

Research on Professional Ethics Requirements for Scientific Journal Editors in the Context of High-Quality Development

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Abstract

High-quality talent can propel journals toward high-quality development. Analyzing the current status of professional ethics requirements for editors of high-quality scientific journals in China can not only help understand the influencing factors behind journal managers' construction of moral expectations for editors, but also provide references for adjusting editors' professional motivation and behavior through moral factors.

Using journals selected for the “Excellence Action Plan for Chinese Science and Technology Journals” as research cases for high-quality development of journals in China, we collected ethics requirement-related texts from job announcements as primary empirical data, introduced grounded theory to conduct open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, and analyzed the key factors influencing professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors and their interrelationships.

The analysis results show that four main categories—individual value identification (subject variable), practical talent demand (internal feedback variable), professional system, and professional convention (external situational variables)—significantly influence professional ethics requirements for editors, though their specific influence modes and pathways differ. Overall, a model of editors' professional ethics requirements and the moderating effect mechanisms of each variable were constructed around the four main categories.

The professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors are significantly influenced by recruiters' individual cognition, exhibiting strong subjectivity and randomness. Furthermore, these ethics requirements adjust according to specific factors such as journal development planning, cognition of editorial functions, and individual emotional intensity. Additionally, the professional ethics model atmosphere advocating “loving one's job and being dedicated to one's work”

in China also greatly influences editors' moral self-discipline and professional identity.

Full Text

A Study on the Professional Ethics Requirements for Scientific Journal Editors in the Context of High-Quality Development: An Analysis of Job Postings

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Abstract: [Purpose] High-quality talent can propel journals toward high-quality development. Analyzing the current status of professional ethics requirements for editors of Chinese scientific journals can both illuminate the factors shaping managerial ethical expectations of editors and provide references for adjusting editors' professional motivations and behaviors through ethical considerations. [Methods] Using journals selected for the "Excellence Action Plan for Chinese Science and Technology Journals" as case studies of high-quality journal development in China, this study collected ethics-related texts from job postings as primary empirical data. Grounded theory was applied through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to analyze the key factors influencing professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors and their interrelationships. [Findings] The analysis reveals that four main categories significantly influence ethics requirements for editors: individual value identity (the subjective variable), practical talent demand (the internal feedback variable), and professional system and professional convention (the external contextual variables). However, their specific modes and pathways of influence differ. Overall, a model of editorial professional ethics requirements was constructed around these four main categories, along with the moderating mechanisms of each variable. [Conclusion] Professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors are heavily influenced by recruiters' individual perceptions, exhibiting strong subjectivity and randomness. Furthermore, these requirements adjust according to specific factors such as journal development plans, functional understandings of editorial roles, and individual emotional intensity. Additionally, China's advocacy for a professional ethics atmosphere centered on "loving one's job and being dedicated" profoundly affects editors' moral self-discipline and professional identity.

Keywords: Professional ethics; Scientific journal editors; Professional identity; Moral education in talent development

Author Contributions:

Author 1: Designed the research framework, conducted grounded theory coding

analysis and text analysis, wrote the manuscript, and revised the final version. Author 2: Collected, cleaned, and analyzed job posting texts for scientific journal editors and participated in manuscript revision.

Professional ethics represents a hallmark of highly professionalized occupations. It is not merely an abstract moral appeal or a utopian ideal, but rather a consensus on moral relationships, requirements, and capacities formed through long-term professional practice. It acknowledges both human greed and inertia, as well as humanity's capacity to restrain undesirable behavior through the "will" [1]. According to a questionnaire survey on the career development of university scientific journal editors, most university editorial departments conduct performance evaluations that assess not only workload and efficiency but also ideological and political moral quality, indicating a demand for talent that is both "virtuous and capable," where attitude matters as much as ability [2]. Beyond adjustments to evaluation metrics, the development of artificial intelligence technology continuously challenges the rationale for editors' professional existence, while Chinese journal editors also appear to be caught in an ethical dilemma of self-identity and professional imagination. In the humanities and social sciences, editors' professional presence and value roles are more firmly established and prominent, but for scientific journal editors, this technological impact and sense of occupational malaise [3] are particularly pronounced.

Professional ethics is not a universal, standardized product. Discussions of editorial professional ethics reflect understandings of the editor's role itself, shaped by the historical development and management systems of journal editing. Specifically, "professional ethics requirements" refer to managers' expectations, tendencies, or demands for editorial talent at the moral level. In contrast to explicit socialized capabilities such as professional titles and skills, these requirements primarily encompass personal intrinsic traits such as character image, professional identity, ideals and beliefs, and quality cultivation.

Comparing professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors between China and Western countries reveals significant differences. Western scholars, for instance, measure editorial ethics by the ability to maintain a fair and just academic publishing environment amid multiple stakeholders [4]. In contrast, Chinese research emphasizes concepts such as "selfless dedication [5]," "service [6]," "being a good teacher [7]," and "social responsibility [8]." In summary, Western scientific journal editors are more often constructed as "academic judges," whereas Chinese editors are portrayed as "dedicated contributors" who work behind the scenes, making Western frameworks of limited reference value for China. Therefore, a deeper and more specific study of Chinese scientific journal editors' ethical issues is necessary. Existing research has approached this from three main perspectives: first, applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs or related psychological models to analyze Chinese editors' career development environments [9]; second, adopting a historical perspective to trace the roots and evolution of editorial identity construction in China [10]; and third, conducting

questionnaire surveys for quantitative analysis of editors' career development [11]. Building on previous work, this study seeks to move beyond Western-derived grand theoretical frameworks and employs grounded theory to openly confront the phenomenon of talent demand for Chinese journal editors. This approach may yield richer, more profound, and more specific insights into the connotations of editorial professional needs, empowering Chinese research on editorial ethics and revealing more local characteristics of the phenomenon [12], while also facilitating the discovery of new ideas suited to China's professional cultural traditions.

In summary, this study addresses the following questions: What professional ethics requirements are proposed for editors to promote the high-quality development of Chinese scientific journals? What factors drive these requirements? And what impacts do these factors have on editors' professional identity and behavior? Analyzing the current status of professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors aims to summarize the construction pathways and patterns of professional ethics for editors in high-quality Chinese scientific journals, thereby proposing corresponding countermeasures and suggestions to meet the objective professional ethics needs of scientific journals, shape a professional model atmosphere aligned with Chinese culture, and optimize editors' individual professional ethical value orientations.

2 Research Methods and Approach

Grounded in China's distinctive scientific journal development practices and professional cultural atmosphere, research on editorial professional ethics issues is relatively novel and unique, lacking sufficient foundational patterns and scientific theoretical support, necessitating a return to the phenomenon itself to summarize patterns. Additionally, given that analysis of professional ethics requirements involves strong implicit and subjective characteristics, quantitative analysis may be unable to explain the potential connections between individual personality traits and traditional Chinese professional ethics. Therefore, this study selects grounded theory as its research method, systematically, focally, and continuously collecting and analyzing data to distill and summarize deep conceptual relationships [13], thereby enriching theoretical research on journal editorial ethics in China.

In implementing grounded theory, to ensure data authenticity and accuracy, job postings from high-quality scientific journals serve as the primary empirical texts. While professional ethics requirements are subjective, they cannot be separated from their objective social foundation. Foreign scholars' controlled experiments have verified that job description content significantly influences individual job value assessments [14]. Professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors are also common expressions in job postings, reflecting editorial departments' subjective needs and imaginations while simultaneously representing empirical objective texts derived from practice. These postings are not merely optional formal screening tools for talent recruitment but also

reflect managers' emphasis on and understanding of professional ethics standards for editors. Therefore, they are regarded as important firsthand materials for studying editorial ethics issues. Furthermore, to verify data authenticity and validity, in-depth interviews with editors-in-chief of high-quality journals and questionnaire analysis were simultaneously introduced, focusing on chief editors' or editors' expressed views on editorial professional ethics to conduct saturation testing of theoretical hypotheses derived from job posting texts.

Regarding research subjects, China's scientific journal ecosystem is highly complex, with different evaluation standards creating fragmented development environments. To enhance data richness and explanatory power, this study focuses on high-quality scientific journal development practices, which hold greater practical leadership and demonstration significance and can provide references for other journals. The "Excellence Action Plan for Chinese Science and Technology Journals" aims to promote high-quality development and serve the construction of a technologically powerful nation. This plan represents China's most extensive, best-funded, and widest-ranging major support initiative for scientific journal development. Therefore, journals selected for this plan can serve as research objects for studying high-quality Chinese scientific journals [15].

During subject selection, project lists of leading journals, key journals, tiered journals, and high-start new journals were systematically reviewed, with job postings searched on their official websites and WeChat public accounts. The screening criterion was explicit mention of professional ethics requirements, ultimately yielding 114 texts addressing editorial professional ethics. It should be noted that when multiple journals share the same sponsoring organization, a single job posting may be issued for centralized recruitment. Additionally, some journals had no available job postings or postings that did not mention ethics requirements; such cases were omitted.

3.1 Open Coding

In the open coding stage, the collected job posting texts for scientific journal editors were coded, labeled, and logged. Since the collected postings did not exclusively address professional ethics requirements but also included "hard" requirements such as education and work experience, texts highly relevant to editorial ethics requirements were extracted, yielding 147 original statements. The screening criterion was that the requirement could not be quantified or objectively verified, emphasizing the editor's subjective will and self-awareness with strong "flexible" evaluation characteristics. Initial analysis of the raw texts revealed numerous overlapping concepts requiring categorization to classify initial concepts and clarify their relationships. During categorization, initial concepts appearing fewer than three times were eliminated. The resulting initial concepts and categories are shown in Table 1. Due to space limitations, only three relatively clear initial examples are listed.

Table 1 Open Coding Categorization

Original Statement (Initial Concept)	Category
C13: Excellent master's graduates who are passionate about journal development and full of enthusiasm may have educational requirements relaxed (Passion for the position)	A11: Highly self-motivated and creative, highly interested in the work of scientific editing (Self-motivation)
B6: Has work enthusiasm and is willing to contribute to improving the overall level of optics publications (Has work passion)	A14: Abide by national laws and regulations, possess good political and ideological qualities and moral character (Law-abiding)
B2: Support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, adhere to the Party's line, principles, and policies (Political awareness)	B16: Have high political consciousness and policy understanding, familiar with relevant publishing policies and regulations (Regulatory awareness)
A12: Be comfortable with working in a fast-paced collaborative environment—team spirit is essential (Can cooperate harmoniously with team)	B2: Love society work, be proactive, and collaborate well (Good at integrating into groups)

Original Statement (Initial Concept)	Category
C9: Possess teamwork spirit, good professional ethics, and abide by CAS and institute regulations (Follow group rules)	B7: Have entrepreneurial spirit, strive to make the <i>Journal of Palaeogeography</i> (English edition) a high-level international journal soon (Has entrepreneurial consciousness)
B9: Have strong self-learning ability, enterprising and innovative spirit, and open-minded thinking (Open thinking)	D6: Strong stress resistance, can independently undertake certain work content, has good pioneering ability and keen insight (Independent and pioneering)
A2: Serious and meticulous work attitude, strong sense of responsibility (Serious and meticulous)	A6: Down-to-earth, serious, meticulous work (Practical and meticulous)

Original Statement (Initial Concept)	Category
C20: Strong sense of responsibility, careful (Responsible and meticulous)	A5: Good interpersonal relationships and communication skills, can effectively communicate with editors-in-chief and editorial boards (Internal work communication)
A12: Be eager to travel and meet scientists worldwide, learn more about them and their research, and help them learn more about us and what we are looking for in the papers we seek to publish (External dissemination and promotion)	B3: Can actively communicate and contact with academic researchers (Stable academic liaison)
C8: Strong political quality, good service consciousness (Service consciousness)	B4: Willing to dedicate, endure hardship (Willing to dedicate and endure hardship)
B7: Willing to engage in long-term editorial work, devote oneself wholeheartedly (Long-term dedication)	A12: Be able to demonstrate the breadth of your interest in scientific research, both within and beyond your specialty (Broad interest in research fields)

Original Statement (Initial Concept)	Category
C61: Understand the current status and frontiers of natural science development, have keen judgment on specific scientific issues (Academic judgment)	D5: Strong learning ability; problem analysis and solving ability, rigor, logical ability; comprehensive knowledge background, broad interests, good aesthetic ability (Active thinking and broad learning interests)
D2: Content with one's job, dedicated and willing to dedicate (Content with position)	C18: Interested in academic journal editing work, has long-term development aspirations in scientific journal field, down-to-earth and serious (Long-term development)
D1: Love scientific journal career and can work stably in the hired position (Pursues stability)	D3: Cheerful personality, good communication and coordination skills (Outgoing and cheerful)

Original Statement (Initial Concept)	Category
A15: High EQ, willing to socialize (Good at socializing)	C51: Strong affinity, strong sense of responsibility and overall situation awareness (Affable and reliable)
C10: Law-abiding, upright behavior, dedicated to work, no academic misconduct record (Academic integrity)	C16: Abide by constitution and laws, love education career, adhere to academic norms (Strong academic norm consciousness)
B2: Can abide by society's rules, has good confidentiality awareness, agrees to sign confidentiality agreement (Protects academic secrets, strong compliance awareness)	B4: Willing to dedicate, endure hardship, obey work arrangements (Obeys arrangements)
C3: Strong sense of responsibility, strong execution, diligent and rigorous, does not shirk work, has high dedication and good political quality (Proactive work)	C20: Strong execution (Strong execution)
C4: Strong organizational discipline, strong subjective initiative and teamwork spirit, strong sense of career and responsibility (Strong subjective initiative)	A10: Strong organizational coordination and learning ability, problem analysis and independent problem-solving ability (Strong leadership and problem-solving)

Original Statement (Initial Concept)	Category
A8: Courageous in taking responsibility and working independently; can bear performance pressure and certain intensity of domestic and international travel (Strong personal stress resistance and responsibility)	

Note: A, B, C, and D represent leading journals, key journals, tiered journals, and high-start new journals, respectively, while A, B, C, D denote the th job posting text under each category. Statements in parentheses represent initial concepts extracted after coding the original statements.*

3.2 Axial Coding

In the axial coding stage, logical relationships among the categories identified in open coding were analyzed to develop main categories and sub-categories. Based on logical relationships and conceptual hierarchies among different categories, four main categories were derived: subject motivation driven by professional identity, personality traits oriented by professional demand, dedication models constructed by professional convention, and collective norms shaped by professional system. The relationships between these main categories and their corresponding open coding sub-categories are shown in Table 2 .

Table 2 Main Categories Formed in Axial Coding Stage

Main Category	Sub-category
Subject motivation driven by professional identity	Value-driven, self-management, pioneering innovation
Personality traits oriented by professional demand	Serious and meticulous, stable and reliable, outgoing and cheerful
Dedication models constructed by professional convention	Dedication and service, long-term development, academic integrity
Collective norms shaped by professional system	Political quality, compliance and execution, teamwork collaboration

3.3 Selective Coding

In the selective coding stage, starting from the main categories identified in axial coding, the following “storyline” for “professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors” was constructed. The basic 思路 for constructing this study’s “storyline” [16] is shown in Table 3 . Specifically, first, it involves abstract “outlining” from the subjective world. Both professional ethics requirements and the realization of moral consciousness require strong subjective will support; therefore, “subject motivation driven by professional identity” provides the driving force and starting point. Second, it involves concrete “depiction”

from the objective world. The specific characteristics of editors' work generate demands for specialized personalities, rendering professional ethics more three-dimensional and concrete. Third, it involves systematic adjustment from social norms and technical rules. Professional convention and professional system together form a buffer zone, adjusting relationships and conflicts between subjective and objective demands for professional ethics.

Table 3 “Storyline” Design 思路 for Main Categories

Corresponding Relationship Structure Connotation	Basic Logical Relationship
Subject identity is the individual factor in editorial professional ethics requirements (“the writer”), directly establishing the tone and direction of editorial professional needs	Objective demand is the determining factor in editorial professional ethics requirements (“the feedback provider”), providing realistic foundation and reference for editorial professional imagination
Professional convention is the social contextual condition adjusting editorial professional ethics requirements, indirectly but profoundly influencing the relationship between subjective and objective needs	Professional system is the regulatory contextual condition adjusting editorial professional ethics requirements, arbitrarily but directly influencing the relationship between subject identity and objective demand

Based on this, this study constructs a theoretical framework analyzing the factors influencing editorial professional ethics requirements in current Chinese scientific journal development practice, namely the “Construction Model of Professional Ethics Requirements for Scientific Journal Editors,” as shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

Figure 1 Construction Model of Professional Ethics Requirements for Scientific Journal Editors

3.4 Theoretical Saturation Testing

This study introduced interview records from 25 academic journal editors-in-chief and questionnaire responses from 259 journal directors for theoretical saturation testing, focusing on the current status, capability assumptions, and competency issues of editorial teams. For instance, one questionnaire respondent

noted that “adjusting editors’ (individual) work attitudes and thinking can play a greater role in improving manuscript quality,” verifying the existence of moral demands under the “value-driven” category. Another editor-in-chief stated in an interview, “We also have requirements for editors; each person must propose at least 50 ideas for journal development as a checklist, mapping out a blueprint for future journal development as their (personal career planning) motto,” verifying moral demands under the “self-management” category. Analysis of interview and questionnaire records revealed that all information points could be covered by the four main categories of this model, and the sub-categories constituting the main categories could also be basically verified. Thus, the “Construction Model of Professional Ethics Requirements for Scientific Journal Editors” can be considered theoretically saturated. Furthermore, these materials provided 思路 and inspiration for model interpretation, which will be cited as evidence in the next section for focused analysis.

4 Interpretation of the Construction Model of Professional Ethics Requirements for Scientific Journal Editors

Based on the above analysis, the theoretical assumptions of the four main categories can be verified as primary influencing factors constructing professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors. However, their specific construction pathways and influence methods differ, with considerable overlap occurring during the process. The following sections elaborate on these points.

4.1 The Relationship Between Editorial Self-Identity and Objective Demand

Driven by self-identity, editors with these traits are considered to possess value-driven, self-management, and pioneering innovation capabilities, representing key internal factors and the primary target of requirements. This demand must be endogenously generated from recognition of the value of scientific journal editing, manifested as passion, enthusiasm, and impulse in personal career planning, with strong idealistic coloring. However, the professional ethics constructed thereby are also the most practically transformative and most valued by managers. From the research texts, 71 of the 147 job postings emphasized the need for professional identity, with journal C13 even prioritizing it over educational requirements, stating “Excellent master’s graduates who are passionate about journal development and full of enthusiasm may have educational requirements relaxed.” Journal C33 similarly emphasized the importance of “professional passion,” specifying “Those who love brainstorming, enjoy writing, and have strong interest in academic publishing and dissemination are preferred.” This indicates that most editorial departments urgently need applicants with strong professional enthusiasm; that is, professional ethics driven by personal identity can generate positive work performance incentives such as self-management and pioneering innovation potential. However, detailed analysis reveals that different professional ethics characteristics produce varying incentive effects.

- (1) **Different journal development plans affect the value scenarios of editorial professional ethics requirements.** The strategic goals that different scientific journals strive to achieve determine the career planning visions editors imagine and reflect the degree of expectation for editors' personal value realization. For instance, B7 mentioned the journal development vision of "striving to make the *Journal of Palaeogeography* (English edition) a high-level international journal soon," where the moral demands for editors were relatively aggressive and long-term, specifically requiring "long-term dedication to editorial work, wholehearted commitment, strong career ambition, and entrepreneurial spirit." B6 proposed the career vision of "having work enthusiasm and being willing to contribute to improving the overall level of optics publications," reflecting that this journal's value vision for editors is serving professional publications. B17's plan of "having dedication...loving one's job and being dedicated, content with one's position" required editors to engage in service and dedication work, reducing comparative expectations with other positions and increasing spiritual satisfaction with their own work. Additionally, one editor-in-chief noted in an interview that "differences between chief editors and responsible editors in frontier consciousness, proactive consciousness, and mission consciousness will influence whether editors position their work as a profession or a career." This relates to editors' personal identity and vision for the journal; if scientific journals are believed to play an academic leadership role, editors' personal charisma becomes more prominent, and the professional ethics formed around them become relatively more grand.
- (2) **Different functional cognitions of journal editors affect the personality traits required in professional ethics.** The personal imagination of scientific journal editors has a strong practical foundation, related to the streamlined operations and refined division of labor in scientific publishing. Although Chinese scientific journals cannot yet match Western publishing companies in the degree of editorial specialization, job postings already reveal differentiated moral demands for editors, presenting different versions of professional ethics based on personality traits. For example, expressions such as "love for scientific publishing and dissemination (A2)," "positive attitude (A19)," "cheerful personality (A19)," and "high EQ (A15)" generally correspond to positions like "translation editor," "English editor," "international exchange editor," or "operations editor." These positions primarily undertake social tasks such as academic dissemination, translation, communication, and promotion, requiring relatively lively, positive, affable, and extroverted professional personalities. In contrast, "strong insight (A14)," "patient and meticulous (C2)," and "upright character (C34)" correspond to text editing and proofreading work, requiring relatively stable, reliable, and rigorous professional personalities. Nevertheless, given China's special journal editorial management system, both scientific and humanities journal editors are generally positioned as versatile talent, so job postings also reveal some "contradictory,"

comprehensive, and all-encompassing personality trait descriptions, such as “has good teamwork spirit and can also creatively work independently (A5),” “has unity, innovation, and dedication spirit (B16),” and “has good service consciousness, pioneering innovation, and teamwork spirit (C8).” Notably, two journals included “male preferred (C54/C67)” in their job requirements. Although such expressions are rare, the implied editorial personality orientation warrants attention. This indicates that personality trait requirements for scientific journal editors are not yet sufficiently specialized and refined, and the value of different personality types needs clearer, healthier guidance and construction.

- (3) **Different intensities of professional emotion projected onto editors affect the practical driving force of professional ethics requirements.** When editors’ professional ethics emotions tend toward sentiment and dedication, their practical driving force becomes stronger. This assumption is evident from moral requirements in job postings. For instance, journal C3 hopes editors “have a strong desire to engage in publishing work, willing to engage in long-term editorial work...diligent and rigorous, does not shirk work, has high dedication.” Journal B19 mentions “endures hardship...aspires to engage in scientific journal editing work.” Journal A8 also requires editors to achieve self-worth through professional identity, demanding they “love cultural and scientific careers...can bear performance pressure and certain intensity of domestic and international travel.” These noble moral expectations also reflect that editors receive relatively adequate spiritual motivation and discursive support in the social professional system, but may simultaneously lack material support.

4.2 The Moderating Effect of Contextual Variables on Subjective and Objective Professional Ethics Requirements

Professional convention and professional system serve as dual contextual variables for editorial professional ethics requirements, adjusting and 磨合 the alignment between individual professional identity and practical talent demand, enabling material and spiritual incentives to function synergistically. The professional image constructed by professional convention aims to achieve personalized spiritual motivation, which must be closely integrated with individual professional identity to maximize its motivational effect—that is, only when individuals recognize the professional value of editing can professional convention exert moral constraints or labor incentives. The regulatory mechanism of professional system is more arbitrary and mandatory, directly related to editorial talent demand. Chinese journal editors belong to the public institution management system, differing from Western market-based incentives and relying more on policy guidance and normative management. For instance, the sub-categories of “political quality,” “compliance and execution,” and “teamwork collaboration” were mentioned in 11, 18, and 75 job postings, respectively. These three sub-categories represent management constraints at different dimensions: na-

tional, sponsoring organization, and editorial department levels, corresponding to the multiple values that scientific journals support for the nation, sponsoring organizations, and editorial departments. As a highly collaborative work with significant social value, scientific journal publishing inevitably subjects editors, as key actors, to constraints from national regulations, industry norms, and organizational systems, directly determining the basic professional norms for editors in the overall social division of labor.

Here, this study also notes the strong moderating effect of professional convention in Chinese scientific journal editors' ethics requirements. Although professional convention and professional system differ significantly in form and mechanism, both constitute external restrictions and constraints on individual professional identity, with certain interactive relationships that dynamically shape professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors under different incentive situations. Combined with China's academic journal management system, professional ethics norms often require editors to construct lofty professional models such as "dedication," "service," "enduring hardship," and "working behind the scenes," similar to compensating for other missing moral values, elevating their status in the overall professional discourse system, especially when sufficient economic incentives are lacking, enabling self-identity through high-intensity labor. As a moderating mechanism, if individuals pursue material incentives, they occupy a "low" moral status in professional ethics requirements, whereas if they pursue dedication and contribution in service of the people, they are portrayed as noble social figures. This mechanism is significantly influenced by sponsoring organizations' benefit objectives under different journal management forms. In summary, in organizational environments pursuing either economic or social benefits, professional convention and professional system form an alternating logical relationship, creating dynamic moderating effects on individual professional ethics requirements.

The relationship between self-identity (subjective recognition) and talent demand (objective guidance), along with the moderating effects of contextual variables, is shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. Here, contextual variables can be understood as public professional ethics requirements jointly constructed by professional system and professional convention. To understand how public moral requirements affect editorial individual agency, this study introduces a parallel mechanism to public moral incentives—market regulation [17]. Specifically, three typical situations can be identified: (1) High consistency between self-identity and talent demand (see point A). Here, external contextual variables' moderation is nearly zero, and editors can achieve the purer forms of "passion," "Highly self-motivated," and "strong interest" mentioned in job postings. These individually-endogenous professional ethics factors possess stronger driving force and, because they align highly with personal career visions, particularly stimulate stronger innovation and self-management capabilities in practice. However, due to their strong self-awareness, individuality, and randomness, they are extremely scarce and rare. (2) Low consistency between self-identity and talent demand, dominated by public professional ethics norms

(see point B). Here, editors' professional ethics self-discipline needs supplementation from external contextual variables. Generally, professional system and professional convention form complementary forces, making overall professional ethics requirements more positive, precise, and oriented toward professional discourses such as "dedication," "steadfastness," "service," and "meticulousness." (3) Low consistency between self-identity and talent demand, dominated by market incentives (see point C). Here, public professional ethics norms no longer need to play an incentive role but primarily limit the excessive influence of market forces on professional ethics bottom lines and basic principles, forming a parallel relationship.

Figure 2 The Relationship Between Self-Identity and Talent Demand and the Moderating Effect of Contextual Variables

5 Conclusions and Optimization Recommendations for Adjusting Professional Ethics Requirements of High-Quality Scientific Journal Editors

Based on the research findings, this study proposes a mechanism model for the formation of scientific journal editor requirements, centered on four main categories: individual subject identity, practical talent demand, professional system, and professional convention. Among these, individual value identity is the subjective variable, practical talent demand is the internal feedback variable, and professional system and professional convention jointly constitute external contextual variables. Based on this model, the following conclusions are drawn: (1) This study finds that professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors have distinct subjectivity, varying according to individual expectations of editorial professional ethics and affecting the development of editors' personal qualities and professional personalities. (2) Further research shows that professional ethics requirements adjust according to objective journal practices, manifested in specific factors such as journal development plans, functional cognitions of editorial roles, and individual emotional intensity. These are generally determined by journal managers and reflected in specific conditions set in job postings regarding personality, qualities, and education. (3) Additionally, public models of dedication for editors significantly affect editors' moral self-discipline and value orientation. Particularly in China, where academic journals are required to pursue social rather than economic benefits, the resulting editorial management system relies heavily on professional convention, thereby fostering a moral atmosphere of "loving one's job and being dedicated" among scientific journal editors. This represents a special cultural phenomenon in China. Historically, Confucianism used "ritual propriety" as the basic criterion for regulating behavior and an important means of social governance. In establishing a socialist market economy, China requires achieving the highest state of dedication—pursuing excellence through diligence, proficiency, and joy—to promote comprehensive economic and social development and individual spiritual growth. Moreover, China's *Outline for the Implementation of Civic*

Moral Construction proposes professional ethics requirements of “loving one’s job, being honest and trustworthy, being fair in handling affairs, serving the masses, and dedicating to society,” reflecting the special significance and role of public professional ethics norms in China [18].

Based on these conclusions, this study offers references for policymakers and journal managers in editorial talent recruitment and professional moral education, with specific recommendations as follows.

5.1 Enhancing Individual Professional Ethics Consciousness Among Scientific Journal Editors

Editorial professional ethics consciousness is the original driving force that “recharges” occupational passion, which can be enhanced through the following approaches: (1) Strengthen the dissemination and communication of scientific journal editors’ professional value. Chinese scientific journal editors are generally considered to need to fulfill “jack-of-all-trades” roles, but with the refined division of labor in scientific publishing, the specific roles undertaken by editors need to be more clearly defined, particularly corresponding to specific publishing processes to clarify the importance and moral integrity of editorial roles. In highly socially-divided creative labor, professional identity based on blind cognition is inefficient. Specific improvements can start with the textual expression of job postings, using clear and coherent moral requirement descriptions and avoiding overly comprehensive, contradictory, or excessively idealistic clauses. (2) Promote editors’ understanding of Chinese scientific journals’ positioning and strategic objectives. The reality gap experienced by scientific journal editors is one cause of negative personal identity. Most Chinese scientific journals face the practical dilemma of lacking high-quality manuscript sources. “Even a good housewife cannot make a meal without rice.” Young editors of scientific journals who long face low-level manuscripts cannot effectively realize their expected self-worth, gradually developing a sense of powerlessness about their work [19]. Therefore, journals’ positioning and objectives are the basis for editors’ self-identity, making it necessary to fully acquaint editors with the realistic development baseline before allowing individual editors to determine their expected value realization space. (3) Define autonomous space for professional value based on individual editors. Individual professional passion is highly random, or the cultivation of professional passion itself may be a pseudo-proposition. A more realistic measure is to enhance dialogue, understanding, and communication with potential candidates before recruitment, 尽可能 meeting the personalized needs of editorial talent regarding position expectations to improve the matching degree between individual editors and position requirements.

5.2 Reducing the Real Cost of Pursuing Identity for Scientific Journal Editors

In objective practice, scientific journal editors need to balance gaps and misunderstandings between subjective and objective factors. On one hand, the relationship between editorial talent capability requirements and moral qualities needs balancing. Currently, due to the high professional academic threshold for scientific journal editors, high requirements are set for education, major, and comprehensive qualities. On this basis, selecting candidates who love editorial work from a pool of highly capable talent easily leads to a demand dilemma of “difficulty in recruiting” and “even greater difficulty in retaining.” At this point, certain compromises between professional capability and moral quality are needed, or talent should be recruited more adaptively to local conditions rather than blindly demanding high education or versatile talent. On the other hand, when attracting and outlining editorial career prospects, non-material benefits need to be guided to attract talent. Although most individuals pursue labor benefits that maximize material interests in a technologically rational society, ensuring that editorial talent can achieve basic quality of life while providing a workplace environment that enables emotional and creative value realization is key to synchronizing with talent that strongly identifies with the editorial profession.

5.3 Improving the Model Moral and Cultural Atmosphere for Scientific Journal Editors

The professional cultural atmosphere in which scientific journal editors operate is an important reference for achieving self-professional identity. To make it conducive to the moral education effects of editorial talent, two approaches can be taken: (1) Create an equal, respectful, and open academic community cultural atmosphere. Under the current academic journal management system, scientific journal editors are easily compared with researchers in the same system. Differences in social recognition, labor recognition, and professional respect make editors vulnerable in professional identity. In response, policymakers can appropriately adjust editors’ social image, constructing a more just “academic judge” image based on editorial work characteristics rather than unilaterally emphasizing editors’ service role. (2) Strengthen positive emotional feedback from the academic community to editors. According to sociological research, emotions not only empower people but also enable them to act in ways that meet cultural expectations in situations, giving strength to cultural norms and rules [20]. Editors’ labor contributions require emotional feedback rather than unidirectional negative evaluations and problem suggestions. Sustained communication and feedback with scholars, whether out of gratitude for editors’ labor or to learn about journal service issues, can provide editors with positive emotional value and respect experiences, thereby experiencing spiritual returns and promoting satisfaction derived from scientific journal editors’ professional ideals.

5.4 Perfecting the Professional Management System for Scientific Journal Editors

The journal editorial professional management system defines the basic professional norms for scientific journal editors, representing strong restrictive moral guidelines. The institutional system represents national management signals and value orientations for editors, driving societal moral demands and attitudes toward the editorial profession. Currently, scientific journal editors primarily hold public institution positions, but compared with positions like teachers that receive sufficient moral rewards, editors are labeled with professional attributes such as “working behind the scenes,” “service,” and “backstage workers” without receiving corresponding respect in social professional status. Unilaterally demanding moral dedication and contribution cannot truly generate pure professional ethics. Or rather, this contributor role, without receiving corresponding social attention and discursive investment, is essentially unbalanced. This relates to the unrecognized creative value of editorial labor in the management system or its failure to be separated from other journal publishing work. Moreover, because scientific journal editors highly depend on scholars’ preliminary creative labor, this symbiotic relationship generates an inertia of thinking that original labor value is superior to processing labor value, squeezing editors in the national professional management system. In summary, in the management system, the academic journal editorial sequence needs to be truly independent so that editorial labor value is first recognized, after which editors’ moral compensation can gain social respect and recognition.

In conclusion, the construction model of professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors proposed in this study can provide inspiration for talent moral education and management. It should be added that this model is an exploratory research result based on grounded theory, requiring expanded data scope and subjects for deeper verification of its reliability, validity, and applicable value. Furthermore, professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors involve related research in sociology, psychology, and other fields, requiring comprehensive application of techniques for interpretation and guidance in specific practice. In the future, as the value of technological innovation receives further national support, the importance of scientific journal editorial talent will become more prominent, further changing public professional ethics norms for scientific journal editors. This change will also be influenced by research fields, diffusing into various scientific disciplines. Additionally, professional ethics requirements for scientific journal editors relate to macro factors such as national socio-economic systems, culture, and history, necessitating comparisons between China and Western countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. Only after fully understanding China’s characteristics can corresponding macro-level construction strategies and pathways be proposed according to local conditions.

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