

The Career Development of Slash Youth under the New Business Format: Analysis of Dilemma and Exploration of Countermeasures

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Abstract: With the rise of new forms of business, the group of slash youth is growing, and its career development has been widely concerned. This paper deeply analyzes the status quo and dilemma of the career development of the slash youth, such as the role conflict under the part-time work mode, the career development path being unclear, and the lack of protection of social security, rights, and interests. At the same time, it explores the corresponding countermeasures, including precisely planning the career path to strengthen the core competitiveness, optimizing the time management and role coordination strategy, and improving the social security and rights and interests protection mechanism. Through the discussion of the dilemma and countermeasures, the study aims to help the slash youth to better realize career development under the new business format and grasp the diversified development opportunities.

Keywords: New business form; Slash youth; Career development dilemma

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1. Introduction

The term “new forms of business” first appeared in the Communiqué of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2015, which proposes to “promote the vigorous development of new technologies, new industries and new forms of business” and emphasizes “strengthening support for flexible employment and new forms of employment.” The 2016 Government Work Report further clarified that new business forms cover the Internet, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, e-commerce, and other fields. Some scholars further defined the concept of the new business form, pointing out that the “new business form” is based on the existing industrial foundation, relying on the innovation and application of information technology, derived service links, and activity forms that meet the needs of diversified, diversified and personalized products or services ^[1]. On the whole, the core features of new business formats are mainly

reflected in digitalization, platformization, and flexibility ^[2]. These characteristics together shape the unique development mode and employment ecology of the new business and have a profound impact on all aspects of youth employment.

In this context, as a new occupational group, the slash youth emerge and develop vigorously. Slashers generally refer to those young people who are not bound by a single professional identity, but who have diversified skills and interests in different fields, wear multiple professional identities, and have multiple sources of income. Their professional identities are often connected by “/”, such as “designer/photographer/psychological consultant” ^[3]. The rise of this group is not only an individual’s initiative to pursue self-value realization and meet the needs of economic diversification but also an inevitable product of social and economic evolution and industrial structure adjustment. According to the 2021 Youth Employment and Career Planning Report, 27.6 percent of young people now have two or more jobs, and “slashers” account for more than 25 percent ^[4]. According to the Social Survey Center of China Youth Daily, 11.1 percent of young people consider themselves “slash youth”, and nearly 50 percent of them have the desire to become “slash youth.” It can be seen that the scale of the slash youth group is continuing to expand. However, although the development of slash youth seems to be full of vitality, some scholars are concerned that they face many difficulties and challenges in their career development, such as the difficulty of work-life balance for slash youth, the imbalance of main and secondary occupations, and the forced work passion for secondary occupations, which leads to maladaptive outcomes ^[5]. There is also a high turnover rate of the main occupation, low career commitment, and low organizational citizenship behavior ^[6]. Therefore, it is of great practical significance and theoretical value to deeply study the career development dilemma of slash youth and explore effective countermeasures for promoting the healthy growth of slash youth, promoting the sustainable development of new business forms, and improving the social employment system.

To sum up, this study focuses on the career development dilemma of slash youth and puts forward targeted career development countermeasures and suggestions. Specifically around the following questions: What is the status quo of career development of slash youth? What practical dilemmas do they face? How should the dilemma be dealt with?

2. Review the status quo of career development of slash youth: Research design and implementation

This study uses the in-depth interview method to select 15 young slashes from different industries and cities as research samples, aiming to deeply explore the working and living status of this emerging group. The selection of research samples mainly covers the following three key dimensions. First, focus on the slash youth under the age of 35, who are actively engaged in the parallel development of the main and secondary industries. Second, it focuses on those individuals who have shared their slash experience on social platforms, which not only ensures that they have a certain willingness to express themselves but also reflects the authenticity and richness of their slash experience from the side. Third, the study strives to present a wide diversity in the occupational types of the samples, covering different fields and occupations of different natures, to enhance the diversity and representativeness of the research results. In the specific research process, the author conducted an in-depth interview with each slash youth, with the interview duration limited to about 60 minutes, to ensure that they could comprehensively and systematically collect detailed information about their work experience, the motivation behind career choice, the difficulties and challenges they encountered, and many other aspects (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Respondent information table

Serial Number	Interviewee	Gender	Age	Primary and secondary occupations (primary/secondary)	Slash-job duration
1	Oceanic	Male	33	IELTS Teacher/content creator	3 years
2	Lily	Female	26	Dance instructor/health consultant	2 years
3	Tintin	Female	34	Hypnotist/stage actress/designer	8 years
4	Filigree	Female	33	Psychological counselor/college teacher	6 years
5	Sugar Sugar	Female	31	Internet clerk/parenting blogger/corporate consultant	3 years
6	Mr. Liu	Male	35	Photographer/interior designer	6 years
7	Miss Ho	Female	32	Homestay hostess/designer/hotel manager	9 months
8	Ms Lee	Female	27	Chinese teacher/online novel writer	5 months
9	Light snow	Female	29	Drawing teacher/graphic designer	1 month
10	Ann Tsai	Male	27	Physical education teacher/ground pick-up guide/hike leader	6 years
11	Siu Fong	Female	25	Study tour leader/consultant	1 year
12	Mr. Chen	Male	30	Taobao shopkeeper/aromatherapist/curator	1 year
13	Xiao Wang	Male	29	Photographer/fitness instructor	3 years
14	Xiao Mei	Female	23	Self-employed/network anchor	2 years
15	Mr. Gu	Male	32	Copywriter/Didi driver	4 years

3. Current status of career development of slash youth

3.1. Career choice motivation: the exploration of personal development driven by diversity

3.1.1. Interest-led: The professional transformation of hobbies

Through the analysis of the interview results of 15 slash youths, it is found that the motivations for their career choice can be mainly classified into three categories: deepening the field of interest, pursuing extra income, and realizing personal value. In terms of deep cultivation of interest fields, many slash youths develop their hobbies into sideline occupations, thus obtaining some kind of pleasure and satisfaction in their work. For example, the interviewee Ding Ding, who originally worked in an advertising company, tried hypnosis therapy due to work pressure. In the process of self-study, he developed a love for hypnosis, self-study, and research, and now he is a registered hypnotist. At the same time, he also works as a stage actress in a theater company and occasionally gets some acting opportunities. “I did it as a hobby. I did not want to do something on the side at the beginning. I just liked it and learned it. Later, some friends will gradually know that I will do hypnosis, find me to do activities, and become a side business, in fact, now these do not earn much, or when the hobby is done” (Ding Ding, August 2024).

3.1.2. Economic pressure: Realistic consideration of increasing income from side business

In the pursuit of extra income, some slash youths choose to engage in side businesses that can bring more income due to greater pressure in life or to improve their economic level. For example, Miss He is a hotel manager. Although her job is relatively stable, she has begun to look for other ways to increase her income as the cost of living rises and her family’s consumption expenditure increases. Under the influence of the “slash” trend, she

became a homestay hostess, effectively increasing her income by running her own homestay on social media, sharing her design experience, and recommending related homestay products. “When you have a child, you have to spend money everywhere. Just because my hometown is a tourist area and my family has an empty house, I started to explore and do it little by little. The income from the boutique B&B in a summer tourist season income can cover our family’s living expenses for a year” (Miss He, 2024 May).

3.1.3. Value pursuit: The journey of ability expansion and self-realization

In terms of realizing personal value, some slash youths hope to expand their ability boundaries by trying different career fields and realizing the improvement of self-value. For example, Xiao Wang, the interviewee, has been working as a fitness coach for 6 years. Now, besides being a fitness coach, he also undertakes some part-time photography for commercial activities. “At the beginning, I just wanted to improve myself. The fitness industry will soon become a leading industry. If I do not do this in the future, I will also have technology to support my family. In the past two years, I have gone out and met many friends, and my skills have also improved a lot, and I have indeed seen progress.” (Xiao Wang, 2024 August)

3.2. Career development model: Multiple explorations in balance and integration

3.2.1. Dynamic balance of main and deputy positions: The coordinated development with the main position as the axis and the deputy position as the supplement

In the process of career development, most slash youths are committed to seeking a relatively stable “dynamic balance” between the main job and the deputy job. They regard the main job as the main source of income and career foundation, and the second job as a useful supplement to enrich career experience and expand development space. Taking Tangtang, a parenting blogger, as an example, she regards the main job as the “main task” and the deputy job as the “side task.” When carrying out the side job, she has formulated a more detailed schedule, clarifying the time and task arrangement invested in the main job and the deputy job, to ensure orderly switching and collaborative development between them. Although at some stages, her income as a parenting blogger occasionally exceeded that of the main job, she always insisted that the main job was the “core.” University teacher Sisi, who also works as a psychologist, believes that the two jobs offer some flexibility in scheduling, which not only does not conflict in nature but can enhance each other. “My work schedule is relatively flexible. The two jobs are not in conflict and can be balanced well,” she said. “Working as a psychologist allows me to practice and expand my professional knowledge, which in turn helps me to better teach knowledge in the classroom. In other words, doing a side business is actually improving my professional ability” (Sisi, 2024 June).

In general, for most slashers, the main job is still regarded as the “axis” for them to settle down, while the secondary job is a supplement to the main job. The two form a dynamic balance. As one respondent said, “I do not want to develop my slash job into my main career. I want to maintain a balanced state without too many conflicts. Even if there are conflicts, I want to be able to control them.” (Ms. Li, 2024 July)

3.2.2. Multiple integration of professional identity: Cross-field integration to create unique value advantages

In the process of career development, some slash youths have successfully realized the multiple integration of professional identity, and they skillfully integrate the skills, knowledge, and resources of different professions, thus creating unique values and significant competitive advantages. For example, Anzai graduated in leisure physical education and is currently working as a physical education teacher in a primary school. In teaching, he is

keenly aware of the market's interest and demand for outdoor sports and nature exploration. Therefore, he made full use of his professional knowledge reserve and extensive network resources, was actively involved in the field of outdoor activity planning, and undertook outdoor hiking planning and organization activities in the form of a studio. "It is difficult to break through the work in the school, so you should find more ways for yourself. Outdoor leadership is the best way to blend your major with your career" (Ann, 2024 July). This diversified and integrated career development model enables the slash youth to fully tap their potential, greatly expand the career development space, and create more possibilities and development opportunities in different fields.

4. Insight into the dilemma of career development of slash youth

4.1. Role conflict: Multiple challenges under the part-time work mode

4.1.1. Limitation of time and energy: Coordination problem in busy work

Slash youth often face the dilemma of limited time and energy due to the need to juggle multiple professional identities at the same time. Different occupations may have different working time requirements and task urgency, which often puts them in a dilemma when it comes to scheduling their daily work. "Sometimes it is really too busy, especially some projects are pressed by the party, and the construction period cannot be compressed anymore. My studio must grab the opportunity, before the winter and summer vacation enrollment, scheduling of classes that is not delayed, the two jobs are busy, the current time coordination is not flexible" (Xiao Xue, 2024 August); "Definitely want to open up the live broadcast, to learn to live will close the store, there is no time to learn, then if it is still easy to get up, maybe how to do? So now or try to take into account both, really take into account not to go" (Xiaomei, 2024 June).

4.1.2. Role transformation and psychological adjustment: The physical and mental test of frequent switching

Frequent transitions between different professional roles also put forward higher demands on the psychology and cognition of slash youth. To quickly switch from one working state to another requires them to have strong adaptability and psychological adjustment ability. "Doing aromatherapy and opening a Taobao store are completely two states, doing aromatherapy is still very relaxing, but you sometimes deal with a lot of things in the store it is difficult to enter the relaxed state, the transformation of identity is sometimes not easy for me" (Mr. Chen, 2024 June). In addition, being in a state of role conflict for a long time may also lead to negative emotions such as anxiety, exhaustion, and self-doubt among slashers, which will have adverse effects on physical and mental health. "You do not think being a blogger is easy, in fact, it is very difficult, many times I am waiting for the child to sleep and then cut video script, wishing to have three heads and six arms. Many times are very frustrated and do not know how others can do so many things. I do not know if I will have time to do this when I finish my maternity leave soon. I do not want to give up for the time being, but I feel that I will be depressed" (Tangtang, 2024 June).

4.2. Career growth path: Confused exploration and wandering

4.2.1. Vague planning: The uncertainty of career direction

Different from the traditional single career development path, slashers are faced with more complex and diverse career choices and development directions, which makes them often feel confused and lost when making career plans. When choosing a side career, many slash youth often rely only on their personal interests or short-term economic interests, lack in-depth analysis and rational judgment of their own advantages, disadvantages, and long-

term career development goals, resulting in an unclear career development direction, easy to wander between different career fields, waste time and energy, and difficult to form effective career accumulation and growth. “I was originally doing interior design, then thinking of making more money, so I began to take photography work with my own interest in photography but found that photography is too competitive after doing it for some time, and I am not sure how to develop in the photography field, unsure whether to choose commercial photography or artistic photography, so now I am doing both, But I feel that there is no progress and I feel very confused” (Mr. Liu, 2024 July).

4.2.2. Promotion dilemma: The inadaptability of the traditional path

In the traditional workplace environment, employees can usually achieve career growth and development through clear promotion mechanisms, such as job promotion and salary increases. However, for slash youth, it is difficult to follow the traditional promotion path due to the diversity of their professional identity and the flexibility of their work forms. The development standards and evaluation systems of various side fields vary widely, and it is often difficult for slashers to measure their level of development and progress in various career fields, and it is not clear how to achieve further breakthroughs and promotions in different career directions ^[7]. This, to a certain extent, severely limits their motivation and confidence in career development and hinders them from moving forward to higher-level career goals. “In the field of fitness coaching, I know how to grow by running myself, but in the field of photography, I am currently agonizing over how to get more business opportunities and feel like I am walking in the dark” (Xiao Wang, 2024 July).

4.3. Social security and protection of rights and interests: Vulnerability and helplessness in risk

4.3.1. The dilemma of social security participation: The uncertainty of future protection

The slash youth work in various forms, many of which are part-time and freelance work that cannot be as stable as the traditional full-time work to pay social insurance, such as pension insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, and so on ^[8]. Some slash youth may not participate in or fully pay social insurance due to unstable income, lack of employer contribution channels, or lack of understanding of social security policies, which makes them lack the necessary social security support when facing pension, medical care, unemployment, and other risks, and may fall into economic difficulties, greatly increasing the uncertainty and insecurity of life ^[9]. “Last year I was hit by a tricycle on the way to part-time work, had a fracture and concussion, and lived in the hospital for a week, friends said I could report work-related injury insurance, but when I asked the part-time agency, people said part-time staff do not have this system, so I finally had to admit it was bad luck, after this matter, to tell the truth, I felt quite bad for the lack of social security” (Ding Ding, 2024 August).

4.3.2. Rights and interests protection problem: The vulnerability of legitimate rights and interests

In some slash occupations, especially in part-time, temporary work, or freelance projects, due to the lack of clear labor contracts and effective constraints of labor laws and regulations, the labor rights and interests of slash youth are extremely vulnerable to infringement ^[10]. For example, there may be problems such as unpaid wages by employers, overtime work without corresponding remuneration, and occupational safety cannot be guaranteed ^[11]. Moreover, because the work of slash youth is often highly flexible and autonomous, they may face difficulties in collecting evidence, cumbersome legal procedures, and the high cost of safeguarding their

rights and interests. As a result, they often choose to swallow their pride when their rights are infringed upon and cannot effectively safeguard their legitimate rights and interests. “When I was doing product promotion for a small company, despite verbally forming an agreement, after the work was done, the boss has been dragging not to pay, when I want to enforce my rights, at that time did not sign a contract, chat records those are not too complete, and the legal process is too troublesome, the cost is high, so I finally just forget it” (Ocean, 2024 June).

5. The countermeasures of career development of slash youth

5.1. Optimize time management and role coordination strategies

Slash youth first need to make a detailed plan, according to the corresponding work tasks, time nodes, and importance of each occupational identity, carefully plan the daily, weekly, and even monthly work arrangements, with the help of time management tools, while reserve flexible time to deal with emergencies, to ensure that all work is carried out in an orderly manner ^[12]. Learning to set priorities is also crucial, accurately distinguishing the primary and secondary work, giving priority to dealing with urgent and important things, avoiding spending too much energy on trivial matters, reasonably postponing or entrusting non-critical tasks, and concentrating on overcoming core work. In addition, establish clear work boundaries and designate dedicated space and time for different tasks, so that they can work without distractions and improve their focus and efficiency. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen psychological adjustment, help quickly adjust the mentality between roles, and enhance mental toughness.

5.2. Clarify career planning and expand promotion paths

On the one hand, slash youths should carry out in-depth self-assessment and positioning, insight into their own interests and strengths and weaknesses, closely combine market demand and industry trends, comprehensively measure the direction of career development, anchor core competitiveness, and long-term goals, prudently choose side businesses, and ensure that all professional identities are related and mutually promoting ^[13]. On the other hand, it is of great significance to actively seek professional guidance, plan a clear path, and formulate targeted learning and growth plans. Through participating in training courses, and seminars, or integrating into the professional community, professionals and peers can exchange lessons and obtain rich career information resources ^[14]. At the same time, give full play to the advantages of diverse identities, explore opportunities for cross-integration in different fields, achieve cross-border innovation, transfer skills and experience from one place to another, shape unique competitive advantages, and expand promotion possibilities. They should also pay attention to building their personal brand and reputation. Through quality results, professional attitude, and active social interaction, they can enhance industry visibility and influence, attract more opportunities and resources, and pave the way for promotion.

5.3. Improve social security and rights protection mechanisms

On the one hand, government departments and relevant institutions should strengthen the publicity and education of social security policy, popularize the knowledge of social security to the slash youth, enhance their awareness of participating in insurance, and make them clear about their rights and interests and ways of participating in insurance ^[15]. On the other hand, given the work characteristics of slash youth, it is necessary to innovate the way to participate in social security insurance, provide flexible and convenient programs, allow the choice of payment levels and insurance projects according to income, support the participation of individuals or through

industry associations, platform organizations and other collective forms of insurance, to ensure the breadth and sustainability of social security coverage. In addition, strengthen the enforcement of labor laws and regulations, optimize the labor supervision mechanism, strictly supervise employers, and severely punish illegal acts such as wage arrears, overtime work, and occupational safety, to safeguard the rights and interests of workers. Finally, efforts should be made to improve the ability to safeguard the rights and interests of slash youths and provide legal aid and rights protection training, such as setting up legal counseling hotlines and platforms to protect labor rights and interests.

In a word, it is not an overnight task to deal with the career development dilemma of slash youth. Among them, diversified development is the trend, time management is the key, and clear career planning is the guarantee. At the same time, all-round strengthening of social security and rights and interests protection system construction is the top priority. This process requires the slash youth themselves, the government, enterprises, social organizations, and other aspects to work together so that the slash youth can be at ease to display their talents, fully release the vitality of innovation, and inject a steady stream of power for the development of new business forms.

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