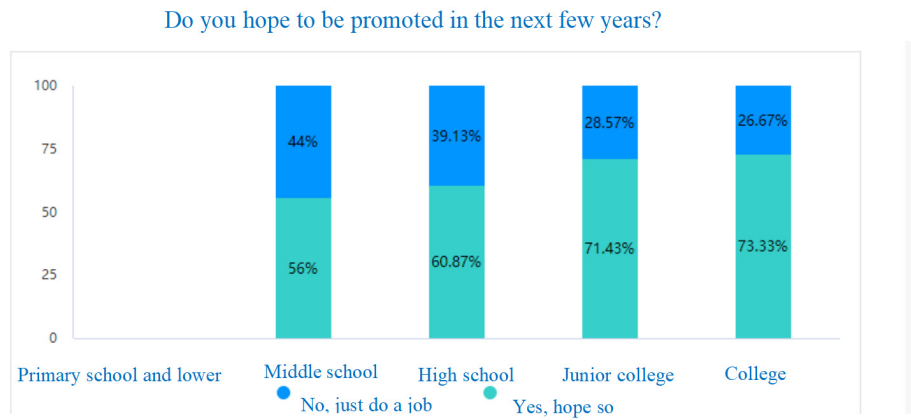
Option	No.	Percentage
No, just do a job	26	37.14%
Yes, hope so	44	62.86%

**Figure 6.** Intention to be promoted of the 86 survey respondents

According to the questionnaire survey, 62.86% of the 86 respondents to the questionnaire wanted to be promoted in their careers, and only about 37% of the employees had no desire to be promoted. The results of the in-depth interviews were not in line with the questionnaire survey here, with most of the interviewed employees expressing little interest in promotion. The results of the in-depth interviews were verified by various sources to be more accurate.

### 4.3 Factors Affecting Career Advancement and Social Mobility of Pearl Workers

#### 4.3.1 Correlation of Educational Level and Promote Intention

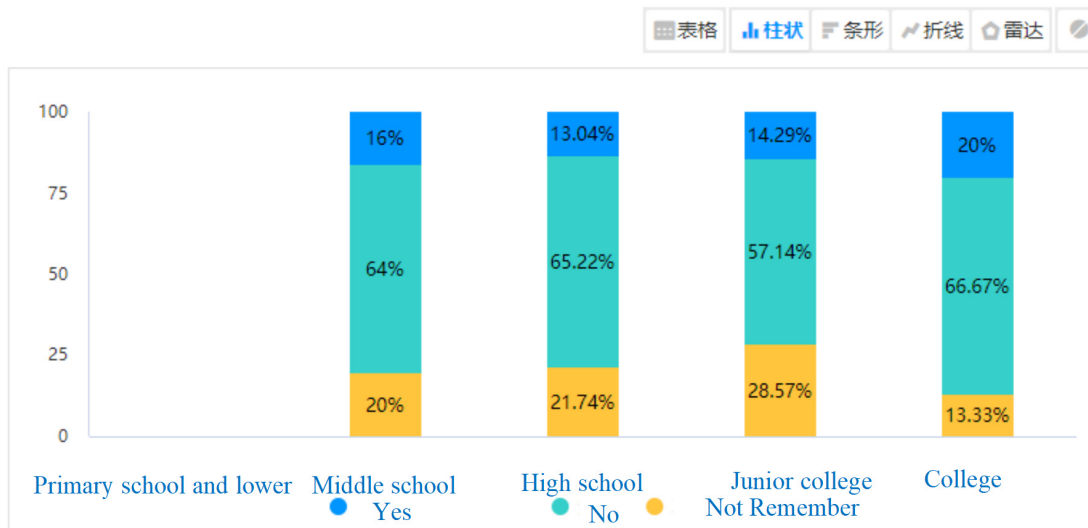


**Figure 7.** Correlation analysis of education level and promote intention

Survey data shows that only 56% of employees with junior high school education level want to be promoted, while 73.33% of employees with college degree or above education level want to be promoted, which shows that the higher the education level, the stronger the willingness to be promoted. It is not surprising that workers with higher education level are more willing to be promoted, as people with higher education level usually have higher career expectation, professional ability, self-driving motivation, resource support and social expectation.

#### 4.3.2 Correlation of Educational Level and Promotion Experience

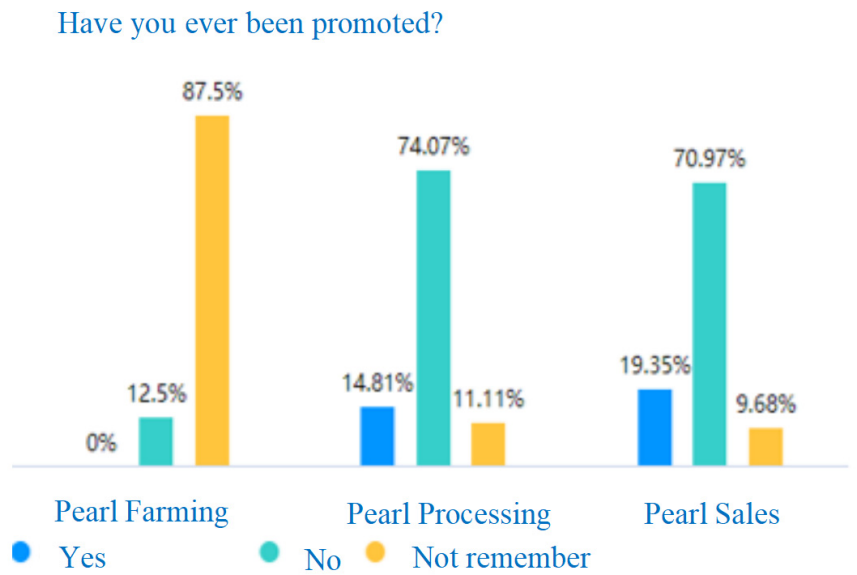
B14、 Have you ever been promoted?



**Figure 8.** Correlation between education level and promotion experience

Survey data shows that 20% of the college and above educational level workers have been promoted, while the workers who graduated from junior high school, high school and college have been promoted are 16%, 13.04% and 14.29%. That is, the higher the education level, the higher proportion of the promotion experience. This confirms with people's common sense, because workers with higher education tend to have stronger ambition to be promoted, more self-driven power and better learning ability.

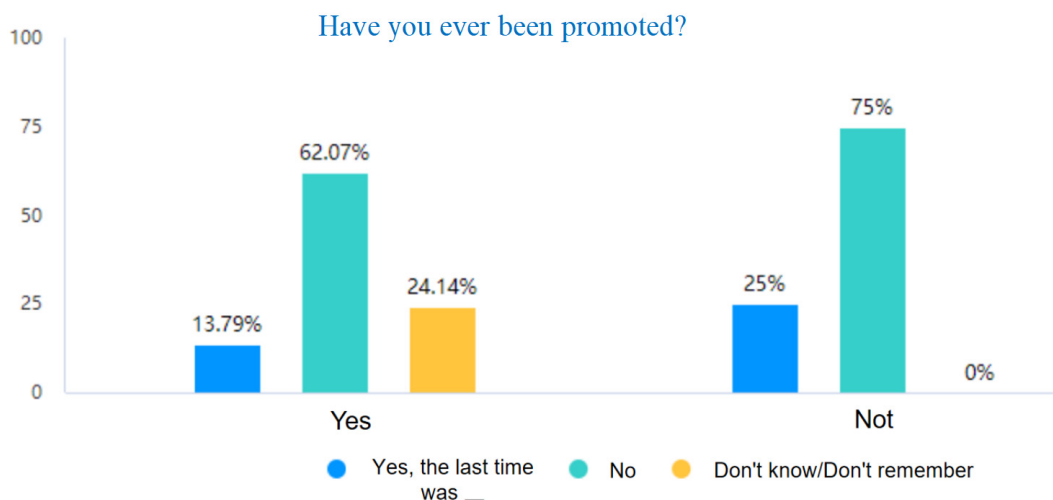
### 4.3.3 Correlation between Job Roles and Promotion Experience



**Figure 9.** Correlation between job role and promotion experience

The research shows that workers engaged in pearl sales have 19.35% promotion experience, while workers engaged in pearl farming have only 12.5% promotion experience, which means that the closer to the business role (e.g. sales), the stronger the willingness to be promoted. The reason for this is that factors such as performance orientation, competitive pressure, authority and responsibility, company emphasis, skill enhancement and a sense of achievement all contribute to a stronger promotion intention among employees who are closer to commercial roles.

### 4.3.4 Correlation of Hukou (Local or non-local workers) and Promote Experience



**Figure 10.** Interaction between Hukou and Promotion Intention

The research shows that 75% of non-local pearl workers have the willingness to promote, while 62.02% of local pearl workers have the willingness to promote, that is, outsiders have a higher willingness to be promoted than locals. The reason for this is that the locals have relatively high life satisfaction because they are in the local area, enjoying decent wages and low consumption, and have their own houses living together with their families, high satisfaction leads to lower willingness to be promoted. But this phenomenon was not verified in the later in-depth interviews. According to the interviews with 14 workers, only 2 interviewees have a relatively strong willingness to be promoted.

Further double verification shows that pearl workers' promotion intention are generally not high due to their high satisfaction with their job.

#### 4.4 Possibility of Promotion to Senior Leadership

B18、 Possibility of workers to be promoted to Senior leadership

Option	No.	Percentage
Absolutely	5	7.14%
Highly Possible	18	25.71%
Not so Possible	31	44.29%
Almost impossible	16	22.86%

**Figure 11.** Likelihood of working people being promoted to senior leadership

Survey shows that 67% of the pearl respondents believe that it is impossible or almost impossible for workers to be promoted to senior leadership, later face-to-face interviews uncovered the key reason is that in addition to four large enterprises, there are 2,000+ pearl enterprises in Zhuji with most of them are family-owned enterprises. Majority of workers work in family-owned enterprises in which usually there are only 2 layer management levels --- worker and boss, thus the opportunity to be promoted to senior leadership is very limited.

#### 4.5 Proportion of Promotions from Worker to Management

B19、 What percentage of management level were promoted from workers in your company?

Option	No.	Percentage
25% or below	40	57.14%
26-50%	20	28.57%
51-75%	10	14.29%
76%-100%	0	0%

**Figure 12.** Percentage of promotion from worker to management level

57% of the questionnaire respondents reported that only less than 25% of management is promoted from workers, meaning that there is little opportunity for workers to be promoted to management. This is consistent with the information from the interviews that there are a lot of family businesses with little middle management level, and even if there are, they are mostly family members, and not many are promoted from workers.

#### 4.6 Major Barriers to Career Advancement and Upward Social Mobility for Pearl Workers:

When asked "which three factors are the most important barriers to promotion", the survey showed that 86 respondents chose "No.3 -Insufficient effort" most frequently (17 times), followed by "No. 4- Insufficient work skills and experience" and "No. - 5 Insufficient management ability". This shows that most of the employees attributed their upward promotion and mobility to their own reasons rather than those of the external organization. In the follow-up interviews, it was learned that the most likely path for pearl workers' career development and upward mobility is to start their own business, in which the employees' own education level, working experience and management capability are very important, as well as the availability of investment capital.

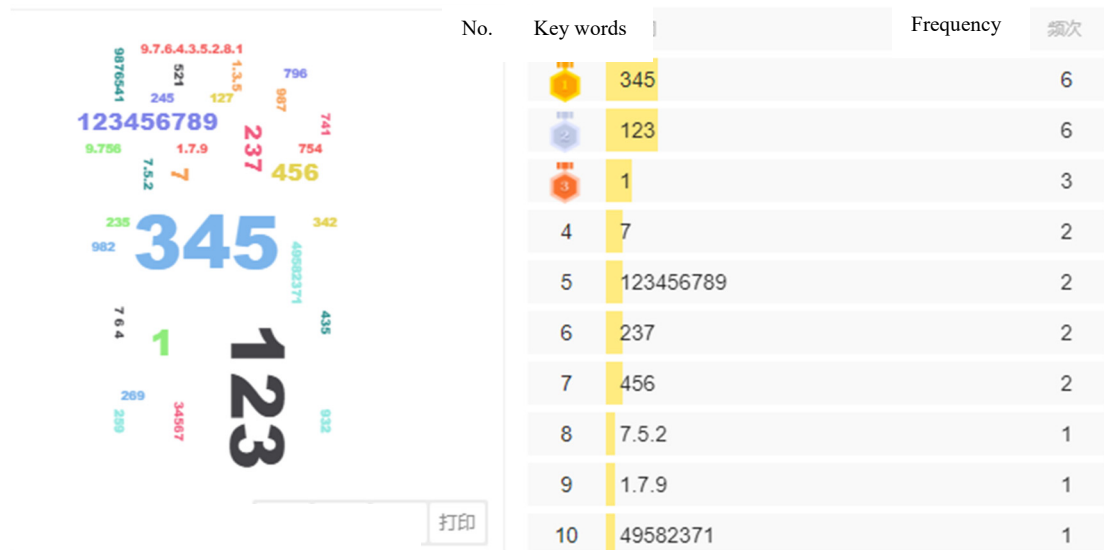


Figure 13. Word cloud of major barriers to worker advancement

#### 4.7 Key Factors Contributing to the Career Development and Upward Social Mobility of Pearl Workers:

The survey revealed that the key factors contributing to the career development and social mobility of pearl workers include vocational and management training, more transparent and wider job opportunities, transparent promotion mechanisms, and the provision of clear career paths. This deviates slightly from the results of the face to face interviews, where the majority of interviewees felt that the most common pathway for upward career development and mobility for pearl workers was to start their own business and become a small business owner, and therefore the key factors needed included capital, experience and customer resources. The results of the interviews were further verified by all parties and seems to be more realistic.

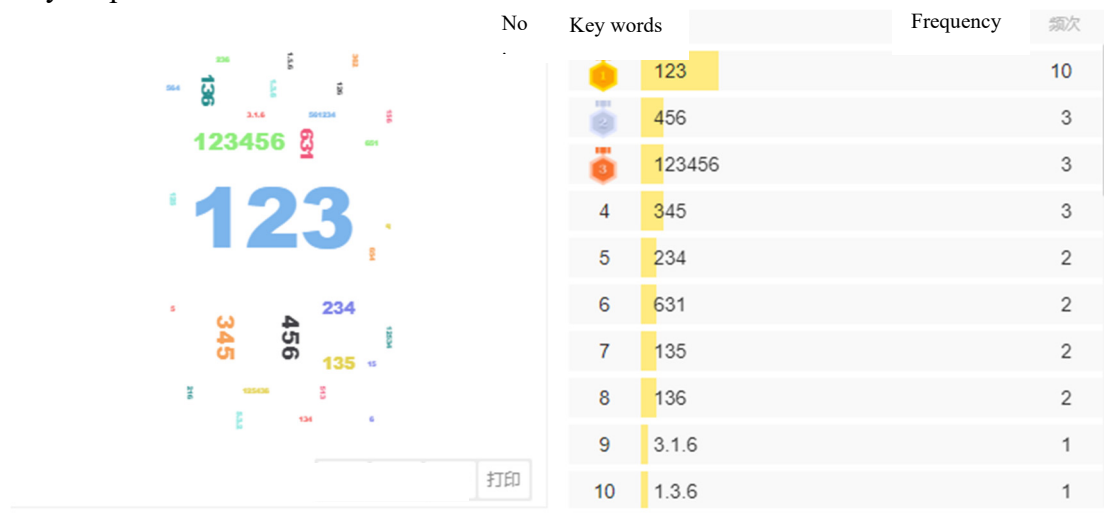


Figure 14. Word cloud – Factors contribute to workers' promotion mostly

### 5. Qualitative Research Key Findings

The following are the key findings and summaries from the face-to-face interviews with the 14 pearl workers:

## **5.1 Relevant Industry Background**

There are about 2,000 companies in the pearl industry in Zhuji, mainly small family-owned enterprises, only four are large-scale enterprises. Most pearl companies are engaged in processing and sales, with the pearl farming concentrated in a few companies.

## **5.2 Regarding the Social Mobility Chain**

Since most companies are family-owned small companies, the social mobility chain is short and mainly contains two levels: workers and bosses, which limits the opportunities for upward mobility.

## **5.3 Regarding the Pearl Processing Industry Chain and Pearl Workers**

Pearl processing work is mostly labor-intensive, including pearl farming, harvesting, cleaning, preliminary screening, hand-selection, polishing, drilling, beading and sales. Pearl workers are predominantly middle-aged and older women (79% of respondents are over 40 years old), with lower education levels (70% of respondents have less than high school education, as young people and men are less inclined to take jobs that require long hours of sitting).

## **5.4 Current Social Mobility of Pearl Workers**

The majority of pearl workers came from local farmers who have already achieved the first step of social mobility from farmer to industrial worker, small business owner (both pearl workers and pearl business owners) or service provider. Further career development and social mobility for pearl workers is challenging due to older age, limited education and low aspirations due to high life satisfaction, but there are still some opportunities with the support from the government and other sectors.

## **5.5 Pearl Workers' Upward Mobility Path**

There are two main paths for pearl workers to achieve career advancement and social class upward mobility: one is to gain promotion in one of the four large pearl firms, and the other is to gain diversified and rich experience by changing jobs within the firm or jumping to other firms to prepare for their setting up their own business. Due to the small size of most companies and limited opportunities for advancement, entrepreneurship became the main route for their career and social mobility advancement.

## **5.6 Salary Level**

Pearl workers earn about 4,000-10,000 RMB per month, which is higher than in other cities of the same type in China. The survey feedback had salary levels of 4,000-6,000 RMB, but after checking with the owners and employees of several pearl companies in later interviews, it was found that the results of the interviews were more accurate.

## **5.7 Life Satisfaction**

Local pearl workers enjoy relatively high manufacturing salaries and low levels of housing and other spending. Higher incomes and lower expenditures explain to some extent the high level of satisfaction of pearl workers.

## **5.8 Next Generation of Pearl Workers**

Some of the children of pearl workers have achieved upward mobility through higher levels of education and migration to larger cities to take up professions such as teachers, doctors and accountants. More equal educational opportunities and more social security policies are needed to support the upward mobility of the next generation.

In Summary, Zhuji pearl industry workers are mainly middle to elderly aged and low-education workers with relatively good income, low consumption, and thus high level of life satisfaction.

Although there are some challenges in career advancement and development due to factors such as age and education level, entrepreneurship is a good path for career advancement and upward social mobility for pearl workers. Government and societal support, including improved entrepreneurial opportunities, training, education, and equalization of social security opportunities, play an important role in promoting the career development and social mobility of pearl workers and the next generation.

## 6. Key Interesting Findings

From the quantitative and qualitative analysis based on the field study, some interesting findings were observed:

**Firstly, pearl workers' wages in Zhuji are higher than those of workers in equivalent cities. According to the interviews, the salary of workers in Zhuji's pearl industry is RMB 4,000-10,000. As we know Zhuji belongs to a fourth-tier city in China, and according to the China Bureau of Statistics, the average wage in China's fourth-tier cities is RMB 2,000-4,000, and the average wage in third-tier cities is RMB 3,000-5,000.**

Secondly, pearl workers' promotion intention is not high. According to the author's verification of 14 pearl workers interviews, although the early questionnaire survey showed that 62.4% of the respondents have the desire for career advancement, in fact, pearl workers have a low ambition for promotion. The main reasons are several:

Elder age (79% of the respondents are 40+ years' old) may be an important reason and lower education level is another one. According to our survey, 70% of the respondents' education is at the level of high school or vocational school and below, and further statistical correlation analysis shows that the lower the education level, the lower the willingness of workers to be promoted. In addition, higher satisfaction with current life and work leads to lower motivation for promotion, especially for local workers. 14 interviewed pearl workers almost all expressed that their life and work situation is good, while 55% of the questionnaire respondents also indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their life.

Lastly, the job satisfaction of local employees among pearl workers is high. Contrary to the author's initial thoughts before the field study, most of the pearl workers are quite satisfied with their work and life mainly for the following reasons: Comfortable living conditions (living in their own houses), good working environment with no heavy workload, decent salary level coupled with low level of consumption, and the ability to take care of their families in their hometowns without the necessity to go to other cities for work.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1 Situation and Recommendations on Current Pearl Workers' Career Advancement and Social Mobility (Intra-Generational Social Mobility)

Pearl workers in Zhuji have basically realized the initial social class mobility from peasants to industrial workers. Limited by age (79% are over 40 years old) and education level (70% are at high school or professional school level or lower), they face challenges in realizing a further leap in social stratification. Except four large companies, the majority of the local pearl enterprises are small family-owned firms, which typically have a shorter chain of social mobility of only two levels, the workers and bosses. And because the succeeding bosses are mainly hereditary members of the family, it is relatively difficult for pearl workers to seek career and social status advancement through promotions within the company. However, a more viable way for them to realize further upward social mobility is to establish their own businesses by accumulating sufficient experience, capital and customer resources.

Based on the discussion with pearl workers, the following measures can facilitate their career advancement and upward social mobility: Provide free market insight and management training, routine market insight sharing which can help them better judge the market situation and trend, and

management training can support them to make a smooth transition from the role of a worker to the role of a boss. Also free legal consulting services will be beneficial as pearl workers may need advice on legal issues when starting their business. In addition, establishing a dedicated fund to provide low-cost financial support to pearl entrepreneurs will aid pearl workers to start their own business.

In response to the above needs of pearl workers, the author hopes to do something for the pearl workers in his hometown. After going back from the field study, through a friend, he contacted a just retired very senior management training consultant from IBM, Mike, who is willing to provide free training program including negotiation and communication skills, cooperation and innovative thinking ect. to the pearl workers. At the same time, through the author's classmates, he contacted a senior partner lawyer Ms. Wang in a famous law firm called “Beijing Jincheng Tongda Law Firm”, lawyer Ms. Wang is also very happy to provide free legal advice to pearl workers as needed as they have free legal aid program. Their help is much appreciated.

## **7.2 Situation and Recommendations on Career Advancement and Social Mobility (Intergenerational Social Mobility) for the Next Generation of Pearl Workers:**

For the next generation of pearl workers, based on the relatively good education they received (most of them are in high school and above), some of the next generation in working ages have already realized the social class movement from workers to professional service providers, some are engaged in professional jobs such as teachers, accountants, and doctors in other big cities and the others work in business service area in their hometowns. There are also some next generations are in school ages. To further support the upward social mobility of the next generation of pearl workers, it is recommended that the Government continue to take some measures like below: Providing more balanced and equal education opportunity with scholarships and financial assistance to poor workers, further narrowing the gap in educational resources between different regions, and strengthening social security, such as cross-regional healthcare, unemployment benefits and retirement schemes, making it easier for the next generation to take the risk of switching jobs or pursuing further studies without fear of losing financial security. At the same time, in addition to government support, it is recommended that the next generation should also work on their own and pursue lifelong learning in order to adapt to the ever-changing market requirement as the current technology-driven economy requires new and ever-changing skills and expertise.

In conclusion, despite the challenges, by enhancing equal educational opportunities, skills development and optimizing social security and taking supportive policies and measures, by reducing barriers to upward mobility. pearl workers and their next generation will be empowered to achieve further upward social mobility. Systematic government support are individual efforts are both integral. By further enhancing viable social mobility and thus reducing social inequalities, a more vibrant, inclusive and stable society will be developed where people from various backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed.

## **7.3 Limitation**

Finally, I would like to frankly admit that the limitation of this study is that the survey sample is small. Confined to my limited resources, only 86 questionnaires and 14 in-depth interviews were conducted and all the analysis and conclusions are derived from these empirical data. However, regardless of the size, the methodology of scientific research is consistent. This study follows a scientifically rigorous methodology to provide first-hand information and data on the career advancement and social mobility of pearl workers which disclosed some useful findings. Although it is just an attempt of scientific research, the author would be satisfied and appreciated if it could attract more scholars and government’s attention to the pearl workers group for their better work and life.

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