



Analysis of The Impact of Employment Stress on The Mental Health of College Graduates: Based on Social Support and The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy--Jilin Province as An Example

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Abstract

This paper explores the mediating role of social support and self-efficacy in the relationship between employment stress and psychological health. A total of 1062 graduates from general colleges and universities in Jilin Province were surveyed using the Employment Stress Scale, the Self-Efficacy Scale, the Social Support Scale and the Mental Health Scale. The results showed that employment stress was significantly and negatively related to mental health, social support and self-efficacy, and social support, self-efficacy and mental health were significantly and positively related to employment stress. Social support and self-efficacy play multiple mediating roles between employment stress and mental health.

Keywords: *Employment stress; Mental health; Self-efficacy; Social support*

1 INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a positive state in which an individual's psychological state (such as adaptability, personality integrity, etc.) remains normal or good, and is harmonious and consistent within the self and between the self and the environment [5]. College students are the backbone of the youth group, and their physical and mental health and comprehensive ability are directly related to the future of the country and the nation. Poor mental health not only makes it difficult for college students to adapt to their studies, leading to negative consequences such as repeating grades and dropping out of school, but also weakens their quality of life and sense of well-being, and even hinders social adaptation and career development [2]. Under the normal control of epidemic prevention and control, the complex and severe employment situation overlaid with economic downward pressure leads to frequent psychological anxiety and depression among college students, and even causes suicidal ideation and attempts, which has a negative impact on mental health. As a direct source of mental health problems, the employment pressure of college students has become a focus of attention for the whole society.

Employment stress is the psychological impact of internal and external stimuli caused by employment felt by individuals, and the higher the stress the worse the psychological condition. By analyzing the relationship between positive psychological capital and employment stress among college students, Chuanwei Wu (2006) found that there was a significant negative correlation between employment stress and positive psychological capital as a whole. Based on the perspective of social-ecological psychology theory, Zhihan Liu (2010) proposed that the mechanism of negative influence of employment stress on psychological health contains environmental and individual factors. Qunjun Liang (2018) found that high stressors generally have low physical and mental health levels, but good social support and positive coping styles can play a moderating role in mental health levels.

The Buffering Model suggests that social support can regulate the way individuals behave when they feel stressed and avoid the adverse psychological effects of stressful events [1]. The material and moral help that college students receive in coping with employment stress and dealing with stressful events can influence the degree to which individuals perceive stress and thus maintain a good level of mental health. It has been

established that social support plays a mediating role in the process of influencing employment stress and psychological well-being of college students. Ecosystem theory also suggests that social support is part of the individual's growth environment and belongs to the contextual system, and good social support reflects to a certain extent the harmonious relationship between the individual and the microsystems, which will certainly promote the development of individual cognition, personality formation and good social adaptation, and thus enhance the level of individual mental health.

According to social cognitive theory, individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to adopt healthy behaviors in the college population, and positive mental health factors show higher levels, while negative mental health factors show lower levels [4]. Higher self-efficacy allows individuals to be more positive when faced with problems and further influences their goal setting, career exploration, and emotional regulation; individuals with lower self-efficacy often have self-doubt and feel unable to cope with the present situation, which leads to psychological problems such as anxiety and worry. They believe that individuals with higher self-efficacy believe that they are capable of managing the situation at hand and are more likely to view problems as challenges rather than threats or subjectively uncontrollable events. The health belief model and the protection motivation theory also identify self-efficacy as an important factor influencing an individual's mental health. Therefore, when individuals have low self-efficacy, they encounter obstacles in the process of finding jobs and employment, which inevitably leads to a lower level of mental health. According to the individual-environment interaction theory, self-efficacy and social support, as positive protective factors, may act as a "combined force" in the psychological health of college students. Therefore, we hypothesized that social support and self-efficacy play a mediating role in the relationship between employment stress and psychological health, i.e., employment stress can attenuate the negative effects on psychological health through individual self-efficacy and perceived social support, respectively.

Social support is a process of exchanging social resources that occurs between individuals with the aim of helping them to obtain the satisfaction of their basic social needs [3]. Self-efficacy, an important component of social cognitive theory, refers to the beliefs that people have about their competence or certainty that they can perform an action. Social support and self-efficacy act as environmental and individual factors, respectively, on the relationship between employment stress and psychological well-being, and are also closely interrelated. Social support such as family encouragement, teacher feedback, and peer support have been shown to be the most favorable factors for self-efficacy. we further hypothesized that social support and self-efficacy play a chain mediating role between

employment stress and psychological well-being, i.e., the moderating effects of social support and self-efficacy can mitigate the adverse effects of stress on psychological well-being and ultimately increase their level of psychological well-being.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research object

In this study, we selected students in the graduation classes of three different types of colleges and universities in Jilin Province as the research subjects and conducted an online questionnaire survey by means of questionnaire star. 1100 questionnaires were distributed and 1062 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a valid recovery rate of 96.55%. Among the research subjects, 273 (35.7%) were male students and 789 (64.3%) were female students; 626 (58.9%) had no experience as student leaders, 249 (23.4%) were class leaders, 124 (11.7%) were college-level leaders and 63 (5.9%) were university-level leaders; 880 (82.9%) had internship experience and 182 (17.1%) had no internship experience. After graduation, 139 students (13.1%) chose to go on to higher education, 21 students (2%) went abroad, 721 students (67.9%) were employed, 50 students (4.7%) started their own business, and 131 students (12.3%) did not have a clear direction.

2.2 Measuring tools

Employment stress scale: The questionnaire was designed using Chen Yuhong's 2019 newly revised Employment Stress Scale for College Students, which includes five dimensions of job application quality, employment expectation, job search support, career orientation, and professional needs, and the scale is scored on a 5-point scale, and the higher the score the greater the employment stress, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale is 0.935, the KMO coefficient The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.935 and the KMO coefficient was 0.917, and the Bartlett's spherical test was significant ($p < 0.05$).

Social support scale: The "Employment Stress Scale" developed by Xiao Shuihui (2009) was used, including three dimensions of objective support, subjective support and support utilization, with a total of 10 items, the higher the score the greater the social support, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.925.

General Self-Efficacy Scale: The Chinese version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale, revised by Zhang Jianxin and Schwarzer (2016), was used to measure the general self-efficacy level of individuals using a 10-item scale with a 5-point Likert scale (1-5). coefficient was 0.917 and Bartlett's spherical test was significant ($p < 0.05$).

Mental health scales: The Mental Health Continuum Brief Scale, revised by Yin Keli (2018), contains three dimensions of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and mental health, with a total of 14 items, and is used to measure the mental health status of individuals. The scale is scored on a 5-point scale, and the higher the score, the more psychologically healthy the individual is. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.957, and the KMO coefficient was 0.911, and the Bartlett sphericity test was significant ($p < 0.05$).

Socio-demographic questionnaire: A self administered questionnaire was used to obtain socio-demographic information about the sample, including school, gender, whether they were class officers, internship experience, family location, family income and graduation direction, etc. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.937. The KMO coefficient was 0.909, and the Bartlett's sphericity test was significant ($p < 0.05$).

2.3 Data collation and analysis

Epidata was used to enter data, and SPSS 24.0 was used to statistically analyze the data. AMOS.19 was used to develop a structural equation model to analyze the mediating effects of the relationship between employment stress, social support, self-efficacy, and mental health among college students.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Common method bias test

In this study, procedures such as anonymous survey and reverse scoring of some questions were conducted during the administration to control for common method bias effects. Using Harman's one-way test, the results showed that there were 12 factors with eigenroot values greater than 1 and the explanation rate of the first common factor was 28.25%, which was less than 40%,

and there was no significant common method bias in this study.

3.2 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

The results showed that the mean score of the total score of employment stress (83.17 ± 27.50) and the mean score of the total score of mental health (53.79 ± 18.63) of college students. There were significant correlations between all variables. Employment stress was significantly negatively correlated with psychological health, social support, and self-efficacy, and significantly positively correlated with social support, self-efficacy, and psychological health (Table 1).

3.3 Mediation model and test analysis of social support and self-efficacy

Structural equation modeling was tested by fitting the model with employment stress as the independent variable, mental health as the dependent variable, and social support and self-efficacy as mediating variables for path analysis (Table 2). The RMSEA was between 0.04-0.08, and the GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, and CFI indices were all above 0.90. The fit indices were good and acceptable, indicating that the model could the model can explain the mediating role of social support and self-efficacy better. Based on the model fit, the significance of the mediating effects was tested using the bias-corrected nonparametric percentile Bootstrap procedure (Table 3), and the 95% confidence intervals for each path coefficient did not include 0, indicating that the indirect effects of the mediating variables were all significant, which verified the multiple mediating effects of social support and self-efficacy between employment stress and mental health. Figure 1 shows the model and standardized path coefficients of this study.

Table 1 Correlation Analysis

Variables	M±MD	Employment pressure	Social support	Self-efficacy	Mental health
Employment pressure	83.17±27.50	-			
Social support	40.72±20.23	-0.251**	-		
Self-efficacy	20.58±7.86	-0.313**	0.406**	-	
Mental health	53.79±18.63	-0.348**	0.458**	0.503**	-

Note: * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

Table 2 Model goodness-of-fit test

CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	IFI	RMSEA
6.696	0.934	0.907	0.956	0.948	0.956	0.080

Table 3 Bootstrap analysis of the intermediate effect test

Pathway	Effect value	Total effect share	95% confidence interval	
			Upper limit	Lower limit
Employment stress → social support → psychological well-being	-0.103	24.52%	-0.109	-0.103
Employment stress → self-efficacy → psychological well-being	-0.102	24.29%	-0.256	-0.238
Employment stress → Social support → Self-efficacy → Psychological well-being	-0.025	5.95%	-0.271	-0.152
Indirect effect	-0.23	54.76%		
Direct effect	-0.19	45.24%		

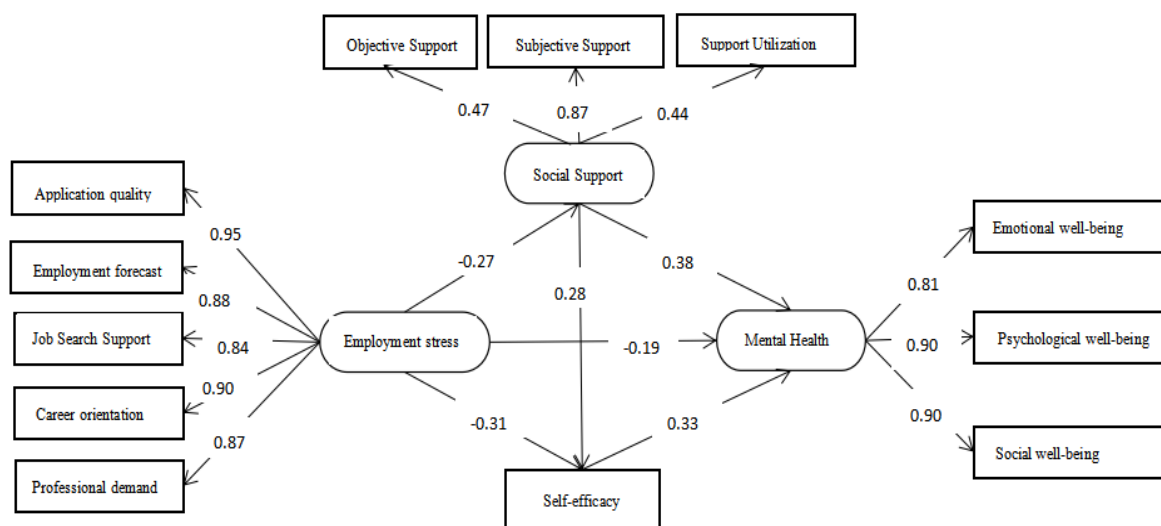


Figure 1 Intermediary effect model

4 DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between employment stress and psychological health of college students. The results found that college students' employment stress had a negative effect on their psychological health, i.e., the higher the employment stress of an individual, the lower the level of psychological health [7]. It is consistent with the results of previous studies. The stress theory model suggests that feelings of stress can directly lead to adverse symptoms in three areas: physical, psychological, and behavioral.

The higher the employment stress felt by college students, the more mental health problems such as anxiety, panic, and depression will occur; the lower the sense of employment stress among college students, the more happiness and positive emotions they will have, and the higher the level of mental health.

4.1 The mediating role of social support and self-efficacy

The results of this study show that the influence of subjective social class on college students' psychological

health can be achieved both through direct effects and indirect paths. On the one hand social support can buffer the impact of employment pressure on psychological health [6]. When graduates face greater downward pressure of employment, emotional companionship and peer leadership from family members and friends can help graduates gain confidence in employment, reduce anxiety, overcome intimidation, etc. thus alleviating the impact of employment pressure on mental health and maintaining a good state of mind. Meanwhile, employment guidance and training provided by colleges and universities can cultivate students' ability to obtain resources and participate in competition, develop the spirit of not being afraid of failure and being brave to try, buffer the influence of employment stress on mental health, and actively promote graduates' mental health; on the other hand, self-efficacy can effectively regulate the negative influence of employment stress on mental health and improve their mental health. When faced with greater employment pressure, graduates with high self-efficacy are more likely to see things clearly, measure the factors that are unfavorable to their employment, choose the optimal employment solution, reduce or alleviate pain and anxiety, and maintain or promote their psychological health level. Graduates with high self-efficacy are good at coordinating between ideas and actions, and when they encounter greater employment difficulties and stress, they firmly resolve their employment problems from their unusual viewpoints, mitigate the negative effects of employment stress on their psychological health, and maintain a positive and optimistic mindset.

4.2 The chain mediating role of social support and self-efficacy between employment stress and psychological well-being

The results of this study indicate that social support and self-efficacy play a chain mediating role between employment stress and psychological health of college students, i.e., employment stress can influence the psychological health level of individuals by promoting social support and improving self-efficacy. In order to improve college students' psychological health, it is not only necessary to promote college students' employment according to the situation, but also to enhance college students' employment confidence and resilience, and actively play the role of emotional support. At the same time, when college students face employment pressure, positive emotional feedback and emotional support should be given to individuals with low self-efficacy in time, which also has a certain positive effect on improving college students' mental health.

5 CONCLUSION

This study explores the factors influencing college students' psychological health and further explores the mechanism of employment stress on college students' psychological health - the chain mediating role of social support and self-efficacy. It opens a new research perspective for the social-ecological psychology theory that the impact of college students' employment stress feeling on their psychological health not only focuses on the trait attributes at the individual level, but also on the impact of environmental factors at the social level. It reveals that we should pay attention not only to the differences in the needs of the basic livelihood issues of college students' employment, but also to the differences in individual psychological needs, which provides theoretical support for the relief of college students' employment problems and mental health interventions.

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