

## The Influence of Foreign Teachers' Future Time Perspective and Ego Depletion: Role of Friendship Satisfaction and Diversity Climate

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### Abstract

This study aimed to (1) examine the relationship between foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion, (2) analyze the mediating role of friendship satisfaction, and (3) investigate the moderating role of diversity climate in this relationship. The research employed a quantitative approach grounded in conservation of resources theory. The sample consisted of 306 foreign teachers from 18 higher education institutions in Guangxi, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu provinces in China, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising four validated scales: future time perspective, ego depletion, friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, mediation analysis, moderation analysis, and moderated mediation analysis.

The findings revealed that future time perspective had a significant negative relationship with ego depletion. Friendship satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between future time perspective and ego depletion, indicating that higher levels of future-oriented thinking enhance positive interpersonal relationships, which in turn reduce psychological exhaustion. In addition, diversity climate significantly moderated both the direct relationship between future time perspective and ego depletion and the relationship between future time perspective and friendship satisfaction. Furthermore, diversity climate strengthened the indirect effect of future time perspective on ego depletion through friendship satisfaction at different levels. These results suggest that future time perspective is a critical antecedent of ego depletion, while friendship satisfaction and diversity climate

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function as important psychological and organizational mechanisms in mitigating negative psychological states. The study contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge by extending the application of conservation of resources theory in explaining ego depletion among foreign teachers in multicultural contexts. It highlights the importance of fostering future-oriented perspectives, promoting positive social relationships, and cultivating an inclusive and supportive organizational climate. The findings suggest that higher education institutions should implement targeted human resource strategies, enhance interpersonal support systems, and develop diversity-friendly environments to effectively reduce ego depletion and improve the well-being and performance of foreign teachers.

**Keywords:** Future Time Perspective; Ego Depletion; Friendship Satisfaction; Diversity Climate

## Introduction

Today, foreign teachers have become a vital force in China's endeavour to forge outstanding universities and cultivate future talent (Guo & Asmawi, 2023). However, cultural diversity frequently leads to negative psychological states among these educators, presenting a significant challenge for modern higher education management. How to address this persistent issue and restore psychological energy among foreign teachers remains unclear. Meanwhile, conservation of resources theory posits that traits constitute key antecedents of psychological responses (Alberts, et al., 2011). This is because trait resources assist individuals in mitigating stress and burnout arising from resource depletion. Friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate perceived as valuable and distinct resources not only fulfil individual needs but also facilitate accurate self-identification and social positioning (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Moreover, resource-related factors can provide individuals with optimism and confidence, thereby mitigating negative psychological states arising from adverse emotions (Rudolph, et al., 2018). This influence process can be further realised through diverse resources. Consequently, according to conservation of resources theory, friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate by augmenting available resources play crucial roles in shaping individual psychological responses and constitute vital resources within ego depletion research. Consequently, future

time perspective may influence teachers' ego depletion by affecting their acquisition of diverse resources.

Moreover, although Chinese academia has conducted some research on ego depletion, studies examining its antecedents and mechanisms remain scarce (Tan, et al., 2012). Consequently, research findings are limited, and investigations lack systematic depth. Therefore, this study aims to explore the antecedents and mechanisms of ego depletion among foreign teachers in China, drawing upon their specific context. This will contribute to enriching the existing research on the antecedents and mechanisms of ego depletion among foreign teachers in China, addressing gaps in the literature, and enhancing the theoretical framework of self-consumption, it holds significant theoretical importance. Concurrently, this study focuses on the antecedents and mechanisms of ego depletion among foreign teachers in China. By identifying existing issues in their ego depletion, it provides valuable reference points for higher education institutions. This facilitates improvements in management strategies for foreign teaching staff, ultimately enhancing teaching effectiveness.

In psychological process research in China, ego depletion is the least emphasized, which starkly contrasts advanced countries. In contrast, Western nations have extensively explored ego depletion in recent years, reflecting both theoretical and practical trends in psychological process research. This also largely reflects the level of psychological process research, though differences stemming from environmental and knowledge backgrounds exist, the trend towards psychological process is evident. Unfortunately, research on the antecedents and promotional mechanisms influencing psychological process in China remains highly unclear. Given this, the following research questions are proposed: 1. Does the foreign teachers' future time perspective related to ego depletion? 2. Does foreign teachers' friendship satisfaction mediating between future time perspective and ego depletion? 3. Does diversity climate moderating between foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion? 4. Does diversity climate moderating between foreign teachers' future time perspective and friendship satisfaction? 5. Does diversity climate moderates the indirect effect of foreign teachers' future time perspective on ego depletion? i.e., the higher the level of diversity climate, the higher the indirect effect of foreign teachers' future time perspective on ego depletion through friendship satisfaction.

Ego depletion is described as ‘a state of diminished self-control capacity’ (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996), which reduces subsequent motivation and effort in self-control tasks while intensifying negative emotions (Hagger, et al., 2010). Moreover, future time perspective is regarded as ‘a relatively stable trait difference across the lifespan’ (Lang & Carstensen, 2002), effectively improving psychological well-being and enhancing environmental adaptation (Zacher & Frese, 2009). Research has found that traits are negatively correlated with ego depletion. (Rudolph, et al., 2018). As a relatively stable trait, future time perspective can enhance motivation and regulate negative emotions through goal setting, effort, perseverance in the face of difficulties, and resilience to failure, thereby diminishing the impact of self-consumption. However, future time perspective may prove pivotal in predicting ego depletion, yet the relationship between the two has never been explored. Moreover, friendship satisfaction reflects an individual's degree of contentment with their peer relationships, it is regarded as a crucial psychological bridge that further enhances individuals' emotional responses (Zhang, He, & Zheng, 2004). Meanwhile, a diversity-conducive atmosphere is defined as an organisational climate characterised by openness and appreciation of individual differences, exhibiting a significant facilitating effect in suppressing negative attitudes (Hofhuis, Rijt, & Vlug, 2016). Therefore, future time perspective, through its interaction with fair and harmonious atmospheres, increases interpersonal trust and provides foreign teachers with greater psychological support, effectively mitigating the formation of negative psychological energy. However, it remains unclear whether other factors such as the relationship between future time perspective and ego depletion are influenced by friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate.

## Research Objectives

1. To exploring the relationship between foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion.
2. To analyze the mediating effect of foreign teachers' friendship satisfaction between future time perspective and ego depletion.
3. To analyze the moderating effect of diversity climate between foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion.
4. To analyze the moderating effect of diversity climate between foreign teachers' future time perspective and friendship satisfaction.

5. To analyze the moderating effect of diversity climate moderates the indirect effect of foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion, i.e., the higher the level of diversity climate, the higher the indirect effect of foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion through friendship satisfaction.

## **Research Methodology**

### **1. Research Design**

This quantitative study employs conservation of resources theory to examine the relationship between future time perspective and ego depletion among foreign teachers in Guangxi, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu Province, China, alongside the mediating and moderating roles of friendship satisfaction and diversity climate. Findings aim to propose strategies and improvement policies that effectively mitigate ego depletion among foreign teachers.

Furthermore, this study will collect data from foreign teachers in Guangxi, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu Province, China, via a virtual questionnaire (future time perspective, ego depletion, friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate of scale) employing purposive sampling in January 2023. Hypotheses will be tested through correlation, mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation analyses. Before sample collection, consent was obtained from both respondents and participating higher education institutions.

### **2. Population and Sample**

The sample for this study comprised foreign teachers in Zhejiang Province, with an effective sample size of 306 responses (a response rate of 46.36%). Information was collected via a virtual questionnaire using purposive sampling. All respondents were foreign teachers currently employed in schools.

### **3. Data Analysis Methods**

This study will utilise foreign teachers in China as its sample cohort, employing future time perspective, ego depletion, friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate scales (virtual questionnaire) to gather data. The survey was conducted in January 2023 with 306 valid responses (a response rate of 46.36%), participants comprised foreign teachers working in China. Using purposive sampling, 18 higher education institutions in Guangxi, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu provinces were selected, and foreign teaching staff were chosen from them. This study will employ descriptive, reliability and validity, correlation, mediation, and moderation analyses to describe and test the

hypotheses.

#### 4. Research Instrument

The research instrument comprised a structured questionnaire employing a 5-point Likert scale (1–5 denoting strongly disagree to strongly agree), encompassing four concepts (future time perspective, ego depletion, friendship satisfaction, and diversity climate). Furthermore, the questionnaire underwent evaluation by three doctoral candidates specialising in educational administration, demonstrating sound validity.

Future time perspective scale: Drawing by Lang and Carstensen (2002), the scale is divided into 2 factors, opportunities and remaining time, comprising 10 items ( $\alpha=0.94$ ). Ego depletion scale: Designed by Wang, et al. (2015), the scale is divided into 3 factors, cognition and emotion with behaviour, comprising 16 items ( $\alpha=0.84$ ). Friendship satisfaction scale: Designed by Zhang, et al. (2004), single-factor, comprising 7 items ( $\alpha=0.86$ ). Diversity climate scale: Drawing by Hobman, Bordia and Gallois (2004), single-factor, comprising 4 items ( $\alpha=0.62$ ).

The english questionnaire employs a 5-point scale for self-assessment, with gender, academic degree, age, and years of teaching experience in China serving as demographic variables.

## Results

### 1. Distribution of Population Characteristics

This study will conduct a descriptive analysis of the collected samples, aiming to understand the distribution of demographic characteristics within the sample.

As shown in Table 1, the effective sample size comprised 306 respondents, predominantly male at 74.51% (228). Those holding a master's degree constituted the majority at 36.93% (113). Younger academics aged 31-40 represented the largest cohort at 69.61% (213). The highest proportion, 75.82% (232), had been teaching in China for 3-5 years.

Background variables	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	78	25.49
	Female	228	74.51
Degree	Undergraduate	91	29.74
	Master	113	36.93

Background variables	Category	N	%
Age	Doctoral	102	33.33
	24-30	13	4.25
	31-40	213	69.61
	41-50	21	6.86
	51 and above	59	19.28
Years of teaching experience in China	11 months and under	0	0.00
	1-2 years	21	6.86
	3-5 years	232	75.82
	6 years and over	53	17.32

Table 1 Distribution of population characteristics

## 2. Model Fit

The purpose of model fit analysis is to assess the degree of correspondence between the sample data and the model.

As shown in Table 2, the overall model had an SRMR=0.033, a good match.

	O	M	95%	99%
Models of saturation	0.033	0.035	0.037	0.039
Estimated model	0.033	0.035	0.037	0.039

Table 2 Root mean square error

## 3. Correlation Analysis

The purpose of correlation analysis is to examine the relationship between variables. The mean values for future time perspective, friendship satisfaction, diversity climate, and future practice were 3.68, 3.74, 3.70 and 0.261, respectively, indicating a high level of acceptance of the variables among the sample.

Correlation analysis indicates that foreign teachers' future time perspective exhibits a significant negative correlation with ego depletion ( $r=-0.380^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby supporting H1.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Future time perspective	3.68	0.91	<b>0.75</b>			
2. Friendship satisfaction	3.74	0.94	0.229**	<b>0.74</b>		
3. Diversity climate	3.70	0.86	0.152*	0.178**	<b>0.76</b>	
4. Ego depletion	2.61	0.95	-0.380**	-0.204**	-0.245**	<b>0.84</b>
<b><math>\alpha</math></b>			0.89	0.89	0.91	0.88

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
CR			0.72	0.81	0.81	0.88
AVE			0.56	0.58	0.58	0.71

Table 3 Correlation analysis

#### 4. Mediating and Moderating Effect Analysis

The purpose of mediation analysis is to examine the mediating effect of the mediating variable; the purpose of moderation analysis is to examine the moderating effect of the moderator variable.

As shown in Table 4, friendship satisfaction had a mediating effect ( $-2.221^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) on the path of future time perspective to ego depletion, and H2 holds (future time perspective  $\rightarrow$  friendship satisfaction  $\rightarrow$  ego depletion). Moreover, diversity climate has a significant negative moderating effect in the pathway future time perspective to the ego depletion ( $\beta = -0.136^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and H3 holds (future time perspective  $\times$  diversity climate  $\rightarrow$  ego depletion). Furthermore, diversity climate has a significant moderating effect in the pathway future time perspective to the friendship satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.128^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and H4 holds (future time perspective  $\times$  diversity climate  $\rightarrow$  friendship satisfaction).

Effect	Path	Coefficients
Mediating	Future time perspective $\rightarrow$ friendship satisfaction $\rightarrow$ ego depletion	$-2.221^{***}$ (Sobel Z)
	Future time perspective $\times$ diversity climate $\rightarrow$ ego depletion	$-0.136^{***}$
Moderating	Future time perspective $\times$ diversity climate $\rightarrow$ friendship satisfaction	$0.128^{***}$

Table 4 Mediating and moderating effect analysis

#### 5. Moderated Mediation Effect Analysis

Moderated mediation analysis aims to examine the effect of moderation on the mediating (path) effect.

As shown in Table 5, the indirect effect of future time perspective through friendship satisfaction on ego depletion is significant ( $-0.1201^{***}$ ,  $-0.1503^{***}$ ,  $-0.1650^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) at different levels of diversity climate, and H5 holds. Therefore,

the indirect effects of diversity climate on ego depletion through friendship satisfaction.

Effect	Sobel test		95 IC
	Indirect effect	SE	
Diversity climate(low)	-0.1201	0.0417	0.1337, 0.3021
Diversity climate(medium)	-0.1503	0.0471	0.1704, 0.3548
Diversity climate(high)	-0.1650	0.0632	0.1863, 0.4302

Table 5 Moderating mediating effect analysis

## Discussion

The findings indicate that foreign teachers' future time perspective exhibits a significant negative correlation with ego depletion. The research findings are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Alberts, et al. (2011); their research indicates that traits are negatively correlated with ego depletion. Because future time perspective constitutes a relatively stable cognitive and behavioral pattern capable of enhancing psychological well-being and adaptive capacity. Conversely, it also serves to inhibit negative psychological energy. Whilst prior research has focused on the aftereffects of ego depletion, this study explores direct and indirect psychological factors that inhibit ego depletion. Consequently, the relatively stable trait of future time perspective among foreign teachers proves particularly crucial for mitigating negative psychological energy.

Research confirms that friendship satisfaction mediates the relationship between foreign teachers' future time perspective and ego depletion. The research findings are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Xie and Lei (2016); their research indicates that friendship satisfaction is regarded as a crucial psychological bridge that further enhances individuals' emotional responses. This occurs because positive intimate relationships effectively suppress teachers' negative psychological energy, alleviate depressive moods, and improve their adaptability. Conversely, indifferent peer relationships stimulate teachers' negative emotions and diminish self-control. Teachers' cognitive evaluations of peer relationship quality, as relatively stable traits, can further inhibit negative psychological energy among foreign teachers through such positive friendships. Notably, friendship satisfaction, as a beneficial psychological state mechanism, exerts significant indirect effects on teachers' ego depletion. This confirms that friendship satisfaction effectively alleviates negative

emotions, enhances adaptability, and suppresses ego depletion.

The findings further indicate that diversity climate exerts an inhibitory effect on future time perspective and ego depletion among foreign teachers. The research findings are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Stillman, et al. (2009); their research found that intimate relationships exert a moderating effect on the relationship between motivation, positive emotions, and ego depletion. This is because, stable patterns of thought and behaviour enhance an individual's environmental adaptability (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), while a fair diversity of psychological climate provides symbolic resources (Cole, Bruch, & Vogel, 2006). Future-time insight, through its interaction with fair and harmonious atmospheres, increases interpersonal trust and provides foreign teachers with greater psychological support, effectively mitigating the formation of negative psychological energy.

Moreover, the findings indicate that diversity climate exerts a positive effect on future time perspective and friendship satisfaction among foreign teachers. The research findings are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Yan, et al. (2022); their research indicates that personality traits can moderate the relationship between network structure and friendship satisfaction. Consequently, within diverse organisations, an atmosphere of fairness and harmony enhances individuals' capacity for objectively interpreting new information. This enables them to maintain past habits and beliefs while experiencing psychological security (Randel, et al., 2016). Consequently, this influences their perceptions, subsequent attitudes, and behaviours. Conversely, when subjected to unfair treatment and deprived of greater opportunities, individuals may become more sensitive in managing interpersonal relationships.

Meanwhile, the findings of the indirect effects of diversity climate on foreign teachers' future time perspective through friendship satisfaction are presented. Diversity climate is an organisational climate characterised by openness and appreciation of individual differences (Hofhuis, et al., 2016). Within such an environment, individuals are more inclined to openly share their long-term personal objectives; future orientation transforms from a private cognitive construct into a collective resource. Consequently, the positive informational effect of future time perspective on friendship satisfaction is amplified. Peers perceive both the other's self-discipline and reliability, while also gaining expectations of complementarity and collaboration, leading to a rapid increase in emotional returns. Consequently, high-

diversity climate typically fosters more frequent and diverse interactions. This propels friendship satisfaction upwards, enabling individuals to gain greater emotional, instrumental, and role support. Correspondingly, this facilitates multi-source growth, thereby inhibiting the formation of ego depletion.

## New Knowledge

This study, incorporating conservation of resources theory, found that foreign teachers' future time perspective exhibits a negative correlation with ego depletion in Guangxi, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu provinces, China. Friendship satisfaction and diversity climate mediated and moderated this relationship, with the indirect effects of diversity climate on foreign teachers' future time perspective through friendship satisfaction. Moreover, self-depletion among foreign teachers in Guangxi, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu Province is a pervasive phenomenon requiring tailored strategies and policies from Chinese higher education institutions.

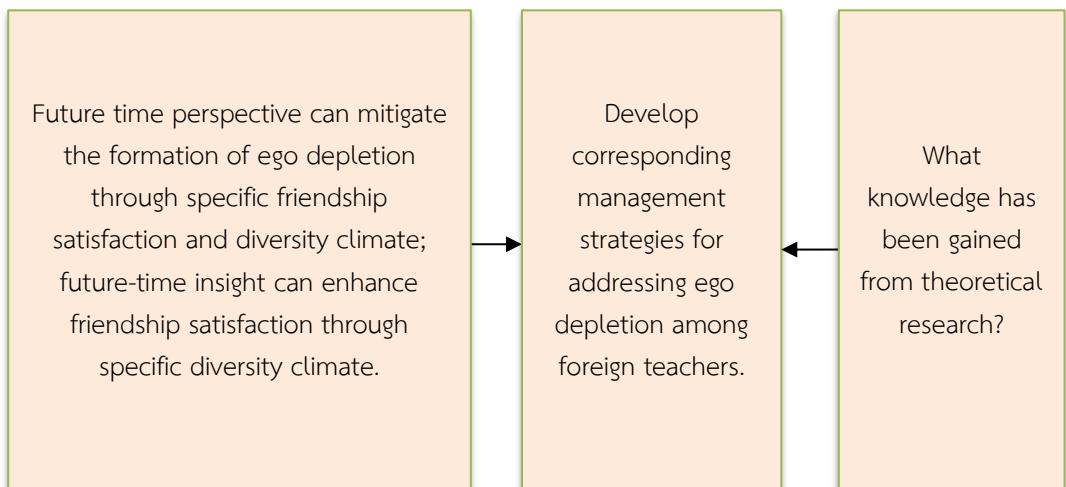


Figure 1 New Knowledge

Mitigating their negative psychological energy through proactive human resource management, multicultural environments, and interpersonal relationships will effectively curb self-depletion.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings indicate that foreign teachers' future time perspective exhibits a significant negative correlation with ego depletion ( $r=-0.380^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and

friendship satisfaction had a mediating effect ( $-2.221^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and diversity climate moderated the direct effect of future time perspective on ego depletion ( $\beta = -0.136^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and friendship satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.128^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the indirect effects of diversity climate on foreign teachers' future time perspective through friendship satisfaction ( $-0.1201^{***}$ ,  $-0.1503^{***}$ ,  $-0.1650^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that foreign teachers' future time perspective requires the cultivation of positive friendship quality and an open, harmonious organisational climate to effectively minimise their ego depletion. Therefore, it can be demonstrated that foreign teachers' future time perspective constitutes a significant antecedent of ego depletion, whilst friendship satisfaction and diversity climate represent key process mechanisms of ego depletion.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed: Higher education institutions must prioritise the management of foreign lecturers' ego depletion rather than remaining confined to theoretical understanding. Policies should be established to effectively alleviate negative psychological energy among foreign lecturers through human resource management and multicultural environments. Furthermore, targeted development and enhancement of cognitive and behavioural skills, alongside interpersonal competencies, should be incorporated into specialised training programmes for foreign lecturers, thereby better controlling their ego depletion. This study highlights the positive impact of future time perspective on ego depletion among foreign faculty within multicultural universities, alongside the potent role of friendship satisfaction and diversity climate in buffering negative psychological energy. Consequently, higher education institutions should prioritise these aspects, assisting foreign faculty in China to better manage and reduce their levels of negative psychological energy.

Finally, these findings also provide valuable insights for future research. Chinese universities must prioritise mitigating the ego depletion experienced by foreign teaching staff, formulating targeted policies to alleviate their negative psychological states through proactive human resource management and the cultivation of multicultural environments. Furthermore, the development and enhancement of cognitive and behavioral skills, alongside the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships, should be incorporated into specialized training programs for foreign teaching staff. This approach will help curb their ego depletion more effectively.

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