

The Effect of Parenting Style on College Students' Job-Hunting Stress: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

To explore the influence of parenting styles on college students' job-hunting stress (JHS) and to examine the mediating role of self-efficacy. A survey of 411 undergraduate graduating students at a university was conducted using the Parenting Style Inventory, the Job-Hunting Stress Scale, and the General Self-Efficacy Scale. The results showed that parental care and encouragement of autonomy were significantly negatively related to JHS and significantly positively related to self-efficacy. Parental control was significantly positively related to JHS and significantly positively related to self-efficacy. JHS was significantly negatively related to self-efficacy. Also, College students' self-efficacy partially mediates the effect of parenting style on college students' JHS. It concludes that parenting styles reduce college students' JHS by increasing self-efficacy.

Keywords: Parenting styles; Self-efficacy; Job-hunting stress

1. INTRODUCTION

Job-hunting stress (JHS) refers to the physiological, psychological, and behavioural stress process caused by the influence of internal or external job-hunting stressors when people face job hunting and job selection [1]. Nowadays, due to the transformation of China's economic development stage from high speed to high quality and the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, the growth rate of the number of jobs has slowed down; and the vigorous development of higher education in China has made the number of job seekers grow by a considerable amount every year. Because of this, competition for jobs has become more intense and the quality of employment has not improved significantly. JHS is now one of the main stressors that college students have to face, and the level of JHS also directly affects the choice and performance of graduates in employment. In recent years, scholars in China have begun to pay attention to the JHS of college students, and researchers have found that the employment pressure of college students is significantly related to career resilience, life satisfaction, suicidal ideation, etc. [2].

Parenting refers to the sum of the behaviors, emotions, and attitudes expressed by parents to their children in parent-child communication and interaction.

It includes the attitudes and educational concepts shown by parents in raising and educating their children, as well as words and deeds in the process [3]. College students whose parents adopt a warm and positive parenting style have a better mental health level and a better developmental state of psychological resilience [4,5]. Research has shown that parental parenting styles are significantly associated with college students' employment anxiety, and negative parenting styles such as excessive protection, excessive interference, refusal to be severe, and punishment denial are positively associated with higher levels of college students' academic performance and employment anxiety [6,7]. The employment decision-making difficulties of graduates are also related to the parenting style of their parents, and the difference in parenting methods directly affects the degree of career decision-making and decision-making difficulties of graduates [8]. College students whose parents adopt a warm and understanding parenting style are more active in self-exploration and have less difficulty making career decisions [9]. Past studies illustrate a correlation between parenting styles and the employment mentality and employment performance of college students.

Self-efficacy is the degree of confidence that people can accomplish a certain work behavior by using the

skills they have [10]. It directly affects people's emotions, thoughts, motivations, and behaviors, and intervenes in the development of behavior through motivation, cognition, and emotion [7]. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy suggests that self-efficacy influences an individual's way of thinking and behavioral efficiency, as well as attitudes and levels of effort they spend when people face difficulties [10]. Self-efficacy is cultivated in personal experiences (including parenting styles) and can have a stable impact on individual thinking and behavior patterns. College students' self-efficacy provides information on early career development and is closely related to academic achievement and decision-making [11]. Research has found that college students' self-efficacy is significantly positively correlated with the parenting style of emotional warmth, and negatively correlated with the parenting style of rejection [12]. Self-efficacy can, directly and indirectly, affect the employment anxiety level of college students [13], and college students with a higher sense of self-efficacy have a more positive mentality and their employment anxiety is effectively alleviated with a lower level of JHS [14-16]. Self-efficacy can also affect the employability of college students by influencing their goal choices, career decisions, and career input [17,18]. Research has found that self-efficacy plays an intermediary role between parenting style and college students' happiness and sense of social responsibility, and also plays an intermediary role between father parenting style and college students' social anxiety [19-21]. Parents' emotional warmth helps children form a higher sense of self-efficacy, and rejection and excessive protection are not conducive to the establishment of children's self-efficacy [22-24]. Studies have also confirmed that the employability of college students is significantly positively affected by general self-efficacy and self-esteem, that is, college students with strong employability also have higher general self-efficacy and self-esteem levels [25].

Previous studies have examined the correlation between parenting styles and mental health conditions such as employment anxiety among college students. However, the impact of parenting approaches on college students' psychological well-being and employment remains unknown. Therefore, this study aims to consider self-efficacy as a mediator between parenting style and college students' JHS. It is hypothesized that a positive parenting style negative predicts JHS of college students, and a negative parenting style positive predicts JHS of college students (hypothesis 1). Self-efficacy mediates between parenting styles and college students' JHS (hypothesis 2).

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

A random sampling method was used to distribute questionnaires to 450 undergraduate students in their final year. The number of valid questionnaires recovered was 411, with a valid recovery rate of 91.33%. Among them, 175 students were male (42.58%) and 236 students were female (57.42%).

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 The parental bonding instrument (PBI)

The parental bonding instrument (PBI) was developed by Parker, Tupling, and Brown et al [26]. in 1979 based on attachment theory, and revised by Yang Hongjun and Chu Yanmin [27]. It was used to gauge how people felt about their parents' parenting approaches while they were kids (before the age of 16 years), which is divided into a version (PBI-M) and a version (PBI-F). They each have 23 items and are divided into three factors: caring, encouraging autonomy, and control. A 4-point Likert scale is used, ranging from 0(not at all) to 3(extremely). The internal consistency reliability in this study using both the father part and mother part dimensions ranged from 0.74 to 0.85, which can be a more reliable measure of parenting styles as remembered by college students [28].

2.2.2 The JHS Scale

This questionnaire was developed by Zhang Lijin and Qiu Guiping in 2007 [29]. It is a 26-item measure that consists of four factors: subjective psychological experience, emotional distress, physiological reaction, and behavioral performance. The questionnaire was scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1(not at all) to 5(extremely). The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire used in this study ranged from 0.65 to 0.93, making it a reliable instrument for measuring JHS among students in their final year of general universities.

2.2.3 General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES)

This study used the General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and his co-workers [30]. which is a 10-item scale with a 4-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of efficacy. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.87.

2.3 Data analysis

The study data were statistically analyzed using SPSS 22.0 software. Statistical methods include correlation analysis, regression analysis, and analysis of variance. Hierarchical multiple regression models were used to

explore the mediator role of self-efficacy between the parenting style and the JHS of college students. Structural equation modeling and mediation validation were conducted by using AMOS 22.0 software to evaluate and analyze the causal relationship between different variables by plotting the correlation variables between parenting style, JHS, and self-efficacy.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive and Correlation analysis

The correlations between the dimensions of parenting style, self-efficacy, and JHS were significant (Table 1). Parental care and encouragement of autonomy were negatively and positively correlated with JHS. Parental control was positively and significantly correlated with JHS and self-efficacy. JHS was negatively and significantly correlated with self-efficacy. The results suggest that a model can be developed between parenting style, self-efficacy, and JHS among college students.

Table1. Correlation matrix of parenting style, self-efficacy, and JHS

	MC	MEA	MD	FC	FEA	FD	SE	JHS
MC	1							
MEA	0.54**	1						
MD	-0.52**	-0.42**	1					
FC	0.60**	0.42**	-0.37**	1				
FEA	0.44**	0.65**	-0.39**	0.51**	1			
FD	-0.52**	-0.32**	0.74**	-0.34**	-0.46**	1		
SE	0.27**	0.30**	-0.11*	0.37**	0.32**	-0.10*	1	
JHS	-0.48**	-0.27**	0.43**	-0.48**	-0.36**	0.47**	-0.37**	1

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01.

MC=Mother caring; MEA=Mother encouraging autonomy; MD=Mother dominating; FC=Father caring; FEA=Father encouraging autonomy; FD=Father dominating; SE=Self-efficacy; JHS=Job-hunting stress.

3.2 The mediating effect of self-efficacy

A latent variable structural equation model was used to investigate the effects of parental styles and self-efficacy on the JHS of college students. The latent variables were positive parenting style and negative parenting style. The observed variables for positive parenting styles were father’s caring and encouraging autonomy, mother’s caring and encouraging autonomy: The observed variables for negative parenting styles were father’s control and mother’s control. A structural equation model was developed to examine whether self-efficacy mediates the effect of positive and negative parenting styles on JHS. The fit indices of the model were: $\chi^2 /df = 3.278$, RMSEA = 0.075, TLI = 0.825, NFI = 0.782, CFI = 0.837, GFI = 0.837. The pathways of positive parenting style, negative parenting style, and self-efficacy on JHS (Figure 1) show that positive parenting style has both a direct negative predictive effect on JHS and an indirect effect on JHS through the mediation of self-efficacy. Negative parenting styles, on the other hand, have a direct positive predictive influence on negative parenting styles as well as an indirect effect on

JHS via self-efficacy mediation. This illustrates that different parenting styles are a partially mediated model in terms of their impact on JHS.

3.3 Direct and indirect effects tests

Based on Shrout and Bolger [31], we used the Bootstrap test to verify the significance of the mediation effect. A random sample of 411 was taken from the original data and then fitted to these data in AMOS using the existing model, saving the path coefficients for each path for the next 411 runs. Lastly, the average coefficients of the mediation effects were calculated. If the 95% confidence interval (CI) for these mean trajectory coefficients does not include 0, the effect is significant. In this study, 95% confidence interval for several of the mediated effects re-evaluated did not contain 0, which indicates a relatively significant mediated effect. The data show (Table 2) that the direct effect of maternal parenting style on JHS was 86.54% and the indirect effect of JHS through self-efficacy was 13.46%; the direct effect of paternal parenting style on JHS was 88.41% and the indirect effect of JHS through self-efficacy was 11.59%.

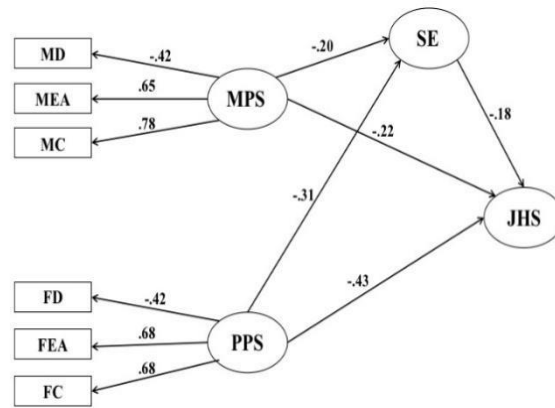


Figure 1 Model diagram of the mediating role of self-efficacy.

Note: PPS=Paternal parenting style; MPS=Maternal parenting style; MC=Mother caring; MEA=Mother encouraging autonomy; MD=Mother dominating; FC=Father caring; FEA=Father encouraging autonomy; FD=Father dominating; SE=Self-efficacy; JHS=Job-hunting stress.

Table 2. Bootstrapping effects and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the mediational model

Type of effect	Paths	Effect value	Standard error	Bootstrapping		Intermediary results	Effectiveness ratio
				95%CI			
Total effect	MPS->JHS	-0.260	0.093	-0.454	-0.089	-	-
Direct effect	MPS->JHS	-0.225	0.088	-0.405	-0.058	-	86.54%
Indirect effect	MPS->SE->JHS	-0.035	0.021	-0.097	-0.004	PIR	13.46%
Total effect	PPS->JHS	-0.483	0.090	-0.628	-0.275	-	-
Direct effect	PPS->JHS	-0.427	0.095	-0.599	-0.224	-	88.41%
Indirect effect	PPS->SE->JHS	-0.056	0.022	-0.111	-0.021	PIR	11.59%

Note: PPS=Paternal parenting style; MPS=Maternal parenting style; SE=Self-efficacy; JHS=Job-hunting stress; PIR=Partial intermediary role.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The influence of parenting styles on college students' JHS

The results show that positive parenting styles are significantly and negatively associated with JHS among college students, while negative parenting styles are significantly positively associated with JHS. In particular, students who experienced more parental love and encouragement were less likely to experience higher levels of JHS, while students who were under parental control were more likely to experience JHS, a finding that is consistent with existing research [7]. Numerous studies have found that parenting methods have a major impact on college students' psychological well-being [32,33], and JHS, as an adverse reaction to individual psychological well-being, is also influenced by parenting styles. Specifically, students who live in a warm family atmosphere perceive more support and understanding and can maintain a more optimistic attitude towards employment and the future, thus reducing their JHS. In

contrast, children who grow up with a controlling parenting style are chronically depressed and feel more helpless, and thus have higher levels of employment anxiety [25].

4.2 Partial mediating role of self-efficacy between parenting styles and college students' JHS

This study also found that parenting styles partially mediated college students' JHS through self-efficacy. Parents' attitudes towards their children influence how well they judge their abilities (self-efficacy). Self-efficacy in turn affects the employability and level of college students [16]. Employment self-efficacy, as one of the self-efficacy, indicates that college students who have higher employment self-efficacy are more confident in achieving their employment goal and have less JHS accordingly [34].

5. CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of parenting styles on JHS and reveals the mediating role of self-efficacy, starting from the JHS of college graduates. The findings of the study provide a theoretical basis for understanding the current state of JHS among contemporary college students. The results extend the model of parenting styles influencing college students' psychological behavior. It also provides theoretical guidance to alleviate and reduce the JHS of college students. Future research should further explore the effect of parenting attitudes and parental input on children's employment development, and provide family-side improvement solutions to better achieve educational goals.

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